



Sugar and Settlers

A history of the Natal
South Coast 1850-1910

Duncan L. Du Bois

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Preface

Composition is for the most part an effort of diligence and steady perseverance to which the mind is dragged by necessity or resolution.

— Samuel Johnson

This work is based on my Ph.D. dissertation entitled “Sugar and settlers: The colonisation of the Natal South Coast, 1850-1910”, which was accepted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2014. As such, what follows is an attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the settlement and economic development of a region which hitherto has been subjected to limited scrutiny. Although the primary focus of this study is on white settlers as colonisers and their sugar enterprise, their interaction with and dependence on the role of the indigenous African inhabitants and indentured Indian immigrants forms a substantial part of the work.

The colonisation of the South Coast was premised on the cultivation of sugar cane, with the Isipingo district constituting what has been termed the ‘cradle of the South African sugar industry’. Confidence in the success of sugar cultivation resulted in the coastline south of Isipingo being exploited by sugar planters in the years after 1858. As a result, a settler presence was established in the territory between the Mkomanzi and the Mzimkulu rivers. However, sugar cultivation did not account for the addition of Alfred County in 1866, which extended Natal’s southern border to the Mtamvuna river.

From the Mlazi to the Mzimkulu 26 rivers traverse the coastal belt, and thus ensured that geography played a critical role in the history of the South Coast as it affected travel and transportation. The decades-long delays in building bridges and the perennial complaint about the poor state of roads severely hampered economic growth and resulted in the South Coast becoming a “Cinderella” region in comparison to other parts of Natal. Innovative attempts at river port shipping provided some measure of relief from the woes of transport, but they were not sustainable. It was not until the attainment of responsible government in 1893 that meaningful development of infrastructure took place.

Despite the economic difficulties which prevailed, the sugar enterprise was witness to considerable mechanisation and amalgamation, based largely on foreign capital. By the 1890s what may be termed a ‘sugarocracy’ was emerging with two families, the Reynolds and the Crookes, dominating the sugar business on the South Coast. The growth of the sugar industry was based on Indian indentured labour, with the Reynolds brothers in particular constantly facing allegations of ill-treatment of their workforce.

A consequence of the extension of the railway to Port Shepstone by 1901 was the establishment of a tourist and hospitality industry which greatly augmented the economy of the region. This was important, as the sugar output of the South Coast was always a distant second to that of the North Coast. The absence of a mineral

of value such as coal, which was located in vast quantities in northern Natal, and the isolation of the South Coast from the main trading route with the diamond and gold fields of the interior, deprived the area of investment appeal. As such, it was regarded as a backwater for most of the colonial period.

Settlements at Verulam, north of Durban, and Isipingo, south of Durban, constituted the respective coastal frontiers of Natal in the early 1850s. What constituted the South Coast changed during the period of this study. Only with the grants of Crown land after 1857, in what was then called Lower Mkomanzi – Alexandra County from 1865 – was the southern coastal frontier extended. In 1866, with the annexation of Alfred County, Natal's South Coast reached its full extent. In that frontier characteristics of remoteness and isolation as a result of distance and geographical barriers were an integral aspect of the South Coast, the Isipingo settlement is featured only in the first chapter. Before 1880, it had ceased to reflect those characteristics. Moreover, the existence of the African reserve area of chief Mnini and his Thuli people between the Lovu and Mkomanzi rivers constituted a barrier between the settler district of Isipingo and the settler nodes within Alexandra County. That barrier ensured that the coastal area south of the Mkomanzi river was not only isolated from the rest of the colony, but as such evinced the characteristics of a frontier domain.

As a consequence of the inextricable linkage between the themes of infrastructure development, politics and economics, a chronological approach has been taken in assessing the evolution of the colonisation process. Although this minimised the risk of overlap and repetition whilst serving to enhance focus on the circumstances which prevailed, it also proved problematic in accommodating the research on the Indian and African communities. In order not to detract from their importance within the study, partitioning of this work into three segments appeared as the most satisfactory solution, using 1893 – the year in which representative government gave way to the responsible government dispensation – as the dividing point.

As a region, the history of the colonial South Coast is confined to a number of hagiographies. The only contemporary account is Jane Arbuthnot's *Autobiographical Sketch* (1897). A most useful settler source was the diary of David Chalmers Aiken, even though its entries spanned only the late 1860s. Although useful in the information and views that they provide, the focus of secondary sources is limited to a single place, as in the case of Eric Slayter's book on Isipingo (1961); a specific community in the case of A.H.E. Andreasen and A. Halland's review of the Norwegian settlers (1982); or on family in the case of Ruth Gordon's work on the Archibalds (1978); Anthony Hocking's study of the Crookes (1992) and Denzil Bazley's account of the Bazleys (2000). Daphne Child's diary-based narrative of Sidney Turner (1980)

affords only a glimpse of the Mzimkulu area during the mid-1860s. The only other secondary source is Robert Osborn's pioneering chronicle on sugar planting (1964).

This study is based on extensive perusal of the Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO) files dating from 1849 to 1910, which proved highly productive in harvesting original, unpublished material. Equally rich and important for this study were the files of the Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA) for the years 1881 to 1893 and 1903 to 1904; also the files of Indian Immigration (II) and European Immigration (EI). These official sources, as well as the copies of the *Government Gazette*, *Blue Books* and parliamentary sessional papers, constitute a bedrock of information. But of special value as sentinels of the ebb and flow of daily life were the newspapers of the period, particularly the *Natal Mercury*, the editions of which were thoroughly perused from 1852 to 1910. As a shipping gazette, the *Mercury* provided the most comprehensive coverage of the coastal movements of ships, as the details contained in the appendix indicate.

Attempts to locate the magistrates' records for Alexandra and Alfred counties proved unsuccessful, despite thorough searches in both the Pietermaritzburg and Durban archives repositories, as well as in the Scottburgh Magistrates' Court. Records for the Lower Umzimkulu magistracy from 1889 to 1906 do exist and were perused in the Durban Archives Repository, as well as a limited record of the files of the Umzinto magistrate, which refer to the late colonial period.

The aim of this study is to contribute to the important and growing literature on settler society in Southern Africa. Focused regional studies invite comparisons with other parts of Natal, South Africa, as well as other sugar-producing regions of the world or areas colonised by the British, and afford the opportunity to evaluate the extent to which outlooks, trends and practices were shared, integrated or replicated. They also provide a more comprehensive perspective on the relationships between settlers and the colonised, as well as between different racial, ethnic, linguistic and national groups and cultures.¹ As a collection, such studies would provide a more specific picture of a period which hitherto has often been limited to generalisations.

Duncan L. Du Bois

Durban 2014

1 A note on orthography: although modern Zulu lexicography has resulted in changes in the spelling of Zulu names, I have maintained the original spelling of Isipingo and Mkomanzi while otherwise keeping to the spellings used by Norman Etherington in his publications.

The past is irretrievable, yet inescapable.

— Duncan Du Bois

Part 1



1

The settlement of Isipingo



Mr. Jeffels is the type of a class that forms the pioneers of all successful colonisation.

— Natal Mercury, 25 July 1856

This chapter examines the settlement of Isipingo in the context of the annexation of Natal and the Byrne immigration scheme, noting the earlier arrival of American missionaries. As with all settlement in Natal, the early years were pioneering ones particularly in respect of survival in an untamed frontier environment and experimentation in agricultural cultivation. Until Michael Jeffels proved sugar was ideally suited to the Isipingo flat, settlers tried to cultivate cotton. Jeffels' historic role in sugar production and Isipingo's role as the cradle of the South African sugar industry therefore form the central thrust of this chapter. This analysis takes place within the context of labour problems, the arrival of the first indentured Indians and the growth of the Isipingo community. Isipingo's later detachment from the South Coast frontier as a result of bridge, rail and magisterial links concludes the focus of this study on it.

Introduction

Isipingo was the most southerly part of the coast in which a settler community was established, until the grants of Crown lands south of the Mkomanzi river were taken up after 1857. In terms of defining the Natal South Coast, for the purpose of this study, and as understood by contemporaries, Isipingo constituted the starting point. The region beyond Isipingo was described by Charles Barter in his 1852 publication, *The Dorp and the Veld; or, Six months in Natal*, as a “belt of land, extending inland from ten to fifteen miles, covered for the most part with thick underwood, occasionally interspersed with fine timber”. Although he noted that “the alligator lurks in the sandy beds of the wide shallow rivers”,¹ he did not point out that between Isipingo and Natal’s southern boundary, formed by the Mzimkulu river, some 26 rivers flowed into the Indian Ocean and posed great difficulty for travel and transport.

Apart from five isolated American Board missionary outposts which were established south of the Mlazi river,² Natal’s southern coastal strip was almost devoid of any European presence.³ In July 1853 Henry Francis Fynn became the first official colonising authority south of the Mkomanzi river when he was appointed assistant resident magistrate and based himself at the Ifumi mission station.⁴

The South Coast was singled out for settlement by British immigrants as early as 1846. Joseph Steer Christopher, author of *Natal, Cape of Good Hope* (1850), was an ardent proponent of emigration as the solution for the socio-economic ills besetting mid-nineteenth-century England.

Christopher visited Natal and saw great potential for immigration. In 1846 he applied to Lieutenant-Governor Martin West to have blocks of land, some 300 000 acres in extent, set aside for settlement between the Mkomanzi and the Ifafa rivers. Each immigrant family would be given 75 acres. Christopher argued that settlement of this area would serve as a barrier to the “unrest” and “tribal divisions” which simmered south of the Mzimkulu and the Mtamvuna rivers.⁵ West approved of the scheme, but it was turned down by the secretary of state for colonial departments, Earl Grey, on the grounds that Crown land could only be acquired by public sale.⁶

1 Barter 1852:165.

2 Etherington 1978:26-27. The stations were: Umtwalumi (1851), Ifafa (1848), Amahlongwa (1848), Ifumi (1847) and Umlazi (1837).

3 CSO 131, No. 491, 1 April 1861. Bunting Johnstone claimed to have lived in Lower Mkomanzi since 1848.

4 Pridmore 2004:135.

5 Reference to the causes of the tensions within the region is made in chapter three.

6 Hammond 1926:11; Hattersley 1950:112-113.

Indifference towards Natal as a colony of settlement tended to frame the thinking of certain officials in the Colonial Office. In 1835, in response to concerns raised by the Cape governor, Sir Benjamin D'Urban, at the arrival in Natal of missionaries from the United States of America, Lord Palmerston, the foreign secretary, stated that as a territory Natal had no significance for British interests.⁷ Although Natal was subsequently annexed as a British territory, Galbraith has argued that there was “no symmetrical explanation” for that.

Lord Russell, who was colonial secretary in the government of Lord Melbourne (1839-1841), saw commercial prospects in acquiring colonies like Natal. But his view was not shared by Lord Stanley, who was colonial secretary in the Peel ministry (1841-1845). Stanley believed that Natal could never become prosperous because it lacked an adequate harbour and because its coastline was hazardous for navigation.⁸ Cape governor, Sir George Napier, was even more direct in his opposition to the annexation of Natal. In a despatch to Stanley in August 1842 he stated that he

had never been led away by the flattering accounts of the beauty of the country and its fertility, in which so many travellers indulge ... I have never for a moment viewed it as a lucrative possession, nor have I been unmindful of the expense of its settlement as a colony.⁹

In deciding to annex Natal, the Peel government was obliged to consider local political and ‘moral’ factors pertaining to the presence of the independent trekboers to the west and north. According to Galbraith, Stanley annexed Natal “largely because he was convinced that the independence of the Boers was reconcilable neither with order nor with humanity”.¹⁰ The annexation of Natal did not bring about a change in attitude towards it as a colonial acquisition. In 1846 James Stephen, the permanent undersecretary in the Colonial Office, was quoted as stating that Natal was “too worthless to justify throwing the burden on our national resources even for a time”. Earl Grey, took the view that he would “discountenance the expectation that any plans for the improvement of the Natal district, which would involve large expense to be provided for by Parliament, can be adopted”.¹¹

Added to those perspectives was the prevailing imperial philosophy of economic liberalism which, in practice, meant that state involvement in a colony should be minimal. “A commercial, rather than a territorial, dominion was the goal of ministers

7 Galbraith 1963:182.

8 Galbraith 1963:195.

9 Brookes & Webb 1965:45.

10 Galbraith 1963. Humanitarians were concerned that the Boers might reintroduce slavery or maltreat Africans.

11 Etherington 1978:10.

and manufacturers alike.”¹² However, by the mid-1840s pressing socio-economic circumstances in Britain itself compelled new thinking on colonisation. With unemployment rife, emigration schemes came to be seen as a remedy for social distress.¹³ Whilst North America was the most popular destination of choice for emigrants, followed by Australia and New Zealand, Natal was not without appeal. Its topographical features excluded dense forests such as found in Canada and parts of Australia, its climate was regarded as congenial for settlers from the British Isles, the presence of Africans was regarded as constituting a source of labour, while the abundance of wildlife was seen as an advantage in terms of sustaining life and livelihood.¹⁴

Natal’s first governor, Martin West, in a despatch to the Cape governor in August 1847, urged that “proper encouragement be given ... to increase the number of civilized inhabitants”.¹⁵ Underlining West’s appeal was the fact that Natal had become untenanted as a result of the withdrawal of the Voortrekkers from it.¹⁶ Small numbers of immigrants paying their own fares – 22 in the case of passengers aboard the *Elizabeth Jane* – reached Natal late in 1848 and early in 1849. Amongst them was Patrick J. Maxwell who, with his wife and family, initially grew cotton and coffee at Umzinto.¹⁷ But the impetus for large-scale immigration to Natal, which West sought, materialised later in 1849 as a result of a scheme established by an Irish speculator named Joseph Charles Byrne.¹⁸

Premised upon glowing accounts of prospects in Natal, Byrne promised each approved immigrant twenty acres of land at a charge of £10 for the voyage in steerage, £19 for intermediate and £35 for those who could afford a private cabin. His scheme was scrutinised by the Emigration Board and duly received government approval. From May 1849 Byrne’s emigrant ships began arriving at Durban. In all some 2 500 approved immigrants arrived. To that total must be added another 800 who were unapproved because they did not obtain certificates from the Emigration Board. The certificates were issued as proof of deposits having been lodged.

In opposition to Byrne, George Murdoch sent out two immigrant ships, the *Ballengeich* and the *Justina*, which brought almost 200 more immigrants. The *Nile*, *Choice*, *John Bright* and *Herald*, which were owned by John Lidgett, conveyed a further 248 immigrants, while the *Hebrides*, owned by Richard Hackett, brought

12 Hattersley 1950:66.

13 Hattersley 1950:94.

14 Hattersley 1950:100.

15 Hammond 1926:4.

16 Hattersley 1950:92.

17 Hattersley 1950: 101-102.

18 Robertson: 1949:416-442.

another 129. Together with other small groups of immigrants who arrived up until June 1852, Natal netted over 4 000 new settlers.¹⁹

From the moment of their arrival in Natal, dissatisfaction, which often evolved into despair, prevailed among many of the new immigrants. Lack of accommodation, limited wagon transport and an undeveloped physical environment challenged even the most enthusiastic and robust settlers. The allotments of land proved particularly disappointing. For the immigrants from the first five vessels, those allotments were in the vicinity of Pietermaritzburg. In terms of size not only were the plots of twenty acres quite inadequate to support an existence, but the soil itself was also unsuitable for agriculture.

As Enid Hammond has noted, exasperation gave way to indignation.²⁰ However, those immigrants who received plots in the Verulam and Illovo area near Richmond fared better. But as Natal's new governor, Benjamin Pine, observed in April 1850, Byrne's scheme was a failure. Although Pine was applauded for offering each settler in possession of an allotment certificate an additional 25 acres of land, many settlers had become too demoralised to bother to assert their claims.²¹ By July 1850 only around 500 of the 2 469 settlers who had arrived were satisfactorily settled.²² Adding to their woes was the fact that by January 1851 Byrne, who was the subject of a court inquiry regarding insolvency, had emigrated to Australia. Byrne's bankruptcy and the flood of letters sent home by dejected emigrants brought about an end to immigration to Natal. Instead the news of gold discoveries in Australia had the effect of diverting immigration there.²³

The only coastal area allotments made under the Byrne scheme were in Victoria County in the vicinity of the Mhloti river north of Durban. The enthusiasm of the Irons family to assist distressed Methodists in England in making a new start in life in Natal resulted in William Irons subscribing around 400 Wesleyans to emigrate under the Byrne scheme.²⁴ By May 1851 it was reported that 156 of them were residing around the village of Verulam (named after the Earl of Verulam who lent his patronage to the Byrne scheme during its formative stage). As Hattersley has noted,

19 Hattersley 1950:107-108, 114-119. Hattersley refers to an estimate compiled some years after the immigration period of 1849-1852, which gave the immigrant total as 4 806 – but he questions its reliability (*ibid.*:315).

20 Hammond 1926:53.

21 Hammond 1926:67-68, 79.

22 Hammond 1926:78.

23 Hattersley 1950:221-222. An average of 10 000 emigrants a year arrived in the colony of Victoria, Australia, during the early 1850s. See also LaNauze 1967:90.

24 Hattersley 1950:126-128.

Irons “had collected a body of industrious and self-reliant colonists”²⁵ who, in the years to come, would become the bedrock of agricultural success in sugar and tea cultivation in Victoria County, as well as producing influential political personalities such as J.T. Polkinghorne, Tom Garland and James Liege Hulett.

The absence of Crown land and Richard (Dick) King’s extensive land ownership in the Isipingo area ensured that no Byrne allotments of land were made there. King was awarded 5 816 acres of land between the Mlazi and the Mbogintwini rivers by Crown grant in 1844 in acknowledgement of his heroic ride to Grahamstown in 1842 to seek relief for the British forces who were under siege by the Trekkers of the Republic of Natalia.²⁶ However, it was disinterest in Byrne’s land allocations that resulted in Isipingo becoming the residence of a settler who, after Edmund Morewood, can be regarded as the greatest pioneer of the sugar industry in the fledgling colony.

He was Michael Jeffels, who had arrived in Natal with his wife Mary and two children aboard the *Sovereign* in March 1850. Although assigned land for cotton cultivation near Byrne, Jeffels preferred to forfeit it and pursue his own enterprise.²⁷ He immediately procured a piece of land from King, which he called Albion, at the far south end of the Isipingo flat near the Mbogintwini river. He built his house above the river near what became the old South Coast road, and initially planted beans, cotton, oats and mealies. In addition he collected salt and made soap to augment his income. He noted that when he arrived there were only three other settler families in the district.²⁸

Isipingo was the southern outpost of Durban County in 1850 and the southernmost frontier of settler presence in Natal. It was situated at the southern end of an extensive flat plain bounded on the north side by the Mlazi river, where in later years the Reunion sugar estate was established. To the west lay an African reserve location; to the south the Mbogintwini river and an African reserve location beyond that. James Ecroyd, who settled in Isipingo in 1851, described the soil as “rich alluvial

25 Hattersley 1950:127, 253-254.

26 Pridmore 2004:137; Slayter 1961:28. In 1855, Henry Francis Fynn stated in a letter to Cape governor, Sir George Grey, that he had been the first British inhabitant of “Isipingo farm” during the years 1828-1834 and therefore saw himself as having a claim to it. But since it had been awarded to Richard King, he sought an equivalent amount of land on the Lovu river. His claim was not entertained. However, after his death in 1861 his widow and son were awarded two plots of land – 300 and 800 acres in extent – in the Illovo area. See also CSO 56, Part 2, 5 November 1855; Pridmore 2004:139.

27 CSO 56, Part 4, 9: Register of Deeds, 2 February 1857. Jeffels forfeited 112½ acres on the Lovu near Byrne.

28 Osborn 1964:275; *Natal Mercury*, 4 February 1858. The other families were those of Platt, Mack and King.

loam”.²⁹ Dick King does not appear to have exploited the soil to any degree and seemed content, certainly until 1854 when he planted his first sugar cane crop, to lease out or to sell off parcels of land from his extensive property.³⁰ The first recorded cultivation of note in Isipingo was that of cotton grown by John Galloway and Alfred Southam, who arrived in Natal in 1848. Writing from his Island plantation to Lieutenant-Governor West in April 1849, Galloway, who had twenty acres of cotton, sought to impress West with a sample of his crop. At the same time he lamented the difficulty he had in obtaining African labour and advocated a land tax to compel Africans to work.³¹ Labour problems proved perennial in the area, as in other parts of Natal, which later resulted in the importation of indentured Indians. However, Galloway and Southam’s enterprise was short-lived. Uncertainty as regards labour and doubts about the profitability of large-scale cotton production saw them sell up and leave.³² In 1849 Southam sold his land to Sidney Platt, who was soon joined by his brother Laurence. Initially Platt grew beans on his 250 acre holding.³³ In 1851 Laurence bought his own farm and named it Prospecton.³⁴

Other pioneers to settle in the Isipingo district included William Joyner, who arrived aboard the *Conquering Hero* in June 1850 with his wife and five children. He lived in Durban for two years before moving to Isipingo. Robert Mack and his son James, arrived aboard the *Henrietta* in July 1850 “with half-a-crown in his pocket” as he put it, also gravitated to Isipingo.³⁵ Living conditions for the new settlers were extremely difficult. Before proper housing could be built wattle and daub huts thatched with grass served as basic shelter. “Nature lay close at hand everywhere, untamed and dangerous”, wrote Eric Slayter. Snakes, bats and insects abounded. Sheets of calico cloth were hung across ceilings in an attempt to prevent such creatures from falling on the heads of those within. Although Joyner set traps for leopards without success, there were no reported attacks by that species.³⁶

In its first edition on 25 November 1852, the *Mercury* reported a hippo hunt at Isipingo. A subsequent edition noted that a “sea cow” [hippo] had been killed by Africans in the Isipingo river and its body cut up.³⁷ Basic foodstuffs were either unobtainable or in

29 Ecroyd 19 January 1851:102.

30 Osborn 1964:283.

31 CSO 13, Part 2, No.136, 12 April 1849.

32 Hattersley 1950:134-135. A record of licenses issued by the resident magistrate of Durban in 1853 showed John Galloway as having a retail shop in West Street. See also CSO 63, 30 September 1853.

33 Hattersley 1950:227; Slayter 1961:29.

34 Osborn 1964:279.

35 Hattersley 1950:163.

36 Slayter 1961:33, 36-37. Tiger Rocks at Isipingo beach received that name after settlers shot a leopard there in the 1850s, mistakenly describing it as a tiger.

37 *Natal Mercury*, 9 December 1852.

short supply. James Ecroyd, in a letter to his mother in 1851, lamented the absence of sugar, milk and butter and wrote of how he was surviving on dry bread and treacle.³⁸ As the *Mercury* noted years later, many of the settlers of the 1850s had relied on a “mealie and pumpkin diet” for their sustenance.³⁹ Money was also scarce. Ecroyd remarked that “for cash almost any kind of tools or implements may be bought at half the price they are worth in England”. He also noted the high cost of materials and of hiring a carpenter to build his house. The carpenter required five shillings and nine pence per day plus food, while the materials to build his house had totalled £70, which he regarded as prohibitive.⁴⁰ Of the new settlers, William Joyner built the first permanent home from bricks that he produced from local clay. He named his farm and house Dingwall after his home in Glasgow. In 1853 a daughter, Clara, was born there.⁴¹ Writing in 1862, *Mercury* editor John Robinson aptly summed up the challenge which the Natal colonist faced: “His life is pre-eminently one of work, frequently of privation, certainly of struggle.”⁴²

Agricultural experiments

In Charles Barter’s view, Natal had “the means of producing a staple article of export, sufficient to ensure her own ultimate prosperity”. He saw cotton as the most promising crop and made no mention of sugar.⁴³ Cape businessman Edward Chiappini, who visited Natal in 1843, also concluded that cotton could be successfully grown. The Natal Cotton Company was floated in April 1847 in partnership with other Cape entrepreneurs. But from the outset there was a dispute with the West administration as regards title deeds to the land. Then, of the 22 750 acres of land earmarked for production, only 4 500 acres were found to be suitable. Shareholders refused to invest further capital and the company was wound up in 1849 without ever producing a single bale of cotton.⁴⁴

In 1848, 35 German families were brought out by Jonas Bergtheil and settled at New Germany, near present-day Westville. But their efforts at cotton cultivation were short-lived.⁴⁵ As Alfred Southam and John Galloway discovered at Isipingo, cotton production was labour intensive and very costly. Cecil Rhodes later described it as a “sink” with a “capacity to absorb any amount of capital” after he and his brother

38 Ecroyd 6 February 1851:132.

39 *Natal Mercury*, 23 October 1882.

40 Ecroyd 19 January 1851:108, 132; 7 May 1851: 169

41 Slayter 1961:33.

42 Robinson 1862:42.

43 Barter 1852:165-167.

44 Hattersley 1950:86; Leverton 1963:8.

45 Hattersley 1950:87.

abandoned their efforts at cotton growing in the Mkomanzi valley during the early 1870s.⁴⁶ Difficulties with parasitic pests during the 1850s added to the woes of those who tried cotton cultivation and by 1857 it had virtually been abandoned as a settler enterprise.⁴⁷ While cotton never constituted an appreciable percentage of Natal's exports, by 1875 sugar had reached unquestioned dominance in the colonial economy.⁴⁸ Ironically, it was while he was employed as a manager for the Natal Cotton Company that Edmund Morewood, who initiated the Natal sugar industry, advised the directors in January 1849 to cultivate sugar and coffee.

In an editorial headed "The real condition of Natal" published on 23 December 1852, the *Mercury* assessed the prospects of the coastal areas as follows: "Lands adjacent to the coast, are proved, beyond doubt, to be well adapted for the growth of cotton, sugar, coffee, indigo, ginger, arrowroot and numerous other tropical substances ... Sugar is probably destined to constitute the first basis of our advancement and prosperity." The *Mercury's* prediction as regards sugar came at the end of a year that proved a turning point in the history of Natal. Following his resignation from the Natal Cotton Company in July 1849, Morewood busied himself experimenting with sugar cane cultivation on his farm at Compensation on the North Coast.⁴⁹

On 9 January 1852 the *Natal Witness* announced that Morewood had 40 acres of cane "in luxuriant state". On 30 January 1852 the *Natal Times* reported that he "has succeeded in perfecting the production of sugar at Compensation" and pronounced the coastlands as being ideally suited for "this valuable article".⁵⁰ As Robert Osborn put it, Morewood provided the vital spark which initially barely flickered. Interest in Morewood's achievement was widespread. Not only were the samples of his sugar sent to the Cape and to England well-received, but locally the land market perked up with new enquiries for farms. Moreover, Morewood's production methods, his need for capital and the future prospects of sugar became a staple news item in local newspapers, as well as those in the Cape.⁵¹

By November 1852 it was reported that Henry Milner had four acres of young cane on his Umgeni farm. Despite the adulation heaped upon him for his pioneering efforts, Morewood's role in the history of sugar in Natal was a brief one. In

46 Leverton 1963:25.

47 Hattersley 1950:228-229.

48 Leverton 1963:38.

49 Osborn 1964:8-9.

50 Osborn 1964:20. In a letter published in the *Mercury* on 13 July 1861, American missionary Aldin Grout, disputed the fact that Morewood was the first to grow cane in Natal. Grout stated that he had first grown cane in his garden at Umvoti in 1843. Historically, however, what is not in dispute is the fact that Morewood produced the first manufactured sugar.

51 Osborn 1964:19, 22, 33-34.

December 1852 he announced that Compensation was up for sale for “the want of sufficient capital to carry out the manufacture of sugar”. By March 1853 he had emigrated and subsequently settled in Brazil.⁵²

Following his departure the role of ‘sugar pioneer’ passed to Michael Jeffels and Isipingo became the cradle of the Natal sugar industry.⁵³ In his tribute to Jeffels, sugar historian Robert Osborn wrote that he was

the one man, more than any other, to whom the South African sugar industry owes its determination to make the most of the certainty established by the lone pioneer, Edmund Morewood ... that Natal could produce sugar as good as any and as a commercial success.

In May 1852 Jeffels was the first settler in Isipingo to purchase plant cane from Morewood.

In August of that year he added to that by importing a further quantity directly from Mauritius. The extent of Jeffels initial cane cultivation was just two acres.⁵⁴ Soon afterwards Joyner, Platt and Mack followed his example. Whereas Morewood had used very basic wooden rollers to produce his first sugar, Jeffels exemplified the “pioneering individualism” to which Peter Richardson has ascribed the success of Natal’s new industry,⁵⁵ by ordering a proper iron made mill from the Vauxhall foundry in Liverpool.⁵⁶ The first of its kind in the colony, it arrived in July 1853. By June 1854 Jeffels had twenty acres of cane and earned accolades from the *Mercury* which claimed that his sugar was the finest yet produced in Natal.⁵⁷ Jeffels was the first planter to send sugar through to Durban on a regular basis.⁵⁸ Whereas in 1858 Jeffels would claim that he had been poor and had even gone without shoes in 1853, his second imported iron mill arrived from England in July 1854.⁵⁹ His success continued when early in 1855 his sugar won first prize at an exhibition in Cape Town and was later also exhibited in Paris.⁶⁰ In the October 1855 editions of the *Natal Star*, Jeffels advertised the sale of his Green Natal cane plants at fifteen shillings per thousand plants.⁶¹

52 Osborn 1964:44.

53 Osborn 1964:38, 40-41, 44.

54 Osborn 1964:275-276.

55 Richardson 1986:133.

56 *Natal Mercury*, 14 October 1858.

57 *Natal Mercury*, 28 June, 1854.

58 *Natal Mercury*, 14 October 1858.

59 *Natal Mercury*, 11 November 1858; Osborn 1964:276.

60 *Natal Mercury*, 14 March 1855; Osborn 1964:276.

61 *Natal Star*, 17, 24, 31 October 1855.

The absence of proper equipment had frustrated Morewood in his efforts to produce sugar. To tackle that challenge, Jeffels suggested at a meeting of fellow planters in Durban in 1854 the formation of a company to erect a central mill which could meet the needs of a number of small cane producers. However, he was ahead of his time and nothing came of this proposal.⁶² It is possible that at the time planters were wary of attempting to set up a company in the wake of the failure of the Natal Cotton Company and the refusal of the Colonial Office to sanction the establishment of the Natal Sugar Company.

A report by the colonial land and emigration commissioners in 1853 had expressed misgivings about the limited capital assets of the proposed Natal Sugar Company. This resulted in the Colonial Office dismissing the project on the grounds that it was “unlikely to survive as a commercial proposition”.⁶³ Yet interest in the proposed Company was widespread at the time of the publication of its prospectus, with 500 shares reportedly taken up by “individuals of all classes”.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, as an incentive to promoting planter interests, Peter Richardson has noted that the Natal government waived duty on machinery imported for agricultural production and processing.⁶⁵ By 1854 there was a growing clamour in the sugar growing districts for machinery to convert the cane into a manufactured state as the extent of land under cane cultivation rapidly increased,⁶⁶ thereby underlining Hattersley’s observation that “no great enlargement of the total area under cultivation took place until the commencement of sugar farming on the coast”.⁶⁷

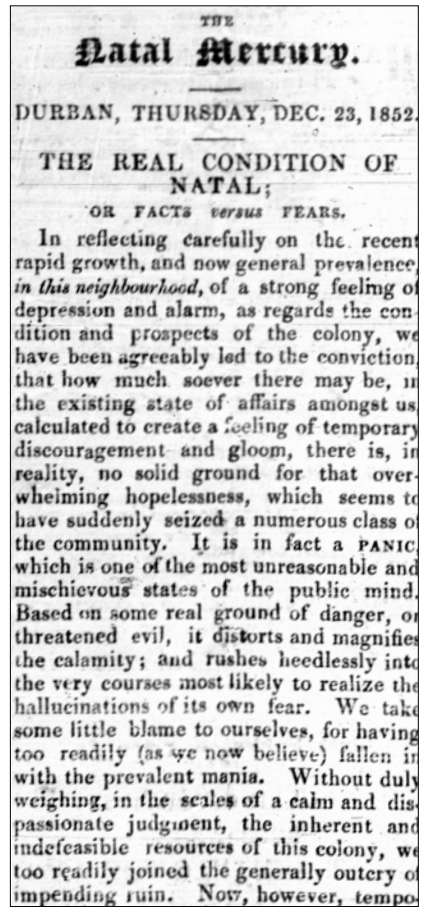


Figure 1.1 *Natal Mercury*,
23 December 1852

62 Osborn 1964:277.

63 Richardson 1986:141.

64 *Natal Mercury*, 3 March 1853. Of the Isipingo planters, Laurence Platt held two £5 shares; Dick King was listed as having five £5 shares (South African Sugar Association papers, KCM 2080).

65 Richardson 1986:134.

66 Osborn 1964:48. Between the Umhlatuzana river and Isipingo 130 acres was under cane by 1854.

67 Hattersley 1936:25.

As a community Isipingo was very nearly wiped out in April 1856 when 27 inches of rain fell over a five day period.⁶⁸ The Isipingo flat was described as “one vast sea”.⁶⁹ In its 25 April edition, the *Mercury* provided a detailed account of how Dick King had rescued M.B. Smart and his family from the rooftop of their home using a raft. Rising waters had forced the Smarts to spend two days and three nights marooned on the roof of their house. Whole plantations were devastated from Verulam to Isipingo, with losses estimated at over £30 000. Another Isipingo resident, William Joyner, lost a new steam mill that he was still busy assembling. This proved financially crippling for him and for a while he turned to house painting to survive.⁷⁰ Babbs and Jeffels were fortunate that their newly ordered steam mills were en route to Durban when the flooding took place.⁷¹

Labour shortage

The extent to which sugar cane cultivation in the Isipingo district had become predominant within less than two years is to be gauged from a return logged by the colonial secretary’s office in December 1854: Jeffels had 26 acres, Mack had seventeen, Babbs fifteen, Joyner eleven and Platt five acres.⁷² Aside from the absence of milling equipment, “uncertainty of procuring manual labour” was cited as a real cause of despondency in a petition signed by 31 settlers and planters based in the coastal districts. Jeffels was amongst the petitioners who requested the importation of Chinese labourers. Jeffels specifically requested three workers at £5 each, while Milner in Victoria County wanted twenty Chinese labourers. While the official response from Government House assured the petitioners that the request was engaging “earnest attention”, the idea lapsed.⁷³ However, labour as an issue continued to engage interest.

Robert Babbs immigrated to Natal in September 1850 aboard the *Globe*. Although assigned land near Umhlali, like Jeffels, he elected to forfeit it and to settle in the Isipingo area.⁷⁴ He was known to his fellow colonists for his literary ability, having won a prize of £25 from the Natal Society in 1853 for the best essay on Natal.⁷⁵ Between

68 *Natal Mercury*, 18 April 1856.

69 Osborn 1964:54.

70 Hocking 1992:40; Slayter 1961:43.

71 CSO 85, No. 328; *Natal Mercury*, 18 April 1856.

72 CSO 73, December 1854.

73 CSO 77, 6 March 1855; 1 May 1855. Unlike the laws and legal contracts on which the immigration of indentured Indians were based, no such documentation was mentioned or existed as regards the proposed importation of Chinese labourers. Jeffels’ offer of £5 per labourer was in all likelihood based on his own assessment of the situation.

74 Osborn 1964:280.

75 *Natal Mercury*, 17 January 1855. Babbs extolled the virtues of Natal as a colony of settlement.

August and October 1855 the *Mercury* published five lengthy letters from Babbs in which he expounded on the labour issue. Essentially he opposed the imposition of a hut tax on Africans (which commenced in 1849), arguing that it brought no benefits to Africans, nor did it address their interests.⁷⁶ He came to the conclusion that the solution to the labour problem was the “importation of labourers from every part of the world”.⁷⁷ Ironically, three months later Babbs contradicted himself in his response to a government request for information to be furnished regarding the numbers of imported Indian labourers that planters might require. He stated that although he could not pledge that he would not require imported labour within a five-year period, he remained “of the opinion that there is an abundance of kaffir labour to supply the whole Colony”.⁷⁸ That statement was also at odds with Babbs’ role as chairman of a meeting of planters held at the Trafalgar Hotel in Durban in November 1855, where he drafted a petition setting forth the labour requirements of planters and calling for the introduction of Chinese and Indian labour.⁷⁹

As a labour-intensive occupation sugar cane cultivation required a large number of regular labourers. In the manufacturing season a high proportion of these had to be semi-skilled to operate the milling equipment. In spite of the presence of a large indigenous population, the Native Affairs Commission of 1852-1853 found that a “uniformly insufficient supply of labour” had arisen because of an “over-abundance of land located in the reserves”. Consequently, Africans enjoyed a degree of economic independence in that their food needs and liability for hut tax did not compel them to subject themselves to regular employment by colonial planters.⁸⁰

A visit to Natal in November 1855 by Sir George Grey, governor of the Cape and high commissioner over British territories in Southern Africa, afforded the advocates of imported Indian labour the opportunity to petition him on the subject.⁸¹ As a result Government Notice (No. 5 of 1856) was published requesting information with regard to the number of imported labourers required by potential employers, the nature of their employment and the rate of wages they would be prepared to pay. In his response, Jeffels stated that he had consulted with his neighbours and that they

76 *Natal Mercury*, 31 August 1855.

77 *Natal Mercury*, 5 October 1855.

78 CSO 56, Part 3, 19 January 1856.

79 *Natal Star*, 14 November 1855.

80 Ballard 1985:38-39. The number of Zulus living in Natal during the 1850s was estimated at between 90 000 and 100 000. See also Palmer (1957:10), where the issue of African reserves is discussed in chapter two.

81 Grey was reportedly taken by surprise at the quantity of cane under cultivation which far exceeded his expectations (*Natal Star*, 14 November 1855).

would collectively require 30 indentured labourers whom they were willing to pay the rate of ten shillings each per month.⁸²

Sugar mills: A yardstick of progress

In July 1856 Jeffels became the first settler in Natal to operate a steam-powered mill. The *Mercury* was ecstatic about this development and described Jeffels' sugar as "fully equal to the best qualities ever imported", while paying tribute to Jeffels as "the type of a class that forms the pioneers of all successful colonisation".⁸³ For the rest of the year and into 1857, H.W. Currie, engineer and machinist, ran an advertisement in the *Mercury* which featured a letter that Jeffels had written in praise of the expertise Currie had shown in erecting the first steam-powered mill in the colony.

By August of that year Babbs also had a steam mill running – the second in the colony. As the *Mercury* correctly observed, those developments served to hasten the production of sugar and were proof that rapid strides had been made in sugar production since Morewood's humble beginnings.⁸⁴ Moreover, that progress was largely based in Isipingo. Of twelve sugar mills in operation in Natal in 1856, eight were to be found on the Isipingo flat.⁸⁵ By the end of 1857 the concentration of sugar planters within the Isipingo basin involved thirteen families and a total of 476 acres of plantation. By 1861 that acreage had increased to 1 270.⁸⁶

Around this same time, to the north of Durban in Victoria County, J.B. Miller had established Oaklands alongside Morewood's Compensation. Adolph Coqui was part of a group that started Chaka's Kraal sugar estate and James Renault Saunders was established on his Tongaat estate. Sam Bishop was at Bishopstoke, A.B. "Sugar" Kennedy was planting cane on his Sea Cow Lake estate on the Mgeni, south of the Mgeni, Henry Milner's sugar estate was established at Springfield and Ralph Clarence was at Clare estate. Sugar cultivation was advancing at a rate unequalled by any other enterprise within the colony. The value of sugar exported from Natal rose from £483 in 1856 to £2 008 in 1857.⁸⁷ From 1858 the sugar belt leapfrogged beyond Isipingo into the area known as Lower Mkomanzi when Crown

82 CSO 56, No. 189, 17 January 185

83 *Natal Mercury*, 25 July 1856. The *Natal Star* of 30 July 1856 described Jeffels' sugar as being of a "very superior quality for colour and dryness".

84 *Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1856.

85 Osborn 1964:129. Those planters were Jeffels, Joyner, Mack, Platt, Babbs, King and Smart.

86 *Natal Mercury*, 4 February 1858. In March 1856, Adolph Coqui estimated that the total extent under cane in Natal was 800 acres. See also Osborn 1964:55, 129.

87 Osborn 1964:57-58.

land grants were taken up and a new community of settlers made sugar cultivation the mainstay of their livelihood.⁸⁸

STEAM SUGAR MILLS.

THE UNDERSIGNED has great pleasure in directing attention to the following letter from M. Jeffels, Esq. :—

Isipingo, July 22, 1856.

Dear Sir—

In reply to your inquiry respecting your success in the erection, on my premises, of the first steam mill in this colony, I beg to state that, in my opinion, your thorough practical knowledge of the stean engine in all its parts, added to the workmanlike manner in which you executed everything necessary to be done, certainly deserves my highest praise. With respect to your mode of flanging the pans in the battery, I can only say that, from its efficiency, economy, and I doubt not, durability also, it is well deserving the attention of all parties interested in such matters.

I am, yours truly,
M. JEFFELS.

H. W. CURRIE,
ENGINEER & MACHINIST,
Durban, July, 1856.

Figure 1.2 *Natal Mercury*, 1856

88 See chapter two (Southward colonising presence: Lower Mkomanzi).

With this rapid expansion in sugar production from around 1858 two issues dominated the lives of sugar planters – labour and capital. The tentative steps taken by Morewood and Jeffels earlier in the decade had evolved into a feasible and worthwhile enterprise. Prospects of windfall profits from sugar resulted in an inflation in land prices. Credit became more available and accessible thereby increasing indebtedness. Driving the increased dependence on credit was the urge to increase production through modernising equipment. Whereas in 1856 there were only two steam mills, by 1864 the majority of the 58 mills at work were steam-driven.⁸⁹

Despite the logic of central milling first proposed by Jeffels in 1854, planters plunged headlong into purchasing their own mills and machinery. For Robert Babbs in Isipingo, this phase of speculative growth proved his undoing. From November 1857 he leased an additional 58 acres of land from W.R. Thompson at Clairmont. In July 1858 he took out leases on two parcels of land at Isipingo, 177 and 271 acres respectively. Possibly encouraged by the praise that he received from a Cape Town newspaper for the quality of his sugar,⁹⁰ in April 1860 he added an additional 168 acres which he obtained from Dick King. In December 1860 Babbs earned another accolade for his sugar, on that occasion from the Cape Agricultural Society.⁹¹ In 1861 he imported a 40-horsepower boiler, the largest in Natal. Babbs was employing a workforce of 120 Africans at the time.⁹²

When *Mercury* editor John Robinson visited the South Coast in 1861, he remarked that Babbs had the second greatest extent of land under cane in the colony – 360 acres – and the largest mill.⁹³ But by December 1861 he was insolvent, having been forced to borrow on his assets at crippling rates of interest. A report in the *Natal Star* noted that Babbs’ “plans were too liberal and vast to result in success in times so commercially and in other respects tight as the present”.⁹⁴

In May 1862 Babbs and his family relocated to London.⁹⁵ When his Umlaas plantation was subsequently put up for public auction, the inventory of his movable and immovable property illustrated the extent of his acquisitive appetite. The listing in the *Government Gazette* was as follows: machinery, a 30 horsepower steam engine, two batteries of 1 500 gallons each, buildings, boilers, stables, outbuildings, agricultural implements, 99 acres of property at Wentworth, and 40 to 50 tons

89 Richardson 1986:136, 138.

90 The *Cape Monitor* quoted in the *Natal Mercury*, 10 December 1858.

91 *Natal Star*, 15 December 1860.

92 Spencer 1983:1-2.

93 *Natal Mercury*, 11 April 1861. Robinson did not specify which estate had the most acreage, but it is likely to have been either that of A.B. Kennedy at Sea Cow Lake or Aling Osborn at Umtata estate.

94 *Natal Star*, 11 January 1862.

95 Spencer 1983:2.

of oat forage.⁹⁶ Whatever Babbs' contribution was to the founding of the sugar industry in Isipingo, it was dissipated amidst the protracted legal tussles which then ensued amongst his creditors.⁹⁷

Indentured Indians

As the decade of the 1850s wore on, labour deficiencies continued to dominate the concerns of planters. These arose out of what Jeffels termed “the rapidly extended operations of the country”, referring to the growth of cane cultivation. At a public meeting in February 1858 he noted that only two Africans had sought work in recent months and called for “steps to be taken immediately to supply ... the deficiency”.⁹⁸ In response, the *Mercury*, as the champion of the sugar enterprise, praised Jeffels for his “forcible representation” in outlining the nature of the labour shortage.⁹⁹ Since Tongaat sugar planter James Renault Saunders had first broached the possibility of importing indentured Indian labour in 1855, the *Mercury* had enthusiastically endorsed the idea as a practical measure to secure “an adequate supply of reliable and effective labour”.¹⁰⁰

However, Governor John Scott was dilatory in expediting the necessary application to the India Board, the Indian government and the Land and Emigration Commission with the result that hopes of formal progress in that direction did not materialise in 1858.¹⁰¹ In the elections held in March 1859 for a new Legislative Council, Adolph Coqui, who was elected for Durban County (which included Isipingo), pledged that he would support “any judicious steps to place the supply of labour on a more reliable footing, either by local measures or by immigration”.¹⁰² In May 1859 several petitions requesting the resolution of the labour shortage were submitted to the Legislative Council. They included requests from Isipingo and Lower Mkomanzi.¹⁰³

A select committee of members of the Legislative Council was tasked to consider ways of resolving the labour shortage in Natal. Its findings resulted in the passage of legislation in June 1859 which opened the way for the importation of indentured labour. Although Robert Babbs, as noted above, had no difficulty in hiring African

96 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 16, No. 724, 16 September 1862.

97 Statement by Carl Behrens, KCM MS Sou, 1799.

98 *Natal Mercury*, 4 February 1858. Referring to African labour, James Ecroyd stated that “the habits of the kaffirs are generally indolent” (Ecroyd, *Letters*, MS ECR KCC).

99 *Natal Mercury*, 11 February 1858.

100 *Natal Mercury*, 2 May 1855.

101 GH 32, Natal No. 1, Lytton to Scott, 25 June 1858.

102 *Natal Mercury*, 20 January 1859.

103 Natal Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 236, 1859. The petition from Lower Mkomanzi was forwarded by Alexander Brander and fourteen other residents. *Votes and Proceedings*, 1859, Vol. 4, 71.

labourers, his experience was evidently not shared by other planters in the district, for the record shows that seven Isipingo planters submitted requests for indentured labour. That would seem to indicate a substantial need for labour, regardless of its origin.¹⁰⁴ Sidney and Laurence Platt each requested fifteen, with Laurence stating that his need was “urgent”. Jeffels and George Thompson each indented for twelve Indians, Joyner applied for six, Atkinson for ten and Edward Priddle requested twenty.¹⁰⁵ Jeffels was prescriptive about his order. He wanted “nine young men and three boys” and stated that he intended to have one Indian as a cook and one as a groom, while the rest would be employed as “agricultural labourers”.¹⁰⁶ But when the Indians assigned to him arrived, they evidently did not measure up to his requirements, for he refused to accept them saying he would prefer “to await the arrival of the next Calcutta ship”.¹⁰⁷

There are no specific records regarding the attitudes of Isipingo settlers towards indentured labourers at that time. Remarks by Sidney Platt in a letter dated 8 January 1860, however, may be regarded as reflecting a general lack of knowledge about the new labour dispensation to which Natal had committed itself. Platt asked to be advised as to what type of preparations he should make for the accommodation of the indentured Indians for whom he had applied.¹⁰⁸ Notwithstanding the conscientiousness of Platt’s enquiry, throughout the period of indenture the housing provided by employers was appalling. Generally that accommodation comprised of wattle and daub hovels partitioned into small rooms. Cooking, washing and sanitation facilities were non-existent.¹⁰⁹ Detailed discussion of the Indian presence as both labourer and settler is to be found in chapter nine.

The Indian presence also had an economic impact in that a market for what were called ‘coolie stores’ came into being. A statement of sales at Beningfields’ public auction held in Durban in June 1861 showed that Robert Mack of Isipingo had purchased 35 bags of rice, five bags of dhol and a bag each of garlic and black pepper for his indentured labourers.¹¹⁰ The extent of that business was well-illustrated by

104 It was reported in December 1863 that two sugar estates in Isipingo were “idle for want of labour” (*Natal Mercury*, 4 December 1863).

105 CSO 119, No. 38, 8 January 1860; No. 68, 16 January; No. 69, 16 January; No. 83, 20 January; No. 121, 28 January; No. 143, 13 March 1860 and No. 120, 24 March 1860. These applications were lodged in terms of Government Notice No. 1 of 1860, which invited “persons desirous of obtaining coolies” to submit formal requests.

106 CSO 119, No. 69, 9 March 1860.

107 CSO 128, No. 104, 16 February 1861. See also CSO 119, No. 69, 9 March 1860.

108 CSO 119, No. 38, 8 January 1860. Platt’s enquiry is unique. Concern for the residential wellbeing of their indentured labourers did not feature in planters’ correspondence at that time.

109 Desai & Vahed 2010:119-121.

110 CSO 133, No. 842, 13 June 1861. Statement from Coolie Immigration Agent, Edmund Tatham.

the £3 351 Beningfields Auctioneers paid to the colonial government following the sale of Indian foodstuffs and spices. The transaction was termed the “largest that [had] ever taken place in this Colony”, according to the *Natal Star*.¹¹¹ The various Indian items – rice, dholl, turmeric, coriander, tamarinds, ghee, chillies and garlic – attracted considerable customs charges for the importer. For example, the invoiced cost of 210 tons of rice landed by the *Tyburnia* in April 1861 was £1 443 and fifteen shillings. But after freight, insurance, customs, warehousing and other dues were added the final cost reached £3 168 and twelve shillings.¹¹² Besides the cost of foodstuffs, sourcing reliable supplies was an additional challenge. In October 1861 a frustrated Adolphus Noon of Isipingo made an urgent request to the colonial secretary to requisition so-called ‘coolie stores’ from Madras rather than Calcutta, as those from the latter were inefficient suppliers.¹¹³

A survey of the allocation of indentured Indian labour in the Isipingo basin showed that by May 1861, 113 Indians were employed. Dick King and Robert Mack were the largest employers with 36 and 34 labourers respectively.¹¹⁴ R.B. Willy, the field cornet (local government officer) for ward two of Durban County, noted in January 1861, about a month after the first indentured workers were assigned, that Africans were more inclined to seek work since the arrival of indentured Indians. Willy ascribed that to the poor maize crop that Africans had experienced in the previous season.¹¹⁵ The growing presence of indentured Indians on the local sugar estates also began to have a bearing on social issues. A report from Isipingo in December 1863 “regretted the coolies’ fondness for rum” and went on to advocate the need for a hospital for Indians as accidents involving mill machinery were occurring regularly.¹¹⁶

The Indian presence also impacted on the business of the local magistrate’s court. In May 1861 a report in the *Natal Star* noted that magistrates in Durban County were “occupied for two or three hours in a morning”, adjudicating disputes that had arisen between indentured labourers and their employers.¹¹⁷ With specific reference to Isipingo, it was reported that on one occasion in February 1862 the only business of the court concerned a dispute that had arisen amongst Indians on the estate of R.S. Bingham.¹¹⁸ The situation evidently did not improve. In December 1864 it was reported that “the business of the court is becoming considerable”, with as many as

111 *Natal Star*, 8 June 1861.

112 CSO 131, 9 April 1861.

113 CSO 138, No. 1570, 23 October 1861.

114 CSO 132, No. 736, 18 May 1861. Platt had 24 indentured Indians, Jeffels had eleven and Bingham had nine.

115 CSO, 128, No. 71, 4 January 1861. The first Indians were assigned to their employers in December 1860.

116 *Natal Mercury*, 4 December 1863.

117 *Natal Star*, 18 May 1861.

118 *Natal Star*, 22 February 1862. The Star did not specify the cause of the dispute.

60 Indians in court on any given day.¹¹⁹ As a result, a petition signed by 21 Isipingo residents was sent to the colonial secretary. The petitioners complained that a bimonthly meeting of the satellite or branch court was inadequate to deal with the large number of cases involving indentured labourers. They requested a weekly meeting of the branch court arguing that it was too time consuming to have to take cases to the court in Durban.¹²⁰

End of an era

By 1862 considerable progress had been made in the “cradle of the South African sugar industry”, as Robert Osborn has defined Isipingo.¹²¹ Buoyant in their outlook, planters like Adolphus Noon calculated that he needed an additional 35 indentured labourers before July 1862 in order to meet his labour needs.¹²² A report in the *Natal Star* early in 1862 described the crops in the district as “looking unusually well” and promising to “partly repay planters for their losses in recent years”.¹²³ An international assessment of Isipingo sugar made by Layton and Hulbert of Mincing Lane in London had rated it highly describing it as a “handsome specimen”.¹²⁴ In retail stores in Natal “Isipingo sugars” competed for sale alongside “Tonga Estate sugars”.¹²⁵ However, the original band of pioneers was diminishing and being replaced by newcomers. An 1864 sketch map of the area shows several newcomers in Isipingo, namely William and George Quedstedt, William Bailey, Thomas Clothier, William Austin, and James Fayers.¹²⁶

In 1860 William Joyner sold his Dingwall estate and took up a Crown land grant in the Lower Mkomanzi district at Ifafa.¹²⁷ He also cancelled his order for six indentured Indians.¹²⁸ Babbs, as noted, had returned to England. M.B. Smart, another of the original planters, had arrived in 1853 and apart from the losses he incurred in the flood of 1856, had prospered on his Milverton estate becoming the fifth sugar planter in the district to erect a steam mill.¹²⁹ But in 1863 he sold Milverton to John Daniel Koch,¹³⁰

119 *Natal Mercury*, 17 December 1864.

120 CSO 224, No. 1166, 15 July 1865.

121 Osborn 1964:41.

122 CSO 139, No. 1664, 13 November 1861.

123 *Natal Star*, 11 January 1862.

124 Osborn 1964:66.

125 See advertisements in *Natal Mercury*, 8 March 1860.

126 KCC 224.

127 Osborn 1964:282.

128 CSO 128, No. 104, 16 February 1861.

129 *Natal Mercury*, 8 December 1859.

130 Osborn 1964:284.

probably because of ill health, as he died a year later.¹³¹ Milverton was combined with Babbs' Umlaas plantation and renamed Reunion sugar plantation. In 1866 it was declared insolvent.¹³²

That same year also saw Sydney Platt's estate up for sale.¹³³ In 1869 Robert Mack, the second settler after Jeffels to plant sugar at Isipingo, passed on.¹³⁴ Dick King, the first to settle in Isipingo, married Clara Noon in December 1852 and they had seven children.¹³⁵ Although he had a steam mill by 1857 and 110 acres under cane by 1861,¹³⁶ King continued to profit from the ongoing sales of parcels of land from his extensive 5 816 acre property. In 1861 a further 258 acres of his land was advertised for auction.¹³⁷

A surviving fragment of correspondence from 1864 showed King writing to the general manager of the Natal Land and Colonisation Company, Carl Behrens, that he was "desirous of clearing all [his] liabilities". King stated further that he was relying upon the company "to arrange [his] affairs in accordance with [his] wishes".¹³⁸ This suggests that King's agricultural pursuits were probably not profitable. The financial depression of the mid-1860s compelled him in 1868 to sell off the Reunion part of his estate, some 600 acres in extent.¹³⁹ He was still growing cane at the time of his death in November 1871.

An early death at just 50 years of age was the fate of Michael Jeffels, described by the *Natal Mercury* as the greatest pioneer of sugar in Natal after Edmund Morewood.¹⁴⁰ Jeffels, one of the better educated settlers, had a MA degree from Queens College, Cambridge.¹⁴¹ He showed forward thinking on the issue of central milling whilst his views on the labour question had commanded authority. Described as "an exceedingly nice man" by James Ecroyd, his immediate neighbour, Jeffels was widely respected. In 1859 he was appointed a justice of the peace for Durban County.¹⁴²

131 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 16, No. 902, 31 May 1864.

132 Osborn 1964:284; *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 18, No. 997, 13 March 1866.

133 *Natal Mercury*, 21 August 1866.

134 *Natal Mercury*, 11 July 1869.

135 Slayter 1961:35.

136 Osborn 1964:283.

137 *Natal Star*, 25 May 1861.

138 Letter to Carl Behrens, 26 October 1864, KCM 9540.

139 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 20, No. 1108, 24 March 1868.

140 *Natal Mercury*, 30 September 1858.

141 *Natal Mercury*, 18 February 1862.

142 *Government Notice* No. 91, 31 October 1859.



Figure 1.3 “Isipingo sugars” advertisement, *Natal Mercury*, 8 March 1860

Shortly afterwards he was appointed to assist the resident magistrate of the county, with cases held in the branch court, which took place in the school room at Isipingo.¹⁴³ His interest in sugar production saw him visit Mauritius in 1860 and he recounted his observations and comparisons with Natal in a series of detailed articles in the *Mercury*.¹⁴⁴ Essentially he argued that Mauritian planters and millers were, by and large, behind Natal in general efficiency.¹⁴⁵ Unlike Babbs, he was careful with money and once stated that he “owed no man a sixpence”.¹⁴⁶ His last will and testament reflected his solvent state of affairs in that he bequeathed his wife Mary the sum of £50 per year chargeable to his farm, Albion.¹⁴⁷ He left his 130-acre farm to his son, Frederick William, together with all his machinery, cattle, and implements. The remainder of his property he divided between his son and his sister, Laura E. Munro.

In 1899 Albion was sold and became part of the Prospecton sugar estate.¹⁴⁸ Jeffels died on 12 February 1862. His death was ignored by the *Natal Witness* and barely noted by the *Natal Star*¹⁴⁹ and the *Natal Mercury*,¹⁵⁰ which were preoccupied in reporting

143 *Government Notice* No. 100, 12 November 1859.

144 *Natal Mercury*, 6 September, 18 September, 4 October, 22 November 1860.

145 Osborn 1964:60.

146 *Natal Mercury*, 11 November 1858.

147 AGO 1/8/5, No. 145A, 5 October 1861.

148 Osborn 1964:277.

149 *Natal Star*, 15 February 1862.

150 *Natal Mercury*, 18 February 1862.

the death of the prince consort, the husband of Queen Victoria, in December 1861. The cause of Jeffels' death was not stated, but the fact that his will was drawn up only months before on 5 October 1861 suggests that he was ill. This assumption is corroborated by the fact that correspondence he had been conducting with the colonial secretary's office on behalf of the Isipingo community for the formation of a Volunteer Corps ceased after June 1861.

Further exchanges of correspondence on this matter bore the signature of another Isipingo planter, Adolphus Noon. Furthermore, Jeffels' name was not among the 30 signatories of a letter dated 20 September 1861 requesting the government to supply arms and ammunition to the Isipingo Volunteer Corps.¹⁵¹ With the passing of Michael Jeffels in 1862, the initial era of the history of sugar and settlers on the South Coast came to an end.

Forging community

A feature of the frontier settlement of Isipingo in the 1850s was its sense of 'community' among European settlers. Although Jeffels was at the forefront of cane cultivation, it was a joint venture within the district. Equally deficient in expertise and all previously bean planters, Jeffels, Joyner, the Platts and Dick King embarked individually, but collectively on the sugar enterprise. Together with Babbs and Mack, they attended the first auction of locally grown sugar held in Durban in 1855.¹⁵² They all had a relationship with Dick King, the original landowner in the district, in that their farms were once part of his extensive estate. Issues concerning education and religion further strengthened their bonds.

When the first marriage in the district took place in 1853 (between Sam Rose and Martha Davenport) no church building existed within which the couple could exchange their vows.¹⁵³ For a long time, as a report in the *Mercury* noted, the residents of Isipingo lamented "their religious and educational destitution". Despite meetings to source subscriptions to construct a building that could be used for divine services on a Sunday and as a school building during the week no progress was made. Early in 1856, at a meeting on Jeffels' Albion estate, a committee was formed to oversee the erection of a church which was built in due course on half an acre of land donated by Edward Priddle.¹⁵⁴ Local settlers donated £27 and ten shillings towards the £55 cost of the building, the balance of which was provided by Colenso, the Anglican Bishop

151 CSO 137, No. 445, 20 September 1861; CSO 138, No.1635, 19 November 1861.

152 *Natal Mercury*, 23 June 1855.

153 Slayter 1961:35.

154 *Natal Mercury*, 14 March 1856.

of Natal. The church building of the parish of St. James was completed in 1856. It was destroyed by fire in 1869 and rebuilt in 1872.¹⁵⁵

By 1856 there were more than 30 settler families in the Isipingo district.¹⁵⁶ With the nearest and only school on the coast for colonists being some twenty kilometres away in Durban, Isipingo parents were anxious to have a school in their district. To that end they petitioned the colonial secretary. In a memorial written by Babbs and signed by seventeen local settlers, a request was made for an annual grant of £25 for education. In motivating the request, Babbs made a telling point: the Isipingo district was equally important if not more important than other districts that received education grants because it was “the most fertile in the Colony”.

The reply from the acting governor was disappointing. Although he anticipated that education would receive attention from the council, he was “unwilling to make any arrangement in advance”.¹⁵⁷ In June 1859 Durban County member of the Legislative Council, Adolph Coqui, appealed for £50 to be budgeted on the Supply Bill of 1860 for a school at Isipingo.¹⁵⁸ In 1861 the report of the Superintendent of Education noted that the Isipingo school had 37 registered pupils. It was one of 27 schools in the colony at the time.¹⁵⁹

Community involvement was also reflected in the participation of local men in the Isipingo Rifle Club which was loosely formed in 1856.¹⁶⁰ It was common among pioneer settlers in Natal to form rifle groups as a basic defence network. Settler communities such as the one at Isipingo were small and isolated and therefore felt vulnerable to any unrest that might occur within the neighbouring African reserve locations.

During the period under discussion no such disturbance occurred. However, in January 1861 planters and householders met to discuss the need to form a Volunteer Corps. In terms of Ordinance 11 of 1855, the establishment of Volunteer Corps was officially promoted. Once formally proclaimed, members were subject to strict rules regarding discipline, drills, equipment and attendance.¹⁶¹ In the memorial they drew up, addressed to the acting governor, Major Williamson, they also asked

155 Goldie 1956:5; Slayter 1961:52, 62. The first chapel in Verulam opened for worship in June 1851 (Hattersley 1950:254). A second chapel, built by the Wesleyans, opened in 1855 (*Natal Star*, 3 October 1855).

156 Holden 1854:251.

157 CSO 85, 27 March 1856; 21 April 1856. At that time there were government-aided schools in Durban and Pietermaritzburg counties.

158 *Votes and Proceedings*, 1859, Vol. 4, 146

159 CSO 130, No. 356, 11 March 1861.

160 Slayter 1961:42.

161 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 13, No. 681, 19 November 1861.

for government assistance in the erection of a fort for protection of their cattle “to prevent them being stolen by the natives”.¹⁶² There was no response from the colonial government as regards the request for a fort.

In June, Jeffels, in his capacity as chairman of the meeting of Isipingo residents who gathered to discuss the need for local security, wrote to the colonial secretary that the Volunteer Corps would require between 36 and 40 rifles.¹⁶³ At this time resident magistrates of other districts forwarded lists of volunteers to the colonial secretary’s office. The largest list, containing 80 names, emanated from the Tugela Division.¹⁶⁴ Unrest on the Tugela border caused a wave of insecurity to spread through the colony when Cetewayo’s impis were reported to be moving menacingly near the Natal border.

As a result, rumours spread of an imminent invasion.¹⁶⁵ Bishop Colenso closed down his mission school at Bishopstowe and moved his family to the safety of Pietermaritzburg.¹⁶⁶ In November 1861 the Isipingo Volunteer Corps was formally proclaimed under the captaincy of Dick King. The corps was required to meet fortnightly for a drill and to hold a special parade on the Queen’s birthday.¹⁶⁷ In 1862 it had a membership of 29 men.¹⁶⁸ During the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, the Isipingo Volunteer Corps supplied 36 men for active service at what was called “the front”.¹⁶⁹

The economic slump of the mid-1860s hastened the decline and disbanding of the Isipingo Volunteer Corps. Sidney Platt, whose farm was up for sale, resigned as lieutenant in 1866.¹⁷⁰ In April 1868 the disbanding of the corps was announced and all members were asked to return arms and other property of the government before 30 May 1868.¹⁷¹ Besides economic hardships, an additional factor that promoted the demise of the corps was the austerity policy of the new governor, Robert Keate. In his speech at the opening of the Legislative Council on 18 June 1868, Keate announced wide-ranging cuts in government expenditure, including the “discontinuance, for the present, as far as possible, of all outlay connected with the Volunteer Corps”.

162 *Natal Star*, 26 January 1861; CSO 129, No. 260, 15 February 1861.

163 CSO 135, No. 1080, 26 June 1861.

164 CSO 131, No. 596, 1 May 1861; 2 May 1861; 27 April 1861.

165 Robinson 1900:110.

166 Guy 1983:105.

167 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 13, No. 681, 19 November 1861; *Natal Government Notice*, No. 139, 1861.

168 *Natal Blue Book*, 1862, G7.

169 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 31, No. 1794, 25 November 1879.

170 *Natal Blue Book*, 1866, J8.

171 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 20, No. 1113, 28 April 1868.

In other civic related matters, Babbs was a member of the Durban County council for ward two until his resignation in September 1855.¹⁷² Osborn claimed that Jeffels was a Durban councillor¹⁷³ but that was not the case. Instead Jeffels was reported as having attended meetings of the county council.¹⁷⁴ Established in terms of Ordinance 3 of 1854, the purpose of county councils was “to provide better government of the different parts of the District”. It was envisaged that they would assist in basic governance such as the provision of roads and in suppressing illegal trade in gunpowder and firearms.¹⁷⁵ As an incentive to local communities to accelerate the development of roads and bridges, this ordinance committed the government to expend in any county at least double the amount that the county in question raised in local rates.¹⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the sums of money involved were so small as to make the whole exercise worthless. A case in point was the sum of £13 which had been raised for the half year ended June 1855 in Durban County.¹⁷⁷ Governor John Scott, in his opening address to the first elected council in March 1857, recommended that county councils be disbanded as they could only work in situations where population density was greater.¹⁷⁸



Figure 1.4 Isipingo sugar mill

172 *Natal Mercury*, 12 October 1855.

173 Osborn 1964:277.

174 *Natal Mercury*, 7 December 1855.

175 *Natal Mercury*, 8 February 1854.

176 *Natal Mercury*, 1 February 1854.

177 CSO 78, No. 143, 10 July 1855.

178 *Votes and Proceedings*, 1857, Vol. 1, 7. With the county councils disbanded, in 1904 the idea of reintroducing them was floated “for those villages not fully ripe for municipal government”. *Natal Mercury*, 4 June 1904.

Being isolated, virtually deserted and uncultivated ten years earlier, by 1859 Isipingo was described as a “flourishing little township”.¹⁷⁹ Its produce, Isipingo sugar, was advertised as “dry and bright” and available from the stores of H. and W.H. Savory.¹⁸⁰ Besides the establishment of a church and a school room, by 1860 Isipingo also boasted a biweekly postal service link with Durban.¹⁸¹ It was managed by E.J. Pugh, who was appointed postmaster on 30 December 1859 at a salary of £10 per annum.¹⁸² He also served as the schoolmaster,¹⁸³ while his school room served as a centre of social interaction until the county hall was officially opened in July 1863.¹⁸⁴ Meetings of the Temperance Society were held there,¹⁸⁵ as well as public education lectures such as the one given by a Dr. Seaman, entitled “The story of chemistry”, in January 1862.¹⁸⁶ The school room was the venue for a meeting held in July 1861 to discuss the disturbances on the Tugela border and to call for the establishment of the Volunteer Corps.¹⁸⁷ Sessions of the branch court were also held in the school room, as were political meetings such as the one endorsing John Sanderson’s candidacy for Durban County in 1870.¹⁸⁸ By the 1870s social activities included horse racing, which saw the 1874 New Year’s day races described as “more attractive than any previous year”.¹⁸⁹

Concluding remarks

From 1858, when grants of Crown land south of the Mkomanzi drew new settlers, Isipingo had ceased to be a frontier settlement. However, its pioneering role in the sugar industry was far from over. When John Robinson toured the South Coast in 1870, he remarked on the size and progressive state of the Reunion estate of De Pass and Spence. Its mill was capable of producing seven tons of sugar per day and was the largest in the colony.¹⁹⁰ By 1879 the Reunion estate employed between 350 and 400 indentured Indians, making it then one of the largest employers of indentured

179 Goldie 1956:7.

180 *Natal Star*, 26 March 1859, 23 and 30 April 1859.

181 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol.12, No. 581, 3 January 1860.

182 *Natal Blue Book*, 1871, M22.

183 *Natal Blue Book*, 1862, T2.

184 *Natal Mercury*, 4 August 1863.

185 *Natal Mercury*, 7 March 1861.

186 *Natal Star*, 18 January 1862. In contrast, Verulam had a well-established Literary Institution which hosted regular lectures. At its annual general meeting of 1859 it reported a weekly issue of 200 books (*Natal Star*, 12 November 1859).

187 *Natal Mercury*, 23 July 1861. As noted earlier, rival factions within Zulu King Mpande’s household engaged in deadly combat near the Tugela border with Natal. Robinson 1900:107.

188 *Times of Natal*, 14 September 1870. Sanderson was not successful and the sitting member, Captain Harford, was re-elected. *Times of Natal*, 9 November 1870.

189 *Natal Mercury*, 3 January 1874.

190 Robinson 1872:93.

Indians in Natal.¹⁹¹ It had a movable tramway throughout its fields along which a locomotive pulled carts of cut cane and transported them to the mill.¹⁹²

By 1876 the Isipingo area had also become the home of new settlers. They were contract-expired Indians who cultivated corn, fruit and vegetables, often employing African labour on their rented plots.¹⁹³ The magistrate's report for 1878 noted that several Indians had migrated further south and formed a "thriving settlement" on the banks of the Lovu river.¹⁹⁴

The extent to which transport woes preoccupied the colonial mind may be gauged from a suggestion put forward in 1866 to link Isipingo with Durban bay by way of a canal. Engineers proposed diverting the Mlazi river down a canal which would flow into the south end of the bay. The effect of that flow, it was claimed, would assist in deepening the entrance channel to the bay. The *Mercury* endorsed the idea wholeheartedly: "We maintain that to bring all the Isipingo flat ... and to connect it with the shipping by means of a canal would be an end worth any effort."¹⁹⁵ This project was never pursued, but transport links with Durban were facilitated by the construction of the first bridge on the South Coast. Opened to traffic in March 1866, it was of wooden construction, 110 feet in length and rested on piles driven into the bed of the Mlazi river.¹⁹⁶ In a sense that bridge served to detach Isipingo from the South Coast and to firm its links with Durban's immediate southern environs – Clairmont, Wentworth, Seaview and Umbilo.

Although until 1858 the South Coast had extended only as far as Isipingo, by the 1870s Isipingo's affinity with the South Coast was waning. The first substantial indication of that came in 1875 when eighteen planters objected to the court of the Umlazi division, in which Isipingo was located, being based in Pinetown. They protested the inconvenience of the location and also that it placed Isipingo in an unfavourable position as regards the services of the district surgeon.¹⁹⁷ But the coming of the railway to Isipingo in January 1880 indisputably severed its links with the South Coast, particularly as Alexandra and Alfred counties were excluded from railway development at that stage.¹⁹⁸ As the southern terminus of the railway network which extended north and west of Durban, Isipingo, which was part of Durban County in any case, inevitably became part of the greater Durban area. It

191 CSO 704, No. 3114, 23 June 1879.

192 *Natal Blue Book*, 1877, Magistrate's Report, Umlazi Division, JJ4.

193 *Natal Blue Books*, 1876, JJ4; 1877, JJ4.

194 *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, JJ5.

195 *Natal Mercury*, 30 October 1866.

196 *Natal Mercury*, 29 March 1866. The bridge was swept away in the flood of 1868. It was replaced privately with a bridge built lower downstream (*Natal Mercury*, 28 February 1871).

197 CSO 519 (unnumbered), 27 May 1875.

198 Heydenrych 1981:114.

must also be borne in mind that the Mnini location stretching from Amanzimtoti to the Mkomanzi river had always separated Isipingo from the rest of the South Coast where white settlement had taken place. Therefore, in terms of the scope of this study, focus on Isipingo ceases at this point.

In closing

The southward movement of the settler frontier forms the focus of the following chapter. Until the annexation of Alfred County in 1866, the South Coast extended only as far as the north bank of the Mzimkulu river and was known as Lower Mkomanzi until it was officially named Alexandra County in 1865.

2

Southward colonising presence

Lower Mkomanzi



Richly as it has been endowed by nature ... its present aspect will scarcely allow for it a higher designation than that of a beautiful wilderness.

— *Natal almanac and yearly register, 1863*

The decision in 1857 to encourage the application for grants of Crown land south of the Mkomanzi river proved the catalyst in the southward colonisation of Natal and the extension of its frontier. But that might not have occurred if Theophilus Shepstone had had his way. This chapter examines the role of the 1846 Commission on Land Allocation for Africans, which had a significant bearing on the demarcation of land on the South Coast; the relocation of Mnini and his Thuli people from the Bluff peninsula to the area between the Lovu and Mkomanzi rivers; the role of missionaries and their attempts at fostering enterprise; the role of the first magistrate of Lower Mkomanzi, Henry Francis Fynn. 1858 saw the first commercial sugar company in Natal being established in the Umzinto district, while the likes of James Arbuthnot and other settlers extended sugar cultivation along the coast of what was to become known as Alexandra County.

Introduction

If Theophilus Shepstone, the secretary for native affairs, had had his way, the whole territory south of the Mkomanzi river all the way to the eastern frontier of the Cape would have been reserved for Africans and excluded white settlement. However, Governor Benjamin Pine rejected the idea as “wholly impracticable”.¹ Instead, something of a compromise occurred in that the coastal strip between the Lovu river and the Mkomanzi was allocated to chief Mnini and his Thuli people, following their relocation from the Bluff peninsula.



Figure 2.1 Governor Benjamin Pine

In 1845, when the fledgling administration of Natal officially came into being, it was confronted not only with a resentful Trekker population intent on withdrawing from the colony, but also with an African population numbering in excess of 100 000. Without funding or a proper police force, and with only a small military garrison, the challenges facing Lieutenant-Governor Martin West were daunting. With the

1 Despatch No. 12, Pine to Governor-General Sir George Cathcart, 27 February 1852 further correspondence relative to the settlement of Natal: Papers presented to the British parliament, 19 August 1853, 48. KCM 17415.

exception of the Thuli tribe, most of the African peoples living there were recent refugees from Zululand. From the British perspective, it was not possible to send them back nor was it desirable to let them settle randomly given the emphasis on attracting European settlers. Henry Cloete, who had been appointed by the British in 1843 to investigate land affairs, proposed the establishment of demarcated areas exclusively for Africans to be known as locations or reserves.

This proposal impressed West, who appointed a commission in 1846 to investigate its feasibility. One of the members of the commission was Theophilus Shepstone, who hailed from the Eastern Cape and was fluent in Xhosa and Zulu. He embraced the location idea with fervour and conviction and was destined to dominate native affairs for the next few decades.² The report of the commission, completed in March 1847, recommended the establishment of ten locations, each under a resident government agent. Africans were to be ruled under ‘native law’ through ‘chiefs.’ Although Africans were regarded as unchristian and barbarous,³ through education and upbringing, the Commissioners believed their ways could be modified over time. They favoured the setting up of industrial training schools where agricultural instruction and ‘useful arts’ could be taught.⁴ In a stimulating study of the location scheme, Jeremy Martens argues that Shepstone understood Zulu society through the lenses of ‘civilisation’ and ‘barbarism.’ Shortly before his death in 1893, Shepstone maintained that chieftainship and tribalism were necessary

to give us proper control [of Zulus] ... I do not believe in the efficacy of violent measures to ... efface barbarism, or to commend civilized ideas and habits to a barbarous race ... Their ancient institutions may be faulty, but they are efficient, and can be made so for the purposes of enlightened government.⁵

While the Colonial Office approved the provision of reserved lands for Natal’s Africans as recommended by the 1846 commission, Britain shrank from having to provide the financial resources which the implementation of the scheme would require. Natal, in the eyes of the colonial office in London, did not merit such expenditure. Instead, as Norman Etherington has pointed out, what was recommended by Earl Grey, the colonial secretary, and James Stephen, the permanent undersecretary, was “a policy of benign neglect that would leave Africans to govern most of their own affairs”.⁶

2 Comprehensive analyses of Shepstone’s role can be found in Gordon (1968), Welsh (1971) and Guy (2013).

3 Guy 2013:130.

4 Brookes & Webb 1965:58-59.

5 Martens 2009:122.

6 Etherington 1978:10.

Crucial to the location system, according to Brookes, is that it was seen as “an insurance to save some parts of Natal for Europeans.”⁷ It was on that premise that Shepstone wrote to Governor Pine in 1851 and put forward his idea of making the area south of the Mkomanzi into a super-location.⁸ He contended that with squatting on Crown lands and private farms having become a problem, and with “natives mixed up with the white inhabitants as they are at present”, the locations could be abolished if all the Africans could move into the area south of the Mkomanzi. This region, he argued, had few registered farms and of those only two or three were occupied.⁹

The Umkomanzi would be a natural and well-defined boundary between black and white from the Drakensberg to the sea; and between it and the boundary of the District every description of land required by the habits of the various tribes would be found.

He saw the Mtamvuna river as forming the southern boundary, so that the entire belt from the Mkomanzi would “cease to be available for the white population”. The relocation operation, Shepstone speculated, could take up to eighteen months. In further motivation of his idea he advocated that a line of forts be placed stretching down to the Cape frontier to maintain order and that two or three magistrates be stationed along that Natal side of the Mkomanzi “to regulate the intercourse between black and white”.¹⁰

Chief Mnini's relocation

As already noted, Pine rejected Shepstone's idea unequivocally. However, a subsequent dispatch also concerning tribal relocation resulted in a territorial arrangement which has persisted to the present. It concerned Mnini, chief of the Thuli, who claimed that for almost four generations his people had lived on the peninsula of land extending from the Bluff headland to the Mlazi river.¹¹ But in 1847 some 4 500 acres of Mnini's land was granted to a Mr. Ogle despite great opposition on the part of Mnini. Then in 1851, without consulting Mnini, a further 1 500 acres

7 Brookes 1924:30-31.

8 Anglican church bishop J.W. Colenso saw merit in the establishment of this proposed “Black Kingdom” (see Guy 1983:49).

9 Shepstone to Pine, 9 December 1851, Encl Despatch No. 12, Pine to Cathcart, 27 February 1852, Further correspondence relative to the settlement of Natal, 49. Shepstone estimated in 1851 that two thirds of Africans lived outside the locations (Bundy1988:170). Of the two or three families living in the Lower Mkomanzi area, Bunting Johnstone claimed in 1861 that he had lived there for thirteen years (CSO 131, No. 491, 1 April 1861).

10 Shepstone to Pine, 9 December 1851, Encl. Despatch No. 12, 50.

11 CSO 21, Part 2, No. 99, Diplomatic Agent's Office, 8 November 1851, Encl.

of the Bluff land was advertised for sale.¹² This was motivated by Governor Pine who deplored the locations as “so many kafirlands in the midst of a colony which has been held up as a field of emigration for Her Majesty’s British subjects”¹³

The marginalisation of Mnini’s lands constituted a survival crisis for the Thuli people. At a meeting with Shepstone, Mnini complained that Ogle’s tenants interfered with his people and that he and his 600-strong community faced starvation because they had been deprived of pasturage and springs of water.¹⁴ When this became known to the Anglican bishop of Cape Town, the latter joined forces with Shepstone to defend the rights of the Thuli. As a result Shepstone and the Anglican bishop of Natal, John William Colenso, became trustees of the Thuli lands.¹⁵ At the Colonial Office in London, however, stronger measures were decided. Concerned that a precedent might be set if a chief’s “hereditary possessions cannot be secured to him”, Colonial Office official S. Walcott expressed the view that “a liberal grant of land be made to [Mnini] in his new location”. That proposal received the endorsement of the colonial secretary, Sir John Pakington, who stated that the land to be given to Mnini in compensation was to be much greater than that “of which he has been deprived”. In justification of this Pakington expressed the view that it was necessary to demonstrate “the most rigid good faith ... in all land transactions with the natives”.¹⁶ The origins of the Mnini settlement can be traced to the select committee on Aborigines which was established in 1836 to examine colonial policy across Southern Africa, New South Wales, Canada, New Zealand and the South Sea islands. Its aim was ensure a “fairer exchange” of the land of indigenous peoples and to provide “safeguards against further loss”.¹⁷ Nonetheless, Mnini’s removal from his traditional lands and relocation to the South Coast constituted one of the first deleterious effects of colonisation on a local African community.

The Natal Native Trust gave further expression to Pakington’s philosophy in that it sought to provide security to the location system. In May 1858 the Mnini location was the first to enjoy the provisions of this policy.¹⁸ Thus Mnini and the Thuli came

12 Despatch No. 17, Encl 2, Letter to Colonial Land and Emigration Office from T.W.C. Murdoch and C.A. Wood, 5 July 1852, further correspondence relative to the settlement of Natal, 126. Sir John Pakington, Encl. 1, 22 July 1852, pp. 126-127; *Natal Government Notice*, No.151, 4 November 1851. Priced at £1-£2 per acre, 24 lots of land of between 19 and 44 acres were put up for sale.

13 Brookes & Webb 1965:69.

14 Despatch No. 17, further correspondence relative to the settlement of Natal, 126-129.

15 Etherington 1978:69.

16 Despatch No. 17, Sub Encl. 1 to Encl.2, further correspondence relative to the settlement of Natal, 126, 129-130. In practice, however, the Colonial Office seldom mediated and condoned Shepstone’s supervision of the reserves. See also Lambert 1995:55-56.

17 Lester 54:26-27.

18 Brookes & Webb 1965:103.

to enjoy security of tenure over the reserve to which they were relocated, stretching along the coast from south of Isipingo to the northern bank of the Mkomanzi river. In terms of the Royal Instructions issued in 1848, African inhabitants of such reserves would be subject to their traditional customs as well as to Shepstone's jurisdiction. A further consequence was the emergence of two distinct economies – different but interdependent: the subsistence African economy of the reserve and the emerging capitalist economy of the settlers.¹⁹ When he toured the sugar estates south of Durban in 1861, *Mercury* editor John Robinson lamented what he termed the “ban” on white settlement in the Umlaas location, as Mnini's lands were called. “There is no more valuable land in the colony than certain portions of this location ... room here for scores and scores of prosperous sugar estates.”²⁰

Missions and missionaries

Wittingly or unwittingly, mission stations and missionaries played a part in the colonisation process. Rodney Davenport has pointed out that colonial authorities saw Christian churches as a subordinate but important factor in colonisation, whilst colonists saw churches “as reassuring cultural props in an unfamiliar environment”. In turn, church leaders were often confronted with the issue of whether to accept or resist state domination, “to serve the needs of the settler community or to reach beyond it”²¹ Prior to the settlement of the Thuli in the Umlaas location, five mission stations had been set up by the American Board Missionaries in the South Coast area.

These were Umlazi, better known as Adams Mission, which was established in 1837 by Dr. Newton Adams; Ifumi (1847); Ifafa and Amahlongwa (1848); and Umtwalume in 1851. As Norman Etherington has remarked, South Eastern Africa enjoyed tremendous popularity during the nineteenth century as a region for evangelisation, with around 75 mission stations scattered across Pondoland, Natal and Zululand.²² African interest in missionaries, according to Etherington, was twofold: having been kept out of Natal by Shaka and Dingane, the colony was seen as a new country and the white man as a novelty.²³ Adams enjoyed attendance figures of almost 600 at his services in 1847. But he soon realised that his perceived rainmaking abilities and the fact that he was a physician were the major drawcards.²⁴

19 Hurvitz 5:63; Bundy 1988:174.

20 *Natal Mercury*, 25 April 1861. Robert Mann (1859:79) described the Umlaas location as being “well-adapted to sugar cultivation ... composed of green hills and wooded valleys, interspersed with kraals of beehive-like huts and mealie grounds”.

21 Davenport 1997:51.

22 Etherington 1978:24, 26-27.

23 Etherington 1978:48.

24 Etherington 1978:47, 52.

Beyond those factors, African interest in missionaries was often political and opportunistic. They cultivated relations with missionaries if it meant that this could strengthen the position of their faction in relation to a neighbouring faction. They also took advantage of the welfare services of missionaries in so far as medical and clothing benefits were concerned, but tended to resist conversion. In one instance, when it was proposed that they formally convert to Christianity, an entire community ceased to attend services at Ifumi in 1848.²⁵ As Etherington has stated, “in the first five decades of evangelization material factors were far more important than spiritual ones in drawing adherents.”²⁶

In circumstances fraught with uncertainty the task facing missionaries was daunting, while the challenge of conversion proved intimidating for Africans. Most missionaries condemned polygamy, the practice of *lobola* and the role of witchdoctors. Africans, in turn, were constrained by traditional ties and customs. Many who tried to live Christian lives beyond the mission stations were subjected to ridicule and intimidation.²⁷ The extent of missionary influence, therefore, was invariably limited to the immediate vicinity of mission stations. A further inhibiting factor was that many Africans came to regard missionaries as aligned to and as part of British colonialism. This was particularly the case after 1850, when assertive efforts were made to promote European settlement in Natal. Missionaries such as Aldin Grout of the Mvoti station in Victoria County, in fact, did welcome colonialism as a positive good and sought government aid for their work among Africans.²⁸

Education proved the most fruitful result of missionary presence. The leader in this field in Natal was undoubtedly Dr. Newton Adams. Although he died in September 1851, he laid the groundwork for the founding of the school that still bears his name and is located south of Amanzimtoti. Its academic excellence attracted students from far afield.²⁹ Where Shepstone was unable to deliver industrial training to Africans for logistical and financial reasons, mission stations fulfilled that role, albeit in a limited way. By imparting knowledge on agriculture, housecraft, carpentry and construction, missionaries contributed to the colonial economy. Their efforts which, wittingly or unwittingly, were part of the colonising process, stimulated material acquisitiveness among Africans and led them to be drawn into the colony's cash economy.³⁰

25 Etherington 1978:58. Etherington (*ibid.*:24) estimates that converts to Christianity in Natal did not exceed 10 000 by 1880.

26 Etherington 1997:97.

27 Etherington 1978:68.

28 Etherington 1978:25, 28.

29 Etherington 1985:277.

30 Bundy 1988:172.

Henry Francis Fynn

While the presence and role of missionaries constituted part of the process of colonisation on the South Coast, the appointment of Henry Francis Fynn as assistant resident magistrate in Lower Mkomanzi in July 1853 signalled the official beginning of that process in the area.³¹ It also indicated that the southern frontier of Natal was to advance more than 50 kilometres beyond Isipingo. Apart from representing colonial authority and dispensing justice in terms of colonial laws, the role of the resident magistrate was broad and comprehensive. It involved recording and reporting on all human activities, natural phenomena, the environment and most importantly, collecting tax. Hut tax was introduced in 1849 at the rate of seven shillings per hut.³² By 1858 an average £10 000 was collected annually in taxation from Africans in Natal.³³ This was approved by the British government on condition that it was used to benefit the African population. In practice, however, Africans received virtually nothing for their contribution, a situation bishop Colenso deplored.³⁴ Instead those taxes went towards the cost of maintaining magistrates, often in isolated areas, and to provide a rudimentary form of governance. Hut taxes were also a subtle means to induce Africans to seek employment in the settlers' economy. Initially based at Ifumi mission station, much of Fynn's time was spent collecting hut taxes.³⁵

Fynn was a prolific writer, as the records of the colonial secretary's office indicate, and as such his letters provide insight into this early period of the colonisation of the coast south of Isipingo. His experience of the region predated his posting to Lower Mkomanzi by twenty years. Between 1828 and 1834 Fynn had resided at Isipingo and viewed himself as the "first pioneer of British rule and civilization". However, Dan Wylie has sounded a note of caution regarding the likes of Fynn, describing him as a "frontier ruffian" who was dogged by accusations of gunrunning and cattle rustling, and whose papers are "extremely dubious" in terms of factual integrity.³⁶ Although Fynn conceded that the Crown land grant to Dick King in 1844 put paid to his claims for land in the Isipingo area, he persisted in his request for a land grant elsewhere, preferably in the Illovo area, citing his 24 years in the public service as justification for his claim.³⁷ The Colonial Office declined his request, but after his death his widow and son were awarded two plots of land of 300 and 800 acres each.³⁸

31 Pridmore 2004:136.

32 Feinstein 2005:55. By 1875 hut tax had doubled to fourteen shillings per hut.

33 Hurvitz 1953:63.

34 Guy 1983:49.

35 Pridmore 2004:136.

36 Wylie 2009:83.

37 CSO 56, Part 2, 5 November 1855; CSO 103, No. 171, 15 February 1858.

38 Pridmore 2004:139.

The undeveloped state of Lower Mkomanzi in the 1850s and 1860s is reflected in the various roles that Fynn undertook. Not long after he took up his post in the area he came up with the idea of signalling the passing of a steamer by means of a huge fire which could then be replicated by the Africans from kraal to kraal until it was seen by the signalman on the Bluff headland. The official response was that the idea was impractical.³⁹ A report in the *Mercury* on 12 July 1854 noted that he was employing a number of Africans in a bid to improve the coast road. In December 1854 Fynn informed the colonial secretary that he was running a ferry service on the Lower Mkomanzi drift.⁴⁰ The poor state of the roads or, more accurately, the virtual absence of roads, resulted in Fynn requesting that two African messengers be assigned to him at fifteen shillings a month each to assist in his travels to collect hut tax. The Colonial Office agreed to that request.⁴¹

Complaints about the condition of roads on the South Coast were a standard issue for decades. James Brickhill, in a letter to the *Mercury* on 24 February 1853, described the condition of the road from Durban to Umkomaas as “shocking” and urged government expenditure on it. More than twenty years later, Sir Garnet Wolseley, who was then serving as administrator of Natal, described the road to Umkomaas as “the worst road in Natal – I never saw anything worse in my life”, his diary entry of 28 July 1875 stated.⁴² While similar complaints were made about the state of the road north of the Mgeni river in the early 1850s,⁴³ the more colonised state of Victoria County ensured that the situation was addressed swiftly. Surveyor-General Dr. William Stanger, surveyed a new line of road between the Mgeni and Mhlanga, and by March 1854 it was reported open to traffic.⁴⁴ However, that did not mean an end to complaints. A report in the *Mercury* on 3 June 1858 noted that “numerous complaints” about the condition of roads and the absence of bridges in the county were being received and that a petition was being circulated.

The close relationship between missionaries and the colonial authority was reflected in the fact that Fynn, as the representative of that authority, not only initially boarded with the reverend Ireland of the American Board Mission at Ifumi mission station, but from 1856 was actively seeking government assistance in promoting African enterprise on the Ifumi and two other mission stations in the region. Of significance here is that attempts at promoting development predated the white settlement. In a

39 CSO 62, No. 106, 6 October 1853.

40 CSO 74, No. 27, 29 December 1854.

41 CSO 76, No. 55, 27 March 1855; 30 March 1855.

42 Preston 1971:227.

43 CSO 58, No. 93, 13 July 1853.

44 *Natal Mercury*, 12 May 1853 and 8 March 1854.

series of letters urging the establishment of a scheme to promote “saleable products from native labour”, Fynn singled out the manufacture of sugar bags. He claimed that in 1854 Natal had imported 3 860 bags at a cost of £96 and ten shillings. With sugar production increasing, he speculated that as much as £2 000 might be spent on bags in the following season. That money, he noted, could be invested in the colony by encouraging Africans on mission stations to manufacture sugar bags.⁴⁵ As an incentive, he suggested that each coastal magistracy be given a sum of money to be awarded to those Africans who produced the best sugar bags. His suggestion received a positive response, with the government agreeing to award £4 for the best sample of sugar bags.⁴⁶ The idea, however, failed to come to fruition as only one mission station produced bags of acceptable quality, that run by Dr. Adams’ successor, the reverend D. Rood, despite the prize on offer.⁴⁷ By that time the Colonial Office had effectively abandoned Fynn’s scheme, noting that the bags were inconsistent in shape, inferior in quality of material (dyed leaves of indigo) and “too fragile”.⁴⁸

Fynn’s enthusiasm remained undiminished. Noting that the lives of Africans on mission stations had generally improved, but that they needed assistance to promote economic development, he submitted a budget for the various items he deemed necessary for agricultural growth. The list included four ploughs, 72 spades and field hoes, and a mill for grinding arrowroot and mealies. To ensure that the project worked he specified the need for an overseer at £150 per annum, two African policemen at £9 each per annum and an African teacher at £25 per annum.⁴⁹ The response of the Colonial Office was that an official would be sent to enquire about Fynn’s suggestions.

Within a few years mission stations did begin to enjoy government funding of various projects. In 1859 the reverend Hyman Wilder of the Umtwalume station received a grant of £50 to construct a watercourse for his mill and a further £20 to purchase a cotton gin.⁵⁰ In terms of a deed of grant of 1856 missionaries were permitted to give individual title deeds to those who resided on the mission reserve.⁵¹ The result was that a trend favouring the adoption of European lifestyles evolved on mission reserves. *Kholwa*, or African converts to Christianity, came to own plots, an upright

45 CSO 84, No. 252, 10 March 1856; CSO 86, No. 522, 3 May 1856.

46 CSO 86, No. 522, 3 May 1856.

47 CSO 91, 18 December and 24 December 1856

48 CSO 87, No. 645, 8 July 1856.

49 CSO 86, 13 June 1856. Pridmore (2004:137) has noted that Fynn regarded himself as a paternal figure who had the welfare of Africans at heart.

50 Hattersley 1950:230.

51 Khumalo 1998:1.

house, a wagon and a plough. From 1860 to 1872 Shepstone had the government sponsor ploughs to mission residents.⁵²

The success of these economic experiments tended to be more prominent in Victoria County at the Mvoti mission station than on the South Coast. But in most cases they were short-lived. At Adams mission in 1865 two Africans, Nembula and Ncayijana, launched a cooperative sugar venture with loans obtained from the *kholwa* at Mvoti mission. Their efforts met with success and a sample of their product was exhibited in Paris in 1867.⁵³ But by 1878 their operation had ceased. Other African-managed sugar enterprises on the South Coast were at Mtwalumi from 1862 to 1877; Ifumi from 1874 to 1878; Umzumbe from 1872 to 1877; and Umgababa from 1876 to 1880.⁵⁴ According to Etherington, those enterprises proved difficult to sustain because they lacked managerial experience and the capital needed to upgrade equipment, there was insufficient land to grow their enterprise, the dual legal system which involved tribal customs, restricted economic ventures and the lack of political clout.

Lower Mkomanzi in the mid-1850s remained as Fynn had found it: inaccessible, isolated and untamed. In April 1856 he noted that most of the cattle (which were African-owned) between the Mkomanzi and the Mpambinyoni rivers had died of lung sickness.⁵⁵ A year before it became policy to open up Lower Mkomanzi through grants of Crown land, Fynn had urged the government to embark on such a course. In motivation he suggested that small craft could navigate the mouths of the Mkomanzi and the Mzimkulu, thereby implying that transport and settlement would be facilitated.⁵⁶ Fynn's frustration with his situation was reflected in a further letter on the subject more than a year later, when he noted that apart from three colonists with farms in Lower Mkomanzi the area was overwhelmingly Zulu. With the government not having come to a decision as to settlement of the area, he felt he would have to continue to "locate myself with a wagon central to the few Europeans occupying the south bank of the Umkomaas". As the resident magistrate, Fynn wanted what he was entitled to and which his colleagues in other counties were obtaining: a central office and a house. But the absence of settlers in his division obliged him to adopt a peripatetic work style, even if he wanted to rent a house he could not, as there were no houses.⁵⁷

52 Etherington 1985:266, 268.

53 Osborn 1964:136.

54 Osborn 1964:135.

55 CSO 85, No. 393, 23 April 1856.

56 CSO 86, No. 522, 3 May 1856.

57 CSO 96, No. 217, 12 August 1857. The three settlers he referred to were Bunting Johnstone, John McKenzie and John Higham.

Settlement of Lower Mkomanzi

The colonisation of Lower Mkomanzi required a policy which attracted settlers to the area. As early as 1853 the *Mercury* had remarked in an editorial of the need for a scheme “for throwing open the unoccupied Crown Lands in this district so as to make them available for approved applicants”.⁵⁸ In 1856 a scheme of land grants for unappropriated Crown lands was announced, but it excluded the coastal counties of Victoria and Durban.⁵⁹ However, the conditions laid down for prospective settlers in July 1856 were extremely prescriptive.⁶⁰ The *Natal Star* dismissed them as “not of an inviting character”, adding that it was “very unreasonable to expect any applications to be made for these farms burdened as they are with restrictions”.⁶¹

Nonetheless, following the election of the first Legislative Council in March 1857, a committee chaired by Thomas Millar was appointed to examine Crown land grants in the counties of Victoria and Durban. At that time Durban County extended from the Mgeni river in the north to the Mzimkulu river in the south.⁶² Land grants were prioritised in terms of proximity to the port of Durban. Thus, the greater the distance from Durban, the cheaper and more extensive were the grants. Grantees had to be white males over the age of 21 and occupy the land continuously for at least fifteen years from the date of the grant.⁶³ The primary objective of the scheme was to promote immigration and the columns of the *Mercury* during April and May 1857 reflect a lively interest in the proposals, with the editor endorsing them as necessary for the provision of security on the colony’s southern boundary.⁶⁴

58 *Natal Mercury*, 9 June 1853.

59 *Natal Star*, 12 March 1856.

60 As proclaimed officially in July 1856 the following terms applied: [i] the payment of a quitrent of £1 per annum; [ii] the grantee should have a horse, a firearm and ammunition at all times; [iii] for farms larger than 1 500 acres an employee was to be hired and also equipped with a horse, firearm and ammunition; [iv] that within two years a three room building of 16 by 36 feet inside, with walls nine feet high and fourteen inches thick was to be constructed; [v] grantees and their assistants were to be available for muster and inspection by the resident magistrate from time to time; [vi] absence from the farm for more than six months without special permission could result in the farm reverting to the Crown; [vii] that after three years of occupation the grantee had the right to sell or dispose of the farm; [viii] that any breach of these conditions was liable to a fine of up to £10 (CSO 124, Encl. 25 August 1860).

61 *Natal Star*, 19 March 1856. The stringent conditions laid down were probably intended to deter opportunists.

62 CSO 104, No. 414, 1858.

63 Grants of 300 acres attracting an annual quitrent of £1 per 100 acres were to be made for the area 30 miles north and south of Durban extending twenty miles inland. Crown land grants further than 30 miles from the port would be 600 acres in extent and require an annual quitrent of ten shillings per 100 acres. Those grants which lay further north or south would be 1000 acres in extent with an annual quitrent of five shillings per 100 acres (CO 179/45, Encl 3, Despatch No.3, 6 May 1857).

64 *Natal Mercury*, 28 May 1857.

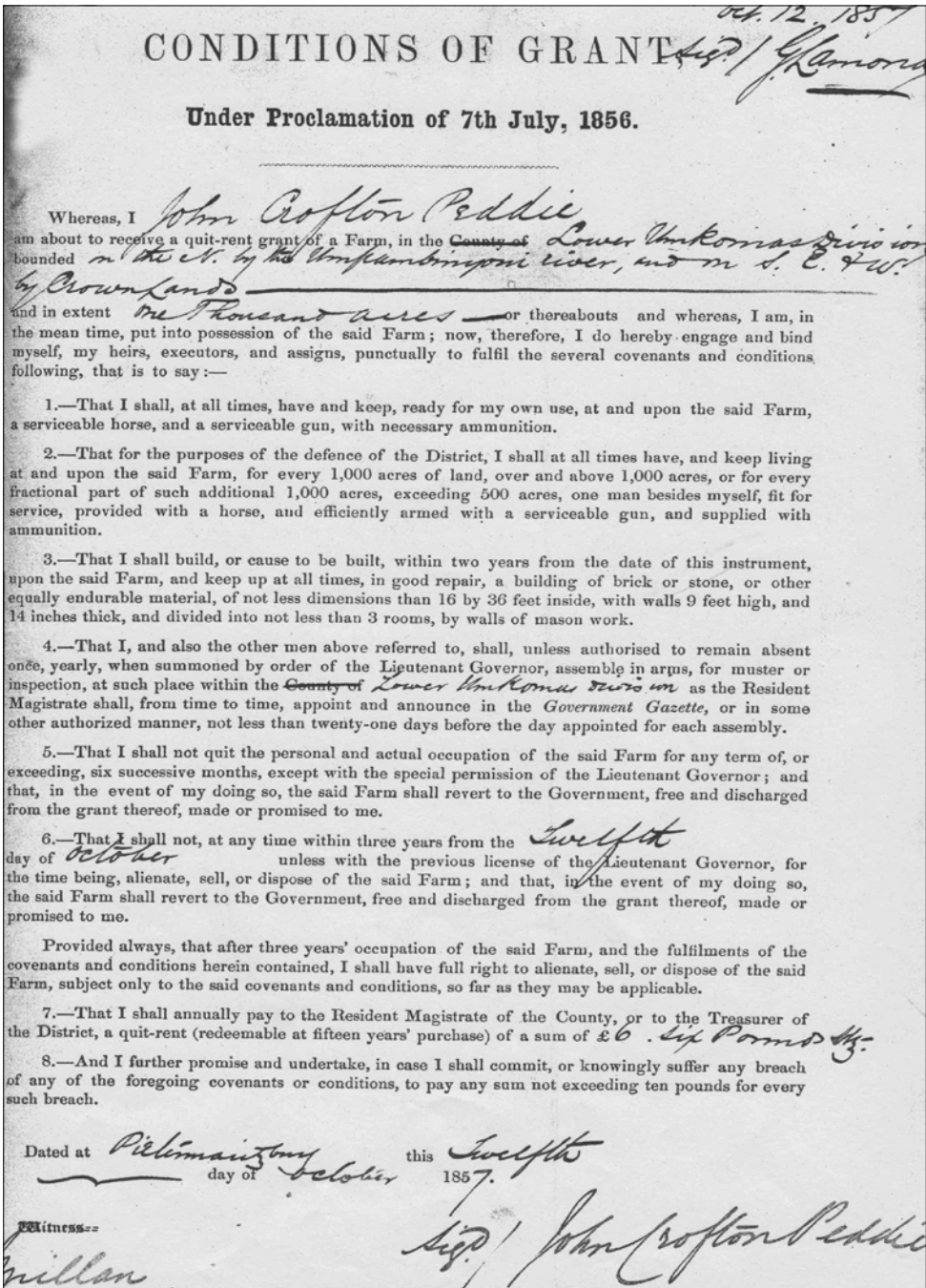


Figure 2.2 Example of a Crown land grant

In order to expedite British immigrants, an immigration board was established, the first time that an official bureaucracy was set up for that specific purpose in Natal. Between November 1857 and September 1862, however, only 1 070 adults came to Natal as a result of the board's efforts.⁶⁵ Essentially the scheme relied upon colonists to encourage friends and relatives to immigrate and to act as guarantors of the required £10 per adult.⁶⁶ The main drawback was the prospect of employment. In a memorandum submitted to the board in October 1857, John Moreland (MLC for Pietermaritzburg County) pointed out that

unless measures for securing employment ... are found practicable, any considerable immigration of the classes alluded to [industrial and working class] would lead to disastrous results and until we are in a more advanced state, it would be unwise to seek the introduction of assisted immigrants even in comparatively small bodies on the mere chance of them finding employment on landing.⁶⁷

Moreland's advice came in the wake of the experience of the Byrne settlers who were dealt a major disservice by not being prepared for the real conditions of life in Natal.⁶⁸ Although in the first year of the board's operation 528 immigration applications were received, only 98 adults actually arrived in Natal. In contrast, the board noted that the South Australian and the Cape governments paid the entire cost of the passage for all migrants.⁶⁹

If immigration applications from Britain were slow and disappointing, the same could not be said of applications for land grants in the Lower Mkomanzi division, which came from existing colonists. A virtual scramble ensued from the moment that the proclamation inviting applications was published in the *Government Gazette* on 29 April 1857 until the closing date of 30 September 1857. Dissatisfaction with existing Byrne grants and news of the success of sugar on the coastal belt prompted many of the applicants to take their chances and make a fresh start. Within a year, Fynn's sparsely colonised world changed quite dramatically. In May 1858, in view of the increased European population, he informed the Colonial Office that he would be purchasing land and building a house near Umzinto, "as the most central locality in the division", for his magistracy.⁷⁰ With the increasing settler population came

65 Natal Parliamentary Papers, 93, No.3/1863, Report of Immigration Board, 11 November 1862.

66 Bagwande 1974:11-12.

67 CSO 99, No. 27, 13 October 1857, Annexure 3.

68 Christopher 1973:117.

69 CSO 109, 2 November 1858.

70 CSO 105, 11 May 1858. According to E.J. Smith, who was born in Umzinto in 1887 and whose parents settled there in 1868, the name Umzinto derives from the Zulu "Umuzive Zinto" or "the home of things or events" (Umzinto District Record Book, Scottburgh Magistrates' Court).

the extension of governance. For the first time a field cornet was appointed for the Lower Mkomanzi division.⁷¹ He was Charles Dacomb. Initially he had settled in Richmond, but in August 1857 he applied for a land grant on the coast and was granted the title to 604 acres at Kelso in March 1858.⁷² In the same year the colonial estimates reflected an amount of £10 allocated to a post office at Umzinto.⁷³ By November 1858, Fynn had the additional support of a justice of the peace – James Arbuthnot.⁷⁴ With the number of colonists in Lower Mkomanzi having grown to 93 by 1859,⁷⁵ it became necessary to consider another cornerstone of settler presence – education. Accordingly, the Supply Bill of 1859 reflected a sum of £50 for a school in the Umzinto area.⁷⁶

Umzinto Sugar Company

Aside from the impetus which the Crown land grants generated in terms of opening up the Lower Mkomanzi area to settlement, the formation of the Umzinto Sugar Company in 1857 also proved something of a catalyst. According to its prospectus, the company had a capital stock of £30 000. Its directors were listed as Dirk G. van Breda, F.G. Watermeyer, P.G. van der Byl, P.L. Cloete and J.W. Stuckeris, all of whom were from Cape Town. The stock was divided into 300 shares of £100 each. Of the shares 200 were issued or disposed of by the directors. Of the remaining 100 shares, 50 were reserved for persons residing in Natal and the balance for overseas investors.⁷⁷ In terms of its deed of grant, Alexandra Farms, as it was registered, was granted 9 000 acres in the Umzinto area. Its plan was to lease these lands for cane growing and to crush the harvest at a central mill which would be financed and managed by the company.⁷⁸ Financed mostly with capital from outside of Natal, Umzinto Sugar was the first public company to operate in the colony. Based on reports of the success of sugar in the Isipingo district and in particular Michael Jeffels' exhibit which won top prize in Cape Town in 1855,⁷⁹ this consortium of Cape investors must have been persuaded that a venture capital investment on the South Coast was a worthwhile prospect.

71 *Government Notice*, No. 34, 31 May 1858. The role of a field cornet was to assist the magistrate in local government. He was vested with administrative, judicial and police powers and responsibilities.

72 Spencer, 1989:57. Dacomb remained field cornet until 1865 when Alexander Brander was appointed in his place. CSO 218, No. 501, 10 and 30 March 1865.

73 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 10, No. 484, 23 February 1858.

74 CSO 109, 12 November 1858.

75 Mann 1859:79-80.

76 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 4, 146.

77 CSO 96, No. 627, 24 June 1857.

78 Richardson 1982:142.

79 *Natal Mercury*, 14 March 1855.

Six months after the publication of the company's prospectus it was reported in the *Mercury* that labour recruitment for the venture was underway. The manager, James Crawford, had been to the East Indies to recruit "experienced sugar-estate labourers" and was expected to arrive "with appliances for prosecuting the enterprise".⁸⁰ By February 1858 Crawford had arrived in Natal from Java, where he had secured the services of a group of Malays and Chinese, amongst whom were several mechanics and agriculturists.⁸¹ Four months later Crawford submitted a report to the first meeting of the company's shareholders in which he noted that £1 000 had been spent on preparing the lands and constructing buildings and that 200 acres of cane had been planted. A mill estimated to cost in the region of £2 500 had been ordered. Although the first harvest was not due until 1860 and much work needed to be done on marketing leases of land, the shareholders were optimistic that the company would be a financial success.⁸² But then the company was confronted by labour problems. The Chinese and Malays found the prospect of earning ten shillings a month unappealing and left.⁸³ Administrative difficulties continued to beset Umzinto Sugar. In January 1859 it was announced that James Crawford was no longer associated with the company and that Albert Robinson and Adolph Coqui were appointed to act on behalf of Umzinto Sugar.⁸⁴ No reasons were given for Crawford's departure, but it seems to have further retarded progress as almost a year elapsed before the company advertised land leases for cultivation.⁸⁵

UMZINTO SUGAR COMPANY.

THE Undersigned is now prepared to LET on
LEASE, plots of Land for

SUGAR CULTIVATION,
within reach of the central Manufactory, on the
Umzinto Sugar Company's Estate, District Lower
Umcomas.

For information apply to
ADOLPH COQUI.

Figure 2.3 Land leased for sugar cultivation, *Natal Mercury*, 24 November 1859

80 *Natal Mercury*, 24 December 1857.

81 *Natal Mercury*, 11 February 1858.

82 *Natal Mercury*, 30 June 1858.

83 Pachai 1971:19.

84 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 11, No. 530, 11 January 1859.

85 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 11, No. 573, 8 November 1859.

Having Coqui on board seems to have made matters worse. Although he was elected as a Durban County member of the Legislative Council in 1859, he was plagued by personal financial problems. Early in 1860 he found himself unable to pay the £515 which he owed to Carl Behrens, the former manager of Natal Bank, and in March 1860 he sailed to England,⁸⁶ but not before applying jointly with George Wirsing for 60 indentured Indian labourers.⁸⁷ He did not return to Natal until July 1861, effectively deserting his Durban County constituents as well as the interests of Umzinto Sugar. During his absence a fresh claim of debt surfaced; he owed a Mr. Haskand £60. During the short while that he was back in Natal between July and October 1861, he was preoccupied with trying to borrow money, unsuccessfully so it seems, as during 1862 and 1863 he was forced to sell off some of his properties including the Chaka's Kraal sugar estate.⁸⁸

Despite these boardroom setbacks, cane cultivation was underway in Umzinto by 1860. Thirty newly arrived indentured Indian labourers were assigned to Umzinto Sugar from the first batch which arrived aboard the *Truro*.⁸⁹ That October an advertisement in the *Mercury* boasted that construction of the sugar factory was complete “on a scale unequalled in the Colony for power”. It went on to offer leases and promised sugar yields that were “unrivalled” in quantity and quality.⁹⁰ When John Robinson toured South Coast sugar estates in March 1861 he described the mill as the largest building in the colony – 150 feet in length with brick walls twenty feet high and covered with an iron roof. According to Robinson, the machinery emitted a “deafening roar” and was capable of crushing two tons of cane per day.⁹¹

Framing the future

The spate of applications for Crown land grants on the South Coast demonstrated a lively enthusiasm for sugar planting. The *Mercury*, as ever, was unstinting in heaping praise on sugar pioneers. In its issue of 10 June 1858 it singled out John McKenzie of Craigie Burn estate, situated along the Mkomanzi river, not only for the success of his crop, but more significantly as an indicator of the “southward extension of the cane enterprise”. Further encouragement for McKenzie came from the *Grahamstown Journal* in August 1858, when it described the sample of his sugar as “equal to the best quality from Mauritius”.⁹² McKenzie, who settled in Lower Mkomanzi in 1855,

86 King 1973:66-67.

87 CSO 119, 8 March 1860.

88 King 1973:68, 72, 75.

89 *Natal Star*, 24 November 1860.

90 *Natal Mercury*, 30 October 1860.

91 *Natal Mercury*, 16 May 1861.

92 *Natal Mercury*, 9 September 1858. The surveyor-general's office noted that McKenzie had a land

was the first to produce sugar south of the Isipingo district. He came to be known as “the king of Umkomaas”. Other settlers who, in time, became prominent sugar growers in this area included Captain Patrick Maxwell, who founded Canonby estate in 1858 and who was joined by Lewis Reynolds in 1860;⁹³ Joseph Landers, who after seven years in the Byrne valley took up a grant on the Mpambinyoni and founded Renishaw estate in 1858;⁹⁴ John Baseley (or Bazley, as he spelled his name in later years), who spent eight years in the Richmond district before taking up the title to 612 acres of land on the Ifafa river in 1859 which he named Nil Desperandum;⁹⁵ and James Arbuthnot, who in 1857, after seven years in Richmond, took up a 600 acre grant of land on the north bank of the Mzinto river which he named Umzinto Lodge.⁹⁶

Robert Mann, in his comprehensive 1859 account of the colony of Natal, states that before the 1857 proclamation of grants of land in the Lower Mkomanzi area only two farms had been surveyed. By 1859, that figure reached 170 and he described the coastlands as “rapidly filling up”.⁹⁷ The sudden acceleration of settlers manifested itself in various ways. In March 1859, the surveyor-general forwarded a sketch to the colonial secretary, representing the proposed village on the south side of the Mpambinyoni river, which was to be called Scottburgh.

The same correspondence contained the proposed layout of a village on the south side of the Mzumbe river. Within two weeks Governor John Scott indicated his approval of the surveyor-general’s proposals.⁹⁸ In Umzinto, where Fynn had established a permanent magistracy, he now called for the establishment of a cattle pound, the first in Lower Mkomanzi, for which he received the go-ahead.⁹⁹ For the first time an official ferryman, namely Henry Reynolds,¹⁰⁰ was appointed on the Mkomanzi river.

For Henry Francis Fynn the last months of his posting as resident magistrate at Lower Mkomanzi and his career in public service were in stark contrast with the circumstances that had prevailed when he first arrived in 1853. His final acts in office saw the appointment of John Pearse as European constable for Lower Mkomanzi

grant of 3 324 acres. See also CSO 100, No.1120, 17 December 1857.

93 Osborn 1964:304-305.

94 Hocking 1992:41.

95 Osborn 1964:308.

96 Osborn 1964:299.

97 Mann 1859:80, 77.

98 CSO, 111, No. 53, 16 March 1859, 29 March 1859.

99 CSO 108, No. 901, 20 and 22 September 1858.

100 CSO 106, No. 112, 27 July 1858. He was not related to Thomas and Lewis Reynolds.

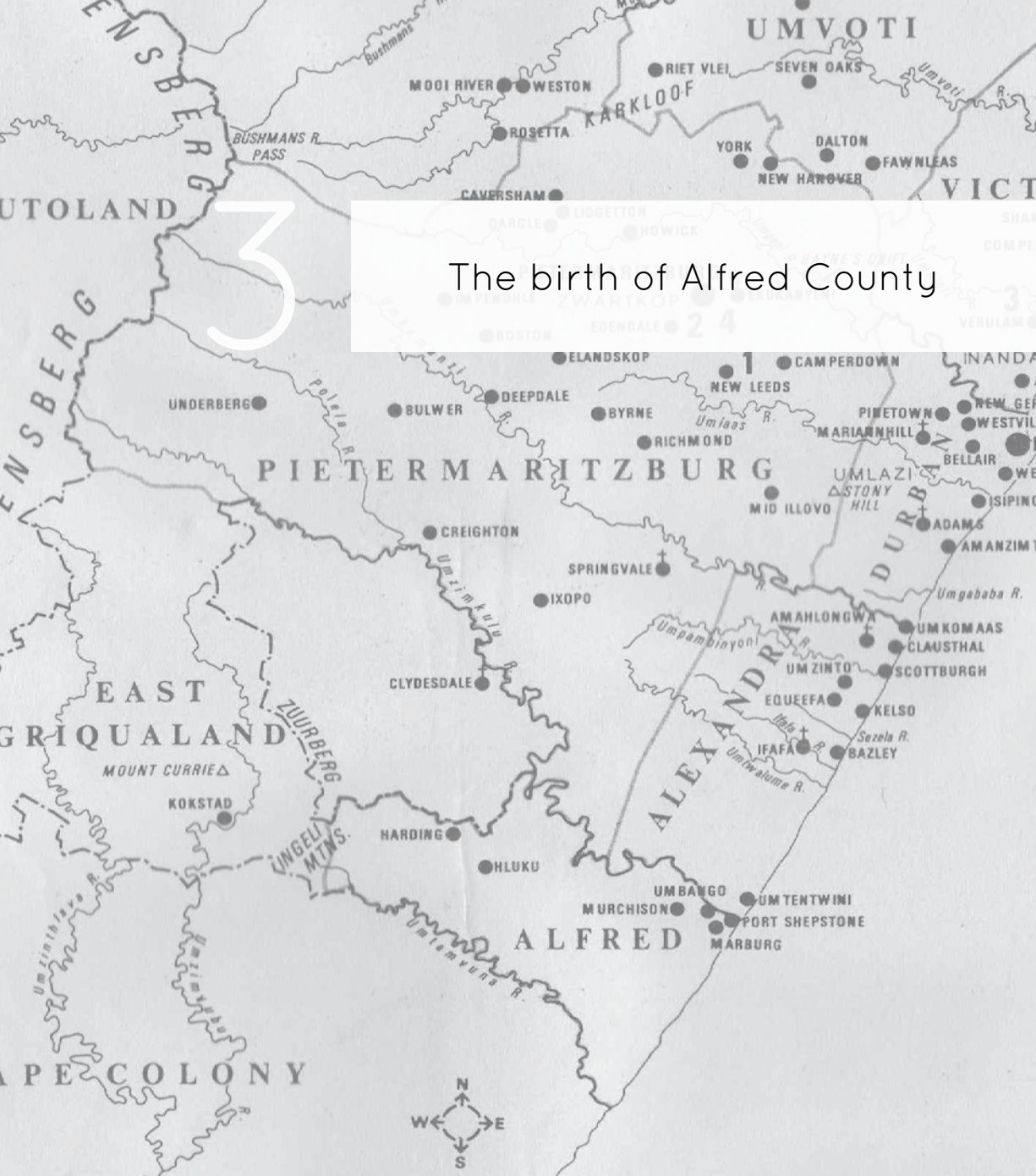
confirmed.¹⁰¹ He heard his final case as magistrate in February 1860, before retiring from the civil service. A farewell public dinner was hosted for him in Umzinto in March 1860,¹⁰² where just a few years before only wilderness had existed. Although Fynn passed on in 1861, at the time of his retirement Lower Mkomanzi was poised on the cusp of considerable development.

In closing

Whereas the emergence of Lower Mkomanzi – Alexandra County as it came to be known from 1865 – was fairly rapid and progressive, the extension of colonisation south of the Mzimkulu river proved tedious in comparison.

101 CSO 119, No. 30, 13 January 1860.

102 *Natal Mercury*, 5 April 1860.



3

The birth of Alfred County

If joined to the Colony of Natal it would throw open a large area for industrious settlers.

— Lieutenant-Governor John Scott to Secretary of State Newcastle, 21 November 1860

This chapter provides an account of the area south of the Mzimkulu river known as Nomansland; why it was problematic and how it came to be annexed to Natal. The roles of Governor John Scott and acting Governor Bisset proved instrumental in pursuing the issue which by 1866 had been the subject of an exchange of correspondence for over twenty years between the Colonial Office in London and the Cape government. The latter part of the chapter, which examines post-annexation life in Alfred County up until 1870, notes that despite political stability, the area lacked social cohesion amongst the settlers and was economically stagnant.

Introduction

On 1 January 1866 the acting lieutenant-governor, Colonel John Jarvis Bisset, in the company of the secretary for native affairs, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, the colonial secretary, Major David Erskine, the surveyor-general, Dr. P.C. Sutherland, an officer and seven men from the Royal Artillery, a non-commissioned officer (NCO), twelve men from the 99th Regiment and a twelve pound howitzer, assembled on the banks of the Mtamvuna river. Also present with 200 mounted men was Griqua chief Adam Kok. Following a 21-gun salute delivered by the Royal Artillery, Colonel Bisset formally declared the annexation to the colony of Natal of the territory known as Nomansland.¹ Its new name was Alfred County, named after Prince Alfred (the second son of Queen Victoria), Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and Edinburgh, who had visited Natal in 1860. Almost 1550 square miles in extent, Alfred County extended Natal's southern border from the Mzimkulu to the Mtamvuna river and reached westward to the Ingeli range of mountains.²

The annexation brought to an end what the *Mercury* described as “an anomalous state” which had characterised Natal's southern border since its inception as a colony. By 1865 Nomansland was described as “a refuge for the destitute where crime, licence and vice in all its forms find a fit and safe sanctuary”.³ The ivory trade was the primary attraction for white settlers, Henry Francis Fynn himself having been involved in the late 1820s. With the proliferation of firearms, by the 1850s the elephant population had been exterminated.⁴ British annexation, in the words of a correspondent of the *Natal Witness*, would “put a stop to the stealing and murderous propensities” which he claimed were common in the territory.⁵ British presence on the Mzimkulu frontier in 1865 comprised just three policemen under command of one Captain Allison. Although members of the Natal Mounted Police, they did not have horses.⁶ Yet when a call for the appointment of a field cornet was made so as to improve security, the official response was that there was no necessity.⁷

The apparent decisiveness displayed by Bisset in annexing Nomansland, was not typical of Britain's approach to colonisation. John Galbraith has noted that British policy in Southern Africa was characterised by material and humanitarian interests

1 Select document No. 25, presented to the Natal Legislative Council, 6 July 1866. Bisset to Gardwell, 16 January 1866, 89-91.

2 Russell 1904:6.

3 *Natal Mercury*, 22 April 1865.

4 Beinart 1980:128, 138.

5 *Natal Witness*, 14 March 1862.

6 *Natal Mercury*, 22 April 1865.

7 CSO 201, No. 866, 14 June 1864.

which were difficult to reconcile. As such they “contributed to aggravation rather than to solution of the frontier problem” and consequently “British intervention on the frontiers was weak and ineffectual”.⁸

Nomansland

Uncertainty and confusion had coloured British policy with regard to Nomansland since 1844, when the Cape governor, Sir Peregrine Maitland, entered into a treaty with Faku, chief of the Amapondo, regarding the territory between the Mtata and Mzimkulu rivers known as Kafirland. In terms of that treaty, Britain agreed to forego claims to any part of Kafirland whilst at the same time agreeing to protect Faku from “unjust and unprovoked aggressions”. Faku in turn agreed to allow livestock stolen from British territory and traced to Kafirland to be returned, failing which he would be liable to compensate fully for the stolen property.⁹

The problem with Maitland’s treaty was that Faku occupied only a part of Kafirland. His authority did not extend to the strip of land between the St. John’s River and the Mzimkulu, which was occupied by an assortment of refugees and smaller African tribes who had no allegiance to Faku. For the British they constituted a problem. Governor Scott noted in 1860 that these groups made a living out of “continued depredations upon the border farmers in Natal”, and the Natal government had called upon Faku to “suppress these robberies and restore the stolen property”. In response Faku pleaded that he had no authority over those perpetrating stock theft and that the stolen property was not among his people. From the colonial point of view the 1844 agreement with Faku needed drastic revision and in February 1850 Crown prosecutor Walter Harding was dispatched to Faku’s residence to sign a new treaty. In the presence of the missionary reverend Thomas Jenkins and subordinate chiefs, Faku ceded the territory between the Mtamvuna and the Mzimkulu to Natal.¹⁰

According to Scott, however, the matter was never finalised. Although the 1850 treaty’s documentation had been sent to the Cape governor, nothing further materialised.¹¹ At that time British attention was focused on more pressing matters.

8 Galbraith 1963:4-5.

9 Select document No. 25, presented to the Natal Legislative Council, 6 July 1866. Scott to Newcastle, 23 November 1860, 3-4. Scott was citing the treaty entered into between Maitland and Faku on 23 November 1844.

10 Select document No. 25, 6 July 1866, 3-4. Scott’s reference to “depredations” suffered by border farmers appears to be exaggerated, due to the fact that there were no settlers in Nomansland. The nearest settler farms were in Lower Mkomanzi (named Alexandra County in 1865), some twenty miles north of the Mzimkulu border. None of those settlers suffered from depredations and raids.

11 Select document No. 25, 6 July 1866, 5.

These included a new outbreak of hostilities on the eastern frontier, problems with the Basuto and the Boers, the latter having their independence recognised under the Sand River and Bloemfontein conventions of 1852 and 1854 respectively. The state of political ferment that prevailed beyond the Cape colony's northern borders was not helped by the fall of the Russell government in England and its replacement by what was described as the "anaemic" Derby ministry whose secretary of state for colonies, Sir John Pakington, was "disposed to inertia" as Galbraith has remarked.¹²



Figure 3.1 Governor Sir John Scott

12 Galbraith 1963:261, 267.

By 1860, when Scott commenced a series of exchanges with the Colonial Office in London on the subject, law and order in the territory, then still known as Nomansland, had deteriorated considerably. In his November 1860 despatch to the Secretary of State for Colonies, the Duke of Newcastle, Scott expressed alarm at the “lawlessness and turbulence” which prevailed in the area. He cited the presence of armed and mounted gangs which traded gunpowder and firearms with other lawless elements beyond the Drakensberg mountains. On that premise Scott urged Newcastle to extend British authority over Nomansland, adding that Natal could manage it “without any risk or cost both of which may have to be incurred if it is allowed to ... continue unchecked”.¹³ Newcastle’s response was sympathetic. However, he requested an accurate description of the southwestern boundary of the territory before any proclamation of annexation could be made.¹⁴ The entry of a new stakeholder at this juncture complicated the issue.

Cape Governor Sir George Grey had given his assent to Adam Kok of the Griqua tribe to occupy a tract of land to the southeastern side of the Drakensberg, between the sources of the Mzimkulu and Mzimvubu rivers. Grey’s assent was based partly on the opinion that Faku had not intended to cede Nomansland to Natal and also as compensation to the Griqua for their loss of territory on the southwestern border of the Orange Free State.¹⁵ Incensed at this turn of events, Scott disputed Grey’s claim that Faku had not willingly ceded the Nomansland tract to Natal. In Scott’s view Grey’s undertaking with Kok would “lead to many complications which may act injuriously on this Colony”.¹⁶ Wary of the diplomatic row which was brewing, Newcastle advised that matters be put on hold whilst he engaged in an exchange of despatches between Grey and Kok.¹⁷ Further aggravating the situation was the fact that Natal’s southwestern boundary had not been properly surveyed.¹⁸ This did not prevent Scott from asserting that Natal still had the right to extend control over Nomansland. To press home the need for decisive action he despatched reports from the resident magistrates of Upper and Lower Mkomanzi in which they emphasised the disordered state of affairs to the south of Natal’s borders.¹⁹

Grey’s departure as Cape governor and his replacement by Sir Philip Wodehouse at the end of 1861 did not lend momentum to events. No sooner had Newcastle informed

13 Select document No. 25, 23 November 1860, Scott to Newcastle.

14 Select document No. 107, 26 December 1860, Newcastle to Scott.

15 Robinson 1900:225.

16 Select document No. 13, 27 March 1861, Scott to Newcastle.

17 Select document No. 123, 4 May 1861, Newcastle to Scott.

18 Duminy 2011:86.

19 Select document No. 41, 5 July 1861, Scott to Newcastle; Select document No. 25, 30 August 1861, Scott to Newcastle, 49.

Wodehouse that Nomansland would be annexed to Natal,²⁰ a new stumbling block appeared: the exact area to which Kok and his tribe were to be relocated. Until those details were finalised, Wodehouse asked Scott to defer any move to annex Nomansland.²¹ Scott made no attempt to conceal his exasperation. In a dispatch to Wodehouse he stated that he found it “objectionable” that continued delays were preventing Natal from annexing Nomansland, and that more than a year had elapsed since he had first expressed concern about the “lawless” conditions on the colony’s southern borders.²² He reiterated these views to Newcastle, urging his superior to recognise that annexation had become “very necessary” in the light of ongoing lawlessness.²³ Wodehouse took exception to Scott’s remarks and told him unequivocally that until the commission assigned to finalise Adam Kok’s territorial boundaries had completed its work, Scott would have to endure “the prolongation for a few months of the disorders” in Nomansland.²⁴ Scott remained unbowed: “I certainly acquiesce in this fresh delay with very much regret”, he replied to Wodehouse.²⁵

The Natal governor’s position was not helped by a subsequent dispatch from Newcastle in which Scott was told that where matters of native policy were concerned, Wodehouse’s “judgment must prevail”.²⁶ The full import of Newcastle’s shift in policy struck Scott almost immediately. This occurred when Wodehouse informed him that because a stalemate had been reached in trying to establish the precise location of Kok’s western boundary, “it becomes my duty to inform you that it appears impracticable ... to carry out the annexation to Natal of the land ceded by Faku”.²⁷

The disorders to which Wodehouse referred stemmed to an extent from what William Beinart has explained as “points of tension in the polity “in relations between chiefs and people. By the 1860s the paramount chief’s ability to demand labour from kraals had become limited to short periods only. In a pastoral economy the decentralisation of stockholding contributed to a diffusion of political authority.”²⁸ “As settlement became more dispersed ... the basic units of settlement in which all the people of Pondoland lived, increasingly became the nuclei of productive

20 Select document No. 25, 5 January 1862, Newcastle to Wodehouse, 52.

21 Select document No. 25, 18 January 1862, Wodehouse to Scott, 53.

22 Select document No. 25, 31 January 1862, Scott to Wodehouse, 54-56.

23 Select document No. 25, 1 February 1862, Scott to Newcastle, 57.

24 Select document No. 25, 13 February 1862, Wodehouse to Scott, 57-59.

25 Select document No. 25, 1 March 1862, Scott to Wodehouse, 59-60. It is noteworthy that at this time Dr. P.C. Sutherland, Natal’s surveyor-general, had begun to lay new boundary line beacons in anticipation of the annexation of Nomansland. See also *Natal Witness*, 28 February 1862.

26 Select document No. 217, 13 May 1862, Newcastle to Scott.

27 Select document No. 25, 15 May 1862, Wodehouse to Scott 63.

28 Beinart 1982:14.

activities.”²⁹ Lung sickness among Pondo herds may have contributed to cattle theft. In any event, a consequence of the commercial boom in Natal in the early 1860s was a heightened demand for draught oxen to power wagon transport.³⁰

Newcastle then declared that Imperial considerations would determine policy and strategy. In September 1862 he informed Scott that as long as Britain’s colonies in South Africa were

dependent for their defence upon British assistance, it will be necessary that questions of this kind should be adjusted by an officer representing not merely the interests of any particular colony, but the policy of the Imperial Government and with a view to the general maintenance of peaceful relations between the natives and the Government.³¹

Scott’s response indicated both his frustration and his disappointment. In December 1862 he put forward the idea that for a limited period the area intended for annexation should be placed under his direct control as a trial run so as to ascertain the limits of land to be apportioned to each tribe.³² Newcastle demurred, citing the need for the boundaries of the Nomansland territory to be accurately defined before annexation could be pursued.³³

By 1863 Scott found himself no closer to resolving the challenges Nomansland posed. But he remained positive. In his address to the opening of the Legislative Council in May 1863 he reported that Newcastle had informed him that the annexation would take place, but that a timeframe had not been specified.³⁴ A report in the *Mercury* lamented what it called “this constant equivocation” over Nomansland and denounced “Cape Town interference” as doing “vast mischief”.³⁵ In a subsequent tilt at the lack of progress an editorial in the *Mercury* urged the government to act, as the coastlands were becoming valuable. “The extension of our southern boundary is the preliminary of a shorter and more certain connexion with East London and Algoa Bay”, it opined.³⁶ But the pace of Imperial deliberations appeared impervious to such opinions. Instead, 1863 saw Nomansland subjected to an exchange of views as to where its boundaries should be pegged. From his distant office in London,

29 Beinart 1982:18.

30 Beinart 1982:23-24.

31 Select document No. 249, 2 September 1862, Newcastle to Scott.

32 Select document No. 143, 4 December 1862, Scott to Newcastle.

33 Select document No. 290, , 25 February 1863, Newcastle to Scott.

34 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 15, No. 756, 6 May 1863.

35 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1862. A subsequent report disclosed that Adam Kok received a £300 salary from the Cape Government (*Natal Mercury*, 2 July 1864).

36 *Natal Mercury*, 6 January 1863.

Newcastle suggested that the Ingeli range should form the northern boundary, but was vague on the whereabouts of the northwest boundary; the Mtamvuna, Mzimkulu and the ocean taking care of the other compass points.³⁷ Scott, in turn, despatched his boundary suggestions to Newcastle and Wodehouse, but the latter was not prepared to commit firmly to any suggestion until Sir Walter Currie, the commandant of the Armed and Mounted Police in Kaffraria, had completed his survey of Adam Kok's territory.³⁸

Despite having achieved a limited form of representative government in 1856, having previously been classified as a district of the Cape, this turn of events served to emphasise Natal's junior status within Imperial structures. Whereas Natal's surveyor-general, Dr. P.C. Sutherland, was eminently qualified to carry out the pegging of the borders of Nomansland with Kok's territory, that task was entrusted to Currie, a military figure from the Cape. Moreover, the fact that Natal's input and opinions on the boundary issue were ignored simply underlined the colony's inferior status.

The boundary saga developed a new dimension when Currie disclosed that Kok had intended to establish his capital a few miles from the junction of the Ibisi and Mzimkulu rivers. "To deprive the Griquas of any part of the Ibisi or its tributaries would certainly be a serious matter to them and cause much dissatisfaction", stated Currie in a dispatch to Wodehouse.³⁹ By July even Newcastle had become frustrated at the seemingly intractable situation which had developed regarding Nomansland. Writing to Wodehouse he expressed the hope that some agreement of the boundaries could be reached "in order that the settlement of this question may no longer be delayed".⁴⁰ Instead, the quagmire worsened. Not only did Scott

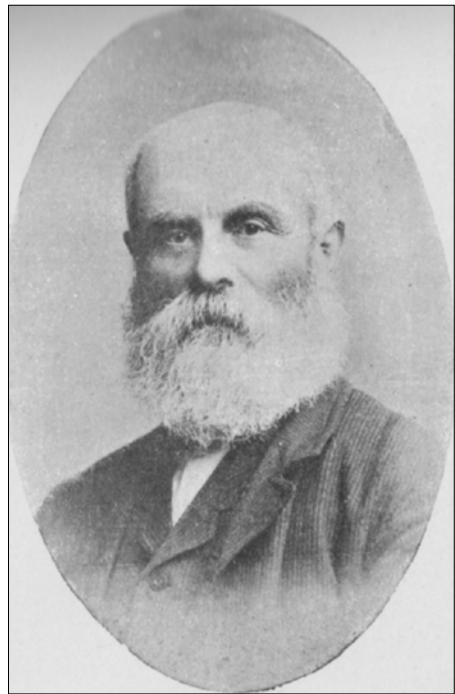


Figure 3.2 Dr. P.C. Sutherland

37 Select document No. 290, 25 February 1863, Newcastle to Scott.

38 Select document No. 25, 19 May 1863, Wodehouse to Scott, 71.

39 Select document No. 25, 28 May 1863, Currie to Wodehouse, 72.

40 Select document No. 657, 6 July 1863, Newcastle to Wodehouse.

express surprise at the intended whereabouts of Kok's capital, but he was outraged by Currie's reference to the Amabacas community as "unauthorised squatters" in the territory. In a lengthy despatch he sketched the background of the Amabacas, arguing that they had dwelled south of the Mzimkulu for almost 50 years and could therefore not be regarded as "unauthorised squatters". At the same time Scott made it clear that the Amabacas were a menace in terms of their cattle-stealing proclivities which had resulted in them being viewed as "a terror even to the frontier kafirs of the Cape Colony".⁴¹

What followed left Scott and the Natal Legislative Council in no doubt that their views and opinions amounted to very little. To Scott's amazement the next despatch from Wodehouse ignored all his concerns about the Amabacas and the positioning of Kok's capital and simply informed him that because he did "not entertain any serious objection to the boundary line proposed by Sir Walter Currie", it had been accepted by Newcastle.⁴² Letters patent then followed from Newcastle authorising the annexation of the district ceded by Faku between the Mtamvuna and the Mzimkulu and between the Kalamba (Drakensberg) mountains and the coast.⁴³ Any lingering doubts Scott may have had about Natal's role in the issue were removed by a subsequent despatch from Newcastle which bluntly instructed him to "submit to the Legislative Council the draft of the Law which, when passed will place the territory under the general government of the Colony".⁴⁴ However, it was not until the autumn of 1864 that the Legislative Council reconvened. The legislation Newcastle prescribed for the annexation of Nomansland served to aggravate the council's already angry mood which the flawed Vetch plans for Durban harbour had brought about.⁴⁵

The introduction of the Annexation Bill was greeted with a demand that all the correspondence relating to Nomansland over the years first be made available. Disapprobation was expressed that that correspondence had been conducted without reference to the Legislative Council.⁴⁶ A select committee on Nomansland was then

41 Select document No. 25, 18 August 1863, Scott to Wodehouse, 75-76.

42 Select document No. 25, 15 September 1863, Wodehouse to Scott, 77.

43 Select document No. 25, 14 December 1863, Newcastle to Scott, 78-79.

44 Select document No. 25, 19 December 1863, Newcastle to Scott, 80.

45 The shifty sandbar at the entrance to Durban harbour proved problematic for over 50 years and was a staple political issue. In 1858 Captain James Vetch was commissioned to devise plans to deal with the problem. By 1864 £90 000 had been spent, yet less than ten percent of the project had been completed. In addition, payments had been made without authorisation, freight on some materials had been paid for twice and materials had been ordered in excess of needs (Leverton 1968:81).

46 *Natal Mercury*, 17 May 1864. The full schedule of correspondence was presented to the Legislative Council on 6 July 1866 as Select document No. 25. It comprised 55 despatches dated from 21 July 1860 to 1 February 1866.

convened. In its report presented in August it rejected the proposed boundaries as “injudicious and likely to lead to unfavourable results, both to the Colony and to the Griquas”.⁴⁷ As a result the Legislative Council passed a bill which differed from that which Newcastle had proposed in as far as boundaries were concerned. Scott, whose term as governor was about to end, declined to sign it although he agreed to submit the Legislative Council’s misgivings about the “anomalies and dangers involved in the present arrangement” to the new colonial secretary of state, Edward Cardwell. Nonetheless, he made it clear to his superior that the request of the Natal Legislature to reopen the whole subject “is, therefore, one which can scarcely at this time be considered feasible”.

In his parting words Scott expressed the hope that at its next session the council would pass legislation that was “freed from exceptional and objectionable conditions”. These concerned the exclusion of Africans from the franchise, the registration of land claims by Africans, the extent of land to be ceded to Adam Kok and the extent of land to be set aside for Africans in general.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, a petition submitted to the Legislative Council in September 1864 reflected the degree of enthusiasm on the part of some colonists to settle in Nomansland. In advance of its annexation, seven settlers, five of them from the Richmond area and two from Lower Mkomanzi, requested land grants in Nomansland.⁴⁹

By 1865 the Legislative Council found itself in a vexed situation as Scott had refused to endorse its terms for the annexation of Nomansland. The problems of unrest and smuggling continued to manifest themselves in the territory. In addition, Kok claimed he could refuse the right of landing to the ferryman appointed by the Natal government on the Mzimkulu river as well as the levying of tolls on wagons passing through his country.⁵⁰ Cardwell had also indicated that he hoped the Natal Legislature would abandon its “inconvenient and irritating” legislation and accept the December 1863 draft for the annexation of Nomansland.⁵¹ Thus, quietly and without any debate, the bill declaring Natal’s laws applicable in Nomansland passed its third reading in the Legislative Council on 12 July and became Law No. 14 of 1865.⁵² After years of delay the legislative hurdle clearing the way for the formal annexation of Alfred County was finally passed. The specific proclamation was published on

47 *Votes and Proceedings*, 1864, Vol. 11, 235.

48 Select document No. 73, 26 October 1864, Scott to Cardwell. Cardwell’s term as secretary of state for colonies commenced in April 1864.

49 *Votes and Proceedings*, 1864, Vol. 11, 291. The petitioners were F.C. Ashmore, W. Payne, L. Drake, G. Harrison, W. Wells, A. Shaw Snr., A. Shaw Jnr.

50 Select document No. 25, 28 March 1865, acting Lieutenant-Governor John Maclean to Cardwell, 86.

51 Select document No. 25, 9 March 1865, Cardwell to Maclean, 84.

52 *Votes and Proceedings*, 1865, Vol. 12, 184.

13 September, while on 23 November 1865 Cardwell informed the new acting lieutenant-governor, Colonel Bisset, that royal assent had been granted to Law 14.⁵³

The proclamation confirmed the portion of land ceded by Faku on 11 April 1850 as the basis of the new territory and outlined the actual boundaries as follows:⁵⁴

On the North-East by the Umzimkulu river, from the mouth of the river to the junction with the Ibisi; on the North and North West by a line drawn from the said junction to the nearest point of the ridge or watershed dividing the waters of the Ibisi from those of the Umzimkuliwana, hence along the said ridge to the Ingela range, thence along the Ingela range keeping to the watershed, to a large beacon recently erected by the Surveyor-General of the said Colony of Natal and Sir Walter Currie, at the western extremity of the said range; and thence straight to the nearest source of the Umtamvuna River from the said source to the sea; on the South-East by the sea from the mouth of the Umtamvuna to that of the Umzimkulu.

As editor of the *Natal Mercury* and a member of the Natal Legislative Council, John Robinson viewed the deployment of a military force to the banks of the Mtamvuna and firing a 21-gun salute in the presence of Adam Kok and his men to announce the annexation of Alfred County as providing an appropriate signal of British intentions in respect of the maintenance of law and order. In praising the acting lieutenant-governor, Colonel Bisset, for his role in the annexation proceedings, Robinson described him as “a sagacious and an active-minded ruler of colonial origins”⁵⁵ Nonetheless, the situation remained precarious in that Alfred County added some 29 000 new African subjects to the colony of Natal⁵⁶ at a time of deepening economic recession and limited resources. In fact, once Bisset’s little force had withdrawn the means which the new resident magistrate, Lieutenant H.K. Wilson,⁵⁷ had at his disposal to enforce British authority was pitiful. This is apparent from correspondence Wilson had with the colonial secretary. Six months after his appointment he requested four pairs of handcuffs and a cat o’ ninetails, as he had none.⁵⁸ Wilson’s formal quarters were also extremely spartan. He hired a room at Duka Fynn’s kraal for ten shillings per month which served as his office

53 Select document No. 25, 2 October 1865, Bisset to Cardwell; 23 November 1865, Cardwell to Bisset,.

54 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 18, No. 971, 12 September 1865.

55 Robinson 1900:226. Bisset’s parents were 1820 settlers. He served in three wars on the Eastern Frontier and from 1840 was an officer in the Cape Mounted Rifles (De Kock 1968:78-79).

56 Select document No. 25, 16 January 1866, Bisset to Cardwell, 91. The figure of 29 000 seems grossly inflated. The *Blue Book* for 1875 puts the African population at 18 000.

57 *Government Notice*, No. 3 1866.

58 CSO 250, No. 1144, 2 June 1866.

and courtroom.⁵⁹ But he had no furniture or office equipment. This was evident from letters he wrote in February and March 1866 requesting 23 items of office appurtenances including paper, ink, stationery, tables, chairs, a desk and a set of pigeon holes for filing. Despite the poverty of his circumstances, Wilson was told that only £10 could be spent on his needs.⁶⁰ The extreme frugality of the colonial administration towards Alfred County was also reflected in the response Sidney Turner, the ferryman on the Mzimkulu, received to his application to be appointed as county field cornet: he was informed that the post could not be filled as no provision had been made for it in the Estimates.⁶¹

The pygmy-sized force left to defend Alfred County amounted to a total contradiction of all the official concern for the security of the territory expressed in the preceding years by officials in Cape Town and London. Reinforcing that hypocritical situation was the parsimonious response of the colonial administration in Pietermaritzburg to Wilson's legitimate requests for the resources his post required. Indeed, the history of Alfred County was one of official neglect until 1889, when Lower Umzimkulu was established as a separate magisterial district. Also of note was the cessation of interest by the British high commissioner in Cape Town, and the secretary of state for colonies in London, in the former Nomansland following its annexation to Natal.

Despite these circumstances, Robinson viewed the addition of Alfred County as “a distinct contribution to [Natal's] self-importance, and until Zululand was annexed it was the only territorial acquisition which Natal at any time could boast”.⁶² At the time, however, very little was known about Alfredia, as Natal's new county was often called. Editorials in the *Mercury* suggested that sugar and coffee would be suitable on the coast and urged the government to “induce a stream of settlers to flow in the direction of Alfred”. Significantly, the *Mercury* also saw potential in the mouth of the Mzimkulu as a harbour, noting that the river was navigable for five miles.⁶³ In May 1866 it quoted Dr. Sutherland, the surveyor-general, as stating that “very little outlay” would be required to make the mouth of the Mzimkulu safe for craft up to 60 tons in size.⁶⁴ Of immediate promise, however, was the presence of a large deposit of limestone in the vicinity of the Mzimkulu. Sutherland surveyed the area

59 CSO 245, No. 697, 19 March 1866.

60 CSO 217, No. 440, 15 February 1866; CSO 244, No. 581, 7 March and 13 March 1866

61 CSO 244, No. 577, 28 February 1866.

62 Robinson 1900:226.

63 *Natal Mercury*, 27 January and 13 February 1866.

64 *Natal Mercury*, 26 May 1866. Sutherland's opinion on the cost of making the Mzimkulu safe for shipping turned out to be grossly inaccurate. By 1907, after the expenditure of £70 000 on Port Shepstone harbour, it was abandoned as a river port (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal*, 1907, Vol. 43, 286).

and forwarded specimens to Sir Roderick Murchison, a geologist in London, to ascertain the possible value of the deposit.⁶⁵ Although transport proved difficult until the arrival of the railway line in 1901, by that time the limestone works were the largest employer of labour in the Port Shepstone area.⁶⁶

Alfred County, 1866-1870⁶⁷

There was much initial enthusiasm about the prospects of Alfred County. In March 1866 the government surveyor laid out 50-acre plots on the south bank of the Mzimkulu. Sidney Turner, who owned a trading store on the north bank (which was in Alexandra County), noted an increase in business since the annexation and claimed to have made a profit of £82 over the previous six month period.⁶⁸ The *Times of Natal* reported that some colonists in the Isipingo district were contemplating moving there if they could obtain suitable Crown land grants.⁶⁹ Colonel Bisset bought 1 000 acres of land on the north bank late in 1866 and asked Turner to develop a coffee plantation for him there. He made a second land purchase early in 1867, acquiring ten plots on the south bank in the vicinity of the drift, about a mile from the river mouth. Turner, in a letter to his father in January 1867 stated that he had “never felt so sanguine about the future”, having just moved into his new brick-built house and store on the south bank of the river.⁷⁰ Among the reasons for his optimism was the positive economic effect he thought the discovery of copper in the Insizwa mountain area in Pondo territory might have in stimulating trade and development.⁷¹

A further reason for optimism was the prospect of river shipping on the Mzimkulu. In correspondence with his parents in April 1866, Turner had remarked that the surveyor-general had been staying with him while he conducted a survey of navigation possibilities.⁷² Months later Sutherland submitted his findings. He found that the river was navigable for over five miles and that it had a maximum depth of 30 feet. However, shoals of rock in the mouth of the river would require removal.

65 Report of the surveyor-general on Alfred quarries. Select document No. 27, presented to the Legislative Council on 9 July 1866.

66 A total of 530 African, Asian and European men were employed (LU/755A/1901, Vol. 3/2/9, Durban Archives Depot).

67 In terms of the title of this study, the focus on Alfred County is limited to the coastal belt, or Lower Umzimkulu as the magisterial division was called from 1889.

68 Child 1980:47.

69 *Times of Natal*, 6 October 1866.

70 Child 1980:56, 62, 60.

71 Select document No. 31 of 1867, presented to the Legislative Council on 30 August 1867.

72 Child 1980:48.



Figure 3.3 Sidney Turner

He also recommended construction of a breakwater.⁷³ Adding to the expectations about river shipping was the fact that the area at the mouth of the river had been referred to as Port Shepstone. A proclamation by the acting governor, Colonel Bisset, announcing the dissolving of the Legislative Council on 1 February, ahead of the

73 CSO 265, No. 138, 24 January 1867.

elections scheduled in March, was issued from Port Shepstone on 15 January 1866.⁷⁴ Bisset had visited Turner on that day and enthused about the future prospects of Port Shepstone in terms of a road linking it to Umzinto, the establishment of a postal service and an influx of settlers.⁷⁵ That proclamation constituted the origin of the name of what became the main settlement of the lower South Coast, namely Port Shepstone.

Stagnation

But the copper discovery, – like that of gold in Alexandra County – proved inconsequential. Moreover, Sutherland's recommendations on making the Mzimkulu safe for shipping were doomed to be ignored until 1880. At ten shillings per acre, the price of "township lots" in the vicinity of the drift was pretentious and unrealistic⁷⁶ given the fact that the area was a wild frontier and hardly different from Crown land elsewhere in the colony, which sold for four shillings an acre.⁷⁷ Not surprisingly the report of the surveyor-general for 1870 showed that of none of the plots in two parcels of land, 1 000 acres on the south bank of the Mzimkulu and 3 400 acres on the north bank, had been sold.⁷⁸ The straitened financial circumstances which prevailed in Natal between 1866 and 1869 also accounted for the lack of interest shown in Alfred County.

As a result, the new governor, Robert Keate, prescribed severe cuts in expenditure on public works as the way to balance Natal's budget. Consequently, by 1869 several public works in other parts of the colony were in danger of becoming utterly useless and on account of the £12 000 deficit that year, there was no expenditure on roads.⁷⁹ For Alfred County, however, that made no difference as it had been totally neglected as regards public works since its annexation.

As was the case with Alexandra County, the revenue that Alfred County contributed to the colonial treasury was far in excess of what it received in return. In 1866 the resident magistrate, H.K. Wilson, collected £1 385 in revenue, £920 of which was derived from hut tax. Official expenses amounted only to £872. Alfred County's

74 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 18, No. 990, 23 January 1866.

75 Child 1980:43.

76 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 19, No. 1045, 29 January 1867: Reserve of Township of Shepstone.

77 Over the period 1866 to 1870 in various counties Crown land was sold at four shillings per acre (Proclamation Notice, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 18, No. 988, 9 January 1866; Proclamation Notice, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 20, No. 1097, 14 January 1868; *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 22, No. 1259, 29 November 1870).

78 Select document No. 28, presented to the Legislative Council on 7 July 1870.

79 Leverton 1968:116.

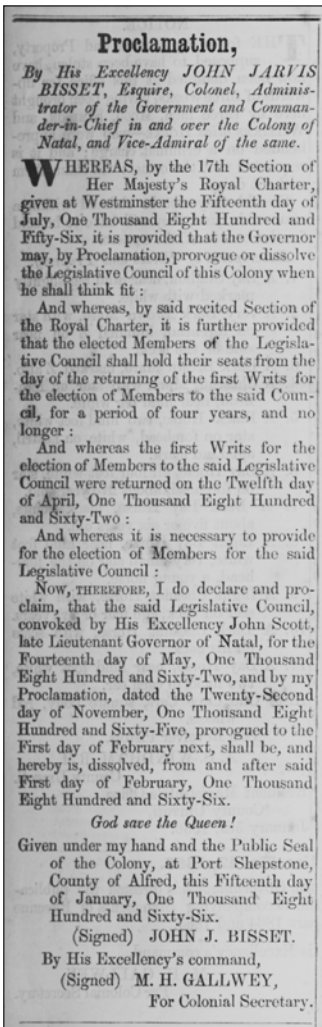


Figure 3.4 Origin of the name Port Shepstone, Natal *Government Gazette*, 15 January 1866

balance sheet remained relatively unchanged throughout the rest of the decade.⁸⁰ But that situation also reflected the stagnation which prevailed in terms of its development. The anticipated influx of settlers did not materialise.

In 1866 the settler population was listed as 28 adults; in 1868 it was put at 29 adults.⁸¹ With the exception of Sidney Turner, who in 1866 established a fishery that produced three tons of dried fish which he sold to the employers of indentured Indians in the Umzinto district,⁸² economic development was stagnant in comparison to other parts of the colony. Most settlers lived in wattle and daub huts or what were called “kaffir” huts. Cultivation of the soil did not extend beyond tending patches of mealies for family consumption. Ten of the settlers were licensed sawyers and made their living from the forests. Apart from that enterprise, secondary trading constituted the basis of the county’s economy. By 1868 there were five retail shops and two liquor outlets.⁸³ The only agricultural production of any note was that of the local African population. The agricultural return for 1867 listed 1 000 acres of Indian corn, the production of 200 pounds of coffee and the planting of sweet potatoes.⁸⁴

In comparison with Alexandra County, Alfred County was more of a frontier-type society in terms of its very small settler population, their remoteness and lack of social cohesion. The nearest school and medical practitioner was 50 miles away in Umzinto. There was no local defence group. The only privately established

80 CSO 264, No. 43, 4 January 1867; CSO 293, No. 103, 10 January 1868; CSO 323, No. 242, 25 January 1869.

81 CSO 264, No. 43, 4 January 1867; CSO 323, No. 242, 25 January 1869.

82 *Natal Mercury*, 17 January 1867.

83 CSO 323, No.242, 25 January 1869. Whereas white woodcutters in the Cape’s Knysna forests were initially men who had failed to make a living elsewhere, the sawyers of Alfred County took advantage of a natural asset which was cheap and easy to exploit (Morrell 1992:43).

84 CSO 279, No. 1552, 8 July 1867. See also Bundy 1988:179.

local institution was a Lutheran mission station under reverend Peter Stoppel.⁸⁵ He arrived in 1867 and called his tract of land Marburg after his hometown, Oberhessen, in Germany.⁸⁶ The only social cohesion that existed was amongst the six or seven officials who worked at the court house at Murchison, which lay ten miles inland on the road to Harding.

Official indifference towards Alfred County served only to entrench its existence as a backwater. The response to Magistrate Wilson's request for a lockup was simply to refer to the Estimates. Although crime was minimal, Wilson's dilemma was that he had no place where prisoners could be securely confined. Consequently, in confining them to a "kafir" hut, he was obliged to post a full-time guard and for that task he could not spare the manpower.⁸⁷ The solution was to send prisoners under guard to the Umzinto gaol. As it was, Wilson was extremely critical of the two white Natal Mounted Police members who made up the sum total of his constabulary, describing them as "perfectly useless".⁸⁸

Another example of official indifference towards Alfred County concerned the position of postmaster at Murchison. The colonial administration in Pietermaritzburg took over eight months to confirm Charles Shaw's application for the position. In exasperation Shaw pointed out to the colonial secretary that between October 1866 and June 1867, he had dealt correctly with 200 mail items.⁸⁹ An insight as to the difficulties which mail service delivery faced is derived from an exchange of correspondence between Shaw and the colonial secretary in 1869. Shaw expressed concern that bad roads and the need to ford many rivers in order to reach Umzinto was discouraging Africans from serving as mail carriers. A further negative factor was the reduction in their wages to fifteen shillings a month. Mail was carried twice a week from Murchison to Umzinto.⁹⁰

When Wilson requested the appointment of a justice of the peace to assist him in collecting hut tax, the response was that no such appointment would be made, but that he would be granted an extra eight days to complete the task.⁹¹ An application for a government appointed ferryman to be established on the Mtamvuna river was also rejected as "not necessary".⁹² Following the extremely heavy rains which fell

85 CSO 293, No. 103, 10 January 1868; CSO 323, No. 242, 25 January 1869.

86 Alfred County centenary souvenir brochure. KC 20385.

87 CSO 274, No. 1043, 1 June 1867.

88 CSO 253, No. 1419, 24 June 1866.

89 CSO 259, No. 2025, 2 October 1866; CSO 275, No. 1125, 14 and 24 June 1867.

90 CSO 341, No. 2110, 23 September 1869.

91 CSO 268, 14 and 27 March 1867.

92 CSO 291, No. 2615, 9 January 1868.

across the colony late in August 1868, Wilson requested £3 to effect repairs to the thatching of his office and courthouse.⁹³ The records do not reflect a response, but less than two years later it was reported that the courthouse had collapsed following further heavy rains. The then magistrate, W.A. Maclean (Wilson had left the post after taking a year's leave for ill health),⁹⁴ expressed alarm as to where he could file the court records seeing as how there was no other suitable building in Murchison.⁹⁵ Court proceedings had to take place in the magistrate's private dwelling.⁹⁶ Official indifference towards the county persisted into the new decade. In September 1870 the new resident magistrate, Henrique Shepstone, bemoaned the fact that licence fees were not being collected because no replacement of the official who performed that task had been made.⁹⁷

In May 1867, despite his earlier "sanguine" feelings about prospects in Alfred County, Sidney Turner accepted an offer by Colonel Bisset to purchase his house, store and boats and left the district.⁹⁸ Hopes of development and expansion did not materialise. Apart from news reports of the wreck of the *Ambleside* at the mouth of the Mzimkulu river on 29 August 1868, the columns of the press were devoid of news from Alfred County as the decade of the 1860s came to an end.⁹⁹ The decline in the status of the county was also reflected in the taxes – excluding hut tax – collected from the settlers between 1866 and 1870; in 1866 the figure was £455, but had declined to £118 in 1869.¹⁰⁰ When John Robinson conducted his survey of the South Coast in 1870 his remark about the territory south of the Mzimkulu summed up the plight of Alfred County bluntly: "There is no European enterprise requiring notice further south."¹⁰¹ A year later the surveyor-general, Dr. Sutherland, was even more scathing in his appraisal of prospects in the county. Noting that South Shepstone was the only township reserved within the county in the belief that trade, industry and river shipping would take place there, Sutherland stated that

93 CSO 312, No. 2038, 1 September 1868.

94 CSO 317, No. 2597, 9 November 1868.

95 CSO 351, No. 304, 9 February 1870.

96 *Natal Mercury*, 2 April 1870.

97 CSO 367, No. 1958, 26 September 1870.

98 Child 1980:69.

99 Archibald Sinclair was one of Alfred County's early residents. He settled in the Lower Umzimkulu area in 1868 and named his farm Ambleside, after the name of the ship that was wrecked there (see the letter to the editor, *Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1888). The *Ambleside* was a 535 ton vessel bound for Liverpool with a cargo of wool, cotton and seeds. In the face of strong onshore winds, the captain dragged the anchor in a bid to avoid being blown ashore. But the ship did run aground, broadside, at the mouth of the Mzimkulu early in the evening of 29 August 1868. There was no loss of life (*Government Notice*, No. 144, 1868).

100 CSO 381, No. 740, 30 March 1870.

101 Robinson 1872:126.

that prospect was “too remote” to contemplate at that stage.¹⁰² The hope expressed by Governor Scott in 1860 that the incorporation of Alfred County would draw “industrious settlers” seemed a forlorn one.¹⁰³

Peaceful and stable relations prevailed in the county for nearly twenty years before stock theft in the proximity of the Pondo border became problematic. Despite the frugal approach of the colonial authorities, the one positive to emerge from the annexation of Alfred County, as far as settlers were concerned, was that of security. Whereas Nomansland had been regarded as a sanctuary of illicit activities, the presence of that minuscule British authority at Murchison from 1866 somehow seemed to bring stability in settler minds. No branch court meetings were held, as was the case in the other counties, because the low level of crime did not warrant them.¹⁰⁴ Responding to the proposal by the Legislative Council in 1869 that retrenchments were needed as part of measures to reduce government expenditure, Magistrate Maclean conceded that his interpreter had not had any cases since 1866 and that his messenger had been involved in just two cases.¹⁰⁵ While the colonial presence was no more than a toehold, it at least seemed to have a salutary effect.

In closing

As stated at the end of chapter two, Alexandra County was poised on the cusp of development in 1860. The following chapter takes up that theme as well as the vicissitudes which the depression of the mid-1860s brought about.

102 CSO 386, No. 1201, 2 June 1871.

103 Select document No. 25, 21 November 1860, Scott to Newcastle, 6.

104 CSO 337, No. 1778, 27 August 1869.

105 CSO 340, No. 2072, 29 September 1869.

4

Alexandra County, 1860-1870

Trial and error



They are the best illustrations which we meet with of Anglo-Saxon energy and pluck, plunging into the midst of unknown localities, regardless of all risk and fearing no failure.

— John Robinson, *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861

As pioneers of sugar in Alexandra County, the likes of James Arbuthnot, William Joyner and John Bazley faced the same difficulties which confronted the Isipingo pioneers, with one great exception: transport. The absence of roads and bridges and the need to ford several rivers to reach Durban triggered a struggle that persisted for 37 years before a bridge was built over the Mkomanzi. As a result, the idea of river port shipping was born with the *Natalie* making history in 1861 on the Mkomanzi. The progress of these pioneer planters was noted by *Mercury* editor John Robinson, who toured the area early in 1861 and provided a valuable if somewhat uncritical historical account. Mrs. Georgina Nelson provided a glimpse of the role of women in colonial history, while early indications of settler political resolve manifested itself following William Joyner's brush with the law. A key aspect of this chapter concerns the economic recession of the mid-1860s and its impact on the emerging sugar industry. The lack of infrastructure investment, the exploitation of fauna and the maturing of settler society conclude the focus.

Pioneering growth

Apart from William Joyner, who had previously grown cane successfully at Isipingo before relocating to Ifafa, none of the new settlers who took up Crown land grants in Lower Mkomanzi from 1858 onwards had any experience in the cultivation of cane. But the example of those already engaged in the sugar enterprise, and the potential which the coast south of the Mkomanzi appeared to hold for extending sugar cultivation, most likely motivated the wave of settlement that occurred in the period after 1857. Nonetheless, John Robinson's description of the life of colonists as being "pre-eminently one of work, frequently of privation, certainly of struggle" was applicable to the new settlers of Lower Mkomanzi.¹

Of the newcomers, James Arbuthnot became what John Robinson described as "the leading man" of the Umzinto district until he died of dysentery in 1861.² Arbuthnot had immigrated to Natal aboard the *Unicorn* in September 1850, accompanied by his wife Jane and their five children. A couple of relative wealth, the Arbuthnots brought a servant, Mrs. McKay, and a nursemaid with them on the *Unicorn*.³ They settled on their Byrne allotment in the Richmond area, which they named Berryden. Initially, James tried his hand at stock farming. He prospered for three years before lungsickness reduced his cattle herd from 300 to just 24.⁴

With the establishment of county councils to assist in the provision of basic governance in outlying areas,⁵ he accepted a requisition from some local colonists to stand as a candidate in a by-election in ward five of the Pietermaritzburg County council and was elected unopposed in February 1856.⁶ In April 1856 Arbuthnot's public status appreciated further when he was appointed a member of the County of Pietermaritzburg Land Board. Other members of the Board were the resident magistrate, James Archbell, and Thomas Fannin and Charles Barter. Their task was to scrutinise applications for land grants before forwarding them to the Central Land Board in Pietermaritzburg.⁷

Until 1856 Natal's position within the British Empire had been that of a district of the Cape colony. The promulgation of the Charter of Natal in July 1856 established it as a separate colony entitled to a limited form of representative government. This constitutional change presented James Arbuthnot with a new political opportunity.

1 Robinson 1862:42.

2 *Natal Mercury*, 9 May 1861.

3 Hattersley 1936:30. The Arbuthnots deposited £200 with Joseph Byrne in London before leaving for Natal but forfeited it when Byrne was declared insolvent (Arbuthnot 1897:3).

4 Osborn 1964:299.

5 *Natal Mercury*, 8 February 1854.

6 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 8, No. 370, 15 January 1856; Vol. 8, No. 374, 12 February 1856.

7 CSO 85, No. 338, 4 April 1856.

In January 1857, 26 residents of Pietermaritzburg County petitioned him to make himself available for election to the Legislative Council. Arbuthnot's response, although detailed and lengthy – it occupied two-thirds of a page in the *Government Gazette* – affords an insight into his thinking. On the African question, he advocated the breaking up of Shepstone's locations and ending the "indiscriminate squatting on government lands". Like most colonists, he believed that Africans should be given vocational and industrial training and that polygamy should be prohibited. In order to encourage African labour he favoured increasing the hut tax. Other views of his that were popular with settlers concerned increasing European immigration, improving roads, building bridges and establishing more schools.⁸ In February he was elected, together with John Moreland, to represent Pietermaritzburg County in the Legislative Council.⁹

In his letter accepting nomination as a candidate for the council, Arbuthnot stated that he did so "under my present circumstances at considerable risk".¹⁰ The reason for his cautious response lay in conversations he had been having with a frequent visitor to Berryden, the surveyor-general, Dr. P.C. Sutherland, who had suggested to Arbuthnot that there were good prospects for cane cultivation near the mouth of the Mzinto river.¹¹ Following the Government Proclamation on 29 April 1857 inviting applications for Crown land grants in the Lower Mkomanzi area, Arbuthnot applied for and received a 598-acre grant near the mouth of the Mzinto river, which he called Umzinto Lodge.¹²

Anthony Hocking has noted that at about the time of the proclamation, a group of farmers from the Richmond district visited the Lower Mkomanzi area in the company of Dr. Sutherland. It is likely that Arbuthnot accompanied the group in order to obtain a firsthand view of the environment that would become his new home.¹³ The designated area included four rivers – the Mkomanzi, the Amahlongwa, Mpambinyoni and the Mzinto, which John Robinson described as "a bewildering expanse, varied by uplands, mountains, precipices, ravines, gentle lawns and shadowy vales".¹⁴ The area was home to the three settler families mentioned earlier (Johnstone, McKenzie and Higham), four isolated mission stations, and a small, scattered African population which stood at around 12 000 in 1866.¹⁵ This was most

8 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 9, No. 426, 20 January 1857.

9 *Government Notice*, No. 12, 24 February 1857.

10 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 9, No. 426, 20 January 1857.

11 Osborn 1964:299.

12 Spencer 1981:61. Arbuthnot's application was noted in the *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 9, No. 455, 4 August 1857. According to the Proclamation, the annual quitrent was three farthings per acre. See also *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 9, No. 441, 5 May 1857.

13 Hocking 1992:35.

14 *Natal Mercury*, 7 March 1871.

15 It was estimated at 12 400 in 1866. See also *Natal Blue Book*, 1866, R4.

likely a legacy of Shaka's earlier raids on Pondo chiefdoms to the south, which had scattered and resulted in diffused settlements.

Before moving his family to Umzinto Lodge in 1858, Arbuthnot had an eight-roomed house erected. In his review of Natal, Robert Mann cited Arbuthnot's approach to clearing his land in preparation for cultivation as worthy of emulation.

In the month of June 1858, ten kafirs cleared, stumped, and picked over his farm, without any assistance from the plough, five acres, which at the commencement of the operation, was a perfect wilderness of vegetation.

That process was repeated in the following two months, so that by 1859 Arbuthnot had 30 acres ready for planting cane.¹⁶ Shrewdly he also leased out part of his property, thereby facilitating the development of a small community. Out of that came the need for a school and a church which Arbuthnot promoted, building a parsonage for reverend J. Barker on his estate.¹⁷

A second family that would be prominent in Lower Mkomanzi were the Landers. Joseph, born in 1803, arrived in Natal aboard the *Henrietta* accompanied by his wife Fanny and their six children in July 1850. According to Hocking they took up their allotment in Byrne only in 1851, where the baptismal register noting the birth of the Landers' seventh child, Samuel, in 1853 described Joseph as a "shoemaker and a farmer". In 1854 when a cattle pound became Byrne's first public amenity, Landers was appointed pound master. Like most of his fellow settlers in the Byrne district, Landers was barely eking out an existence.¹⁸ When the Land Proclamation was published, Joseph and his eldest son Thomas both submitted applications. These proved successful and the transfer of their respective grants on the Mpambinyoni river took effect from 2 January 1858.¹⁹ Joseph named his estate Renishaw after a park near his wife's home in the Sheffield district in England, while Thomas named his farm Maryland, possibly after his sister.²⁰ Nearby, Clausthal, situated between Umkomaas and Scottburgh, was named after the ancestral home of B.L. Schwikkard's wife in Hanover, Germany. He received the original grant in December 1857.²¹ But seven years later the 3 024 acre estate was up for sale.²²

16 Mann 1859: 82-83.

17 Spencer 1981:62.

18 Hocking 1992:32-34.

19 Hocking 1992: 41. Ellen Macleod, in a letter from Byrne dated 20 December 1857, lamented the depletion of the Byrne population as grants on the coast were taken up because it retarded prospects of a school being established (Gordon 1970:85-86).

20 Hocking 1992:44.

21 CSO 100, No. 1120, 17 December 1857.

22 *Natal Mercury*, 27 December 1864.

SUGAR LAND.

MR. ROBERT ACUTT,
HAS RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS
FROM THE PROPRIETOR,
To Sell by Public Auction
AT THE MART, WEST STREET,
On Wednesday, November 23,
AT TWELVE O'CLOCK,

FOUR ADJOINING FARMS
In extent about 300 acres each, situated north
of the
AMAHLONGWANA RIVER,
and abutting on the Coast.
These Farms are a portion of the Estate
CLAUSTHAL,
the property of
Bernhard Ludwig Schwikkard,
and near the plantation of
J. M'KENZIE, ESQ.,
on the Umcomas.

The whole of this estate is well watered, and its adaptability for the culture of sugar and other products is unsurpassed.

The main south road runs through the farm, affording easy transit to and from the Port of Durban; while the Estate itself is immediately contiguous to the site of the proposed port and harbour at the mouth of the Umcomas.

Figure 4.1 Sale of the Clausthal sugar estate, *Natal Mercury*, 17 November 1859

Another family whose relocation from the Richmond area to the South Coast was to prove historically significant in subsequent years was that of John Bazley, or Baseley as it was spelled in the 1850s. Born in 1813 to a family of millers in Northamptonshire, John Bazley arrived in Durban in May 1850 aboard the *Edward*, accompanied by his wife Jane and their four children. Amongst the first to settle in the Richmond district, Bazley's skill as a wheelwright led him to establish a transport business.²³ Innovative and outspoken, he was described by John Moreland, the settler agent, as "an awkward customer though a good colonist and an industrious, go-ahead man."²⁴ Bazley's frustration with the high cost of transport to the port may have contributed to his decision to apply for a grant of Crown land in the Lower Mkomanzi district in 1857.²⁵ In September 1859 he was given the title to 612 acres on the Ifafa river, which he named Nil Desperandum.²⁶



Figure 4.2 A *Natal Mercury* editorial referring to Scottburgh, 9 May 1861

As far as political representation was concerned, Arbuthnot found himself wearing two hats. Although he resided in Lower Mkomanzi he continued to represent Pietermaritzburg County in the Legislative Council. As Lower Mkomanzi – which was then part of Durban County – did not have a direct local representative, Arbuthnot took the initiative in representing the interests of his fellow coastal residents. In turn, Fynn, the resident magistrate, had no hesitation in appointing him as Lower Mkomanzi's first justice of the peace²⁷ in November 1858.²⁸ In 1860, Gould Arthur Lucas, who was for a brief period resident magistrate after Fynn's retirement, even

23 Bazley 2000:25.

24 Bazley 2000:35.

25 Hattersley 1950:227.

26 Spencer 1983:43.

27 A justice of the peace was able to perform many minor legal tasks thereby alleviating the workload of a magistrate.

28 CSO, 109, No. 151, 12 November 1858.

applied to have Arbuthnot appointed as his interpreter.²⁹ Despite the challenges of developing Umzinto Lodge into a viable sugar estate and the distance and the difficulties which travel involved, Arbuthnot seemed to have been conscientious in fulfilling his duties in the colonial legislature in Pietermaritzburg.³⁰ For example, in April 1858 he tabled a report, as chairman of a select committee on general education, which appealed for government grants of at least £25 to be given to each ward in the counties of Weenen and Klip River to establish schools.³¹ At this time only Durban and Pietermaritzburg counties had government aided schools. Arbuthnot's Pietermaritzburg constituents must have been satisfied with his performance as he was petitioned to stand for re-election in 1859 and was returned.³²

Labour question

As Crown land grants continued to be taken up and, as Robert Mann remarked, the coastlands beyond the Mkomanzi were “rapidly filling up” with settlers – he claimed there were 93 settlers in 1858³³ – labour concerns, which were already being heard from coastal planters to the north, were echoed from Natal's newly settled southern frontier. In 1852 Charles Barter expressed doubt “whether continuous and steady labour can ever be obtained from the kafirs ... [i]t is certainly not to be had under the present system”. He argued that there was little incentive for Africans to provide wage labour “beyond that of providing himself with a means of purchasing a wife”.³⁴ As John Lambert has pointed out, the Shepstone location system fostered African independence and was not conducive to the settlers' view that Africans should be a source of cheap labour.³⁵ A longtime colonial civil servant, John Bird, provided further context to the situation when he noted in 1869 that “low wages and the cheapness of the food needed by the native led every European who landed in Natal to wish for kafir labour”. However he observed: “[K]afir labour ... has never been supplied to an extent equivalent to the desire of those who required it.”³⁶

29 CSO, 124, No. 834, 13 August 1860.

30 Law 10 of 1858 stated that travel and transport expenses could be claimed by members of the Legislative Council for no more than 60 days in a calendar year (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 10, No. 491, 15 April 1858).

31 *Government Notice* No. 22, 27 April 1858.

32 Spencer 1981:61; *Government Notice*, No. 29, 29 March 1859. The percentage poll in Pietermaritzburg County was only 27% compared to the colonial average of 44,6% (CSO 111, No. 277, April 1859).

33 Mann 1859:77, 79-80.

34 Barter 1852:163-164.

35 Lambert 1995:56.

36 Bird 1869, KCM 19930, Bird Papers, File 3, 8.

The year of 1859 proved a watershed in Natal as regards the resolution of the labour issue. After several years of debate about procuring indentured labour from India, the newly elected legislature appointed a select committee in May to examine the requirements and regulations necessary to introduce such labour. Arbuthnot was a member of that committee.³⁷ Underlining the need for a positive outcome was the submission of petitions from both Durban and Pietermaritzburg counties, including one from Lower Mkomanzi. That petition, initiated by Alexander Brander of Umzinto and signed by fourteen other residents of the district, was presented on 18 May and requested a supply of indentured Indian labour to ease the shortage of African labour.³⁸ It must have required a strenuous effort to compile the petition, given the isolation of the farms and the difficulties posed by the lack of road infrastructure. This emphasised the urgency of the situation. The appropriate legislation was passed by council in June 1859, but a further eighteen months would elapse before the first indentured Indians arrived in Lower Mkomanzi.³⁹

Travel and transport

While labour posed one important obstacle, an equally if not more critical challenge facing the inhabitants of Lower Mkomanzi was that of travel and transport. When the Arbuthnots trekked to their new home at Umzinto Lodge in 1858, Jane described the roads as “frightful” and the Mkomanzi valley as a precipice which resulted in “breakdowns, misadventures, delays and much anxiety”.⁴⁰ Clara Joyner, in her reminiscences, wrote that when the Joyners moved from Isipingo in 1860, it took seven days to reach their new property at Ifafa called Ellangowan.⁴¹

Although complaints about the condition of roads came from all parts of the colony,⁴² an editorial in the *Mercury* on 5 April 1860 aptly summed up the South Coast’s frustrations when it noted “no part of Natal is so much in need of passable roads as the district about the Umzinto”. Out of determination to address the issue a public meeting of residents of Lower Mkomanzi was held on 24 March 1860 under the chairmanship of James Arbuthnot. John Higham, one of the original settlers of the district, told the meeting that all the existing thoroughfares had been built by the settlers themselves without any government assistance.

37 *Votes and Proceedings*, 1859, Vol. 4, 11.

38 *Votes and Proceedings*, 1859, Vol. 4, 71.

39 The Umzinto Sugar Company received an allotment of 30 indentured labourers (*Natal Star*, 24 November 1860). The delay in the arrival of indentured labour was the result of bureaucratic processes and procedures on the part of the Indian government (Du Bois 2011:22).

40 Arbuthnot 1897:17.

41 Anderson 1946:20.

42 *Natal Mercury*, 9 February 1860.

William Joyner complained that the cost of transport from Umzinto to Durban was nearly three times more than the cost from Durban to Pietermaritzburg, even though the distances were almost the same.⁴³ Following the meeting a petition was drawn up by Alex McLean, manager of the Umzinto Sugar Company, and signed by 37 residents of Lower Mkomanzi. It requested the government to produce a plan for improving the roads within the district. The response of Colonial Secretary David Erskine was not encouraging. He stated that no matter what sum of money was set aside, it would be inadequate for the needs of Lower Mkomanzi. He was emphatic that the claims of Lower Mkomanzi had to be weighed up against other parts of the colony which needed road work just as urgently, and blamed Resident Magistrate Fynn for not procuring sufficient labour.⁴⁴

Arbuthnot's comment on the colonial secretary's response revealed the extent to which transport costs between Lower Mkomanzi and Durban were impacting on the economy of sugar production. He claimed that planters had to pay £7 and ten shillings per ton for transport, which, at a time when sugar fetched around £20 to the ton, severely diminished their profit margin. Aside from the cost, the poor condition of the road to Lower Mkomanzi made the transport of heavy machinery very risky.⁴⁵ Thus, not only were transport difficulties marginalising sugar planters financially, but they were also proving a hindrance towards the mechanisation of mills. Out of this exasperation, however, an innovative solution was germinating: river port shipping.

The *Mercury* had expressed support for what it termed "coasting trade" as early as 1853. At the time a ship called the *Leontine*, built of Natal timber at Port Natal, was plying between St. Lucia, north of Zululand, and the Mtata river mouth (then called Port Albion) in what is today the Transkei area. "When the capabilities of this new coasting trade shall be fully developed", opined the *Mercury*, "we feel confident it will be found an important auxiliary to the general commerce of Natal."⁴⁶

Nothing further developed in this regard until 1856, when the *Mercury* reported enthusiastically on the findings of Captain Patrick Maxwell, a seafarer of some 20 years' experience, who claimed that even on low tides there was a depth of six feet in the channel mouth of the Mkomanzi and estimated that vessels of between 30 and 60 tons could access the river. "We regard the result of Captain Maxwell's observations and surveys as one of the highest importance to our colonial interests", exclaimed the *Mercury*, adding that water carriage would greatly enhance the

43 *Natal Mercury*, 5 April 1860.

44 *Natal Mercury*, 31 May 1860.

45 *Natal Mercury*, 31 May 1860.

46 *Natal Mercury*, 24 February 1853.

value of land in the area.⁴⁷ Robert Mann echoed Maxwell's views when he wrote in 1859 that the river was capable of "the shipment of produce ... with a channel navigable by small craft".⁴⁸ So positive was the feeling that river port shipping would ultimately become a reality that an advertisement, placed by Robert Acutt in 1859 concerning a 300-acre plot of land north of the Amahlongwa river, described it as being "contiguous to the site of the proposed port and harbour at the mouth of the Umcomaas".⁴⁹

Speculation on the possibilities of shipping points along the coast south of the Mkomanzi was also evident in the reports of the surveyor-general, Dr. P.C. Sutherland. In March 1859 his office produced a sketch of the proposed layout of the village to be called 'Scottburg' on the south side of the Mpambinyoni river. The accompanying report noted that the small bay at the mouth of the river was "of such a depth as to afford safe anchorage to ships" and suggested that surfboats could be used to reach ships anchored. Dr. Sutherland also saw similar possibilities on the south side of the Mzumbe river.⁵⁰ According to John Robinson, the possibilities of river port shipping had also preoccupied James Arbuthnot. Reporting on his visit to Umzinto district just weeks after Arbuthnot's death, Robinson wrote that "Mr. Arbuthnot was very sanguine that the beach near the Umzinto would be found available for shipping purposes. He believed that ships might anchor safely off the shore and take in cargo in calm weather."⁵¹ Commercial speculation on shipping prospects continued to appear in the *Mercury*. In advertisements offering leases on its lands, the Umzinto Sugar Company referred to the possibility of coastwise shipping assisting access and transport to the Umzinto district.⁵²

Such references were also timely and topical. Heavy summer rains in 1860 and 1861 had caused rivers to come down in flood. With the complete absence of bridges parts of the colony were cut off for days at a time. Amongst others, a group of 30 indentured Indians on their way to the Umzinto district were held up for ten days at the Lovu river because it was in flood.⁵³ Early in January 1861 residents of the Lower Mkomanzi area petitioned the colonial engineer, Peter Paterson, to do something about the state of the wagon drifts on the Mzinto and Ifafa rivers which were "impassable for both wagons and horsemen caused by the late heavy

47 *Natal Mercury*, 4 July 1856.

48 Mann 1859:79.

49 *Natal Mercury*, 17 November 1859.

50 CSO 111, No. 53, 16 March 1859.

51 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861. From 1886 to 1893 Mzinto bay was frequented by small craft.

52 *Natal Mercury*, 30 October 1860; 7 March 1861.

53 *Natal Star*, 15 December 1860.

and continued rains".⁵⁴ The extent to which colonists were hostages to the vagaries of precipitation that summer saw the *Mercury* urging Paterson to prioritise the erection of bridges.⁵⁵

UMZINTO SUGAR COMPANY.

THE Sugar Factory on this estate being now **COMPLETED** on a scale unequalled in the Colony for power and completeness, the Company are prepared to grant

LEASES

to intending Sugar Growers, of some of their **CHOICE LANDS** adjoining the Mill. The terms originally contemplated have been modified on the most liberal principle.

Rent for the first 2 years	...	...	...	Free
" " next 3 "	...	...	...	10s. per acre.
" " last 5 "	...	...	...	£1 " "

10 years.

A first trial of Sugar making has already established the fact that for quantity and quality the Umzinto Estate yields no other, while the magnitude of the sugar enterprise in that favored locality makes it no longer doubtful that means will be found to save land carriage by shipping coast-wise, either from the Umcomas River, or some suitable spot on the beach nearer the estate.

The Company undertaking to cut and cart as well as manufacture the cane, very limited means will enable an industrious lessee to make for himself a competency in a few years.

Apply to

COQUI & WIRSING,

Agents.

Durban, 26th November, 1860.

Figure 4.3 Umzinto Sugar Company lease, *Natal Mercury*, 21 March 1861

54 CSO 128, No. 89, 4 January 1861.

55 *Natal Mercury*, 21 February 1861.

Any initiative that would facilitate travel and transportation was to be welcomed, and in the end the initiative to establish river port shipping was a private one. Messrs. McArthur and Muirhead and Company of Durban purchased a 63-ton vessel, the *Natalie*. With a draught of only five feet and four inches,⁵⁶ she was thought to be suitable for the hazardous task of navigating river mouths. An advertisement in the *Mercury* on 21 March 1861 was the first indication that an historic occasion was in the offing. It stated that the *Natalie* was to steam to the Mkomanzi river and that tickets for the voyage were available at £2 and two shillings per passenger. On Monday morning, 25 March 1861, the *Natalie* left Durban for the Mkomanzi, arriving at the river mouth at about noon. Finding the tide not full enough, Captain W. Anderson waited almost three hours before successfully bringing the little vessel in and anchoring some 400 metres upstream, much to the delight of local planters and their families who had gathered at what was optimistically called Port Scott (after the governor) to watch history in the making.⁵⁷

The implications of the *Natalie's* voyage were considerable for the South Coast. In terms of distance it meant that a journey by ox wagon, which could take up to five days and involved the crossing of nine rivers, could be reduced to a few hours. In terms of finance a saving of £2 and ten shillings per ton was estimated. For the emerging sugar industry in the Umzinto district, instead of Durban being about 50 miles distant, shipping sugar from the Mkomanzi meant a trek of just fifteen miles. The *Mercury* was elated by the significance of the *Natalie's* voyage and claimed that Durban had “a partial rival in the new port at the mouth of the Umkomaas”.⁵⁸

As will be seen later, that proved an over-optimistic assessment. Nonetheless, the Umzinto Sugar Company exploited the commercial value of the event. In an advertisement in the *Mercury* on 11 April 1861 promoting its recently completed mill and the lands it had available for lease, shipping from the Mkomanzi was cited as an added advantage to the investor. The development of the coasting trade which the *Mercury* had championed since 1853 appeared to have come to fruition. The *Natalie's* coastal schedule showed her servicing ports as far north as the mouth of the Zambezi river, while beyond the Mkomanzi, Port St. Johns, East London and Port Elizabeth were also listed as ports of call.⁵⁹

56 *Government Notice*, No. 123, 1861. Report on the loss of steamship *Natalie*. Draught refers to the depth of water required by a ship for safe flotation.


57 *Natal Mercury*, 28 March 1861.

58 *Natal Mercury*, 28 March 1861.

59 *Natal Star*, 6 April 1861.

FOR PORT SCOTT, UMCOMAS.

The Screw Steamer
"NATALIE,"
Capt. W. ANDERSON,



Will leave for the above Port on **MONDAY**, the 25th **MARCH**, at 6 a.m. A limited number of passengers only can be accommodated. Return Tickets £2 2s.

It is expected that the vessel will return on Wednesday, the 28th inst. For freight or passage apply to

M^rARTHUR, MUIRHEAD & CO.,
Agents.

Figure 4.4 The *Natalie*'s intended first voyage to Mkomanzi, *Natal Mercury*, 21 March 1861

Sugar prospects

The year 1861 marked a watershed for the South Coast, which achieved a possible breakthrough with regard to river port shipping, while the largest mill housed in the biggest building operated by the largest privately owned company, Umzinto Sugar, had gone into production in March 1860. The relocation of settlers from the Byrne and other areas to the Lower Mkomanzi coastal belt and the southward extension of the sugar cane enterprise appeared to indicate that Natal was making tangible progress as a colony. For those reasons, John Robinson, as the new editor of the *Mercury*,⁶⁰ decided to make a thorough investigation of the Natal South Coast. Riding alone on horseback over a two month period during February and March 1861, he visited every sugar estate from Isipingo to the most southerly one at Mtwalume and inland to Umzinto.⁶¹ His observations, published as a six-part series in the *Mercury* during April and May, provide a unique record of the state of the area.

Although highly detailed and descriptive, Robinson's remarks were uncritical and tended to propagate a sense of flourishing enterprise. Of particular note were his overly optimistic references to the tonnage yields of sugar expected. As the oldest

60 Failing health resulted in John Robinson succeeding his father George as editor late in 1860. George Robinson died on 24 January 1861 (Wilks 1977:38-39).

61 Wilks 1977:43.

resident of the Umkomaas district (since 1855), John McKenzie of Craigie Burn had the most established estate and, apart from the Umzinto Sugar Company, his 120 acres of cane was the second largest individual acreage after Arbuthnot, who had 130 acres. McKenzie claimed a return of three tons of sugar per acre.⁶² According to Robinson 788 acres were under cane, but only 410 acres were ready for crushing – yet he confidently asserted that a yield of 1 000 tons was possible because the average yield was two tons per acre.⁶³ Although the statistics supplied in the *Blue Books* at that time did not specify the actual acreage of cane crushed, it is possible to calculate that the yields claimed by McKenzie and Robinson were grossly exaggerated. This can be done by examining the acreage and yield statistics for 1862, 1863 and 1864 of Lower Mkomanzi.

In 1862, although the area under cane in Lower Mkomanzi had grown to 1 240 acres, the total yield was just 451 tons.⁶⁴ In 1863 cane cultivation had increased further to 1 508 acres, yet the total yield was only 498 tons.⁶⁵ Even in the bonanza year of 1864 a yield of 1 032 tons of sugar was achieved from 1 422 acres.⁶⁶ If one assumes that only half of that acreage was ready for crushing, the yield was still less than one ton per acre. Robinson also did not question the long term economic viability of the various individual plantations. He described Charles Ross Sinclair's estate, Restalrig, on the Mpambinyoni as prosperous, despite the fact that it had only 40 acres of cane. With the exception of McKenzie and Arbuthnot, no other planter had holdings larger than 50 acres.⁶⁷ Whilst the enterprise of these men was admirable, the sustainability of their operations was questionable in the light of the start-up costs they all had to bear.

Robert Mann provided an analysis of input costs which settlers to new areas like Lower Mkomanzi faced. Excluding the cost of the land, he calculated expenses for the first year as amounting to £262⁶⁸ and £142 for the second year, but cautioned that fluctuating prices of labour and other essentials could change that calculation. Mann also made the mistake of anticipating a yield of two tons of sugar per acre, which, as noted above, did not occur.⁶⁹

62 *Natal Mercury*, 9 May 1861.

63 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861.

64 *Natal Blue Book*, 1862, X2-3.

65 *Natal Blue Book*, 1863, X2-3.

66 *Natal Blue Book*, 1864, X2-4.

67 John Bazley of Nil Desperandum and George Compton of Southern Home had only 25 acres of cane each. *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861. Restalrig was named after a suburb in Edinburgh (see Hocking 1992:44).

68 This included the purchase of oxen, a cart, implements such as a plough, harrow, hoes, doors and windows for a house or barn, cane tops, food and labourers' wages.

69 Mann 1859:83.

By 1861, Mann's figures were not only three years out of date, they excluded the cost of indentured Indian labour which Robinson cited as being "fairly widely" used. In addition to those expenses, several planters had bought mills – Robinson cited three steam mills and two cattle mills in use, with more mills on order.⁷⁰ Given the high transport costs and other costs such as packaging and brokerage, the planter's return on a ton of sugar was marginal, especially when the retail price dropped from around £20 per ton in 1860 to £16 per ton in 1864.⁷¹

Ironically, of all the estates visited by Robinson in 1861, the one that he regarded as the most promising was the first to be declared insolvent. It was James Arbuthnot's Umzinto Lodge. Robinson wrote⁷²

There is no sugar estate more likely to attract the stranger's eye than the Umzinto Lodge Sugar Estate ... Commenced three years ago, it has been steadily increasing up to this time, when there are 130 acres bearing fine cane and 80 acres ready for this year's manufacture.

Arbuthnot had ordered a crushing mill from Aberdeen, which started work in December 1860.⁷³ He leased 40 acres to Charles Eaglestone, his neighbour and tenant, and had erected a small school and chapel on his estate.⁷⁴ But his death at the age of 45 in May 1861⁷⁵ left his wife Jane and their eight children in dire straits. The most pressing of Arbuthnot's creditors were the agents for his mill from Aberdeen. In January 1862 Umzinto Lodge was declared insolvent and Arbuthnot's property was auctioned on 21 January 1863.⁷⁶ But Umzinto Lodge was not sold. Instead it was cultivated by James Bell until 1870. Jane Arbuthnot was permitted to remain in the homestead and to cultivate five acres. In 1865 she moved to nearby Equeefa where her son, St. George, purchased the farm Arborville.⁷⁷

In the decade after 1852 a line of sugar estates had sprung up along the Natal coast, from the Tugela in the north to the Mtwalume in the south. But it was in the south that the pursuit of sugar cane production was advancing Natal's southern frontier and proving the vanguard of colonisation. Reflecting on this at the conclusion of his

70 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861. Depending on the size of the engine, the price of a mill was upwards of £200.

71 Osborn 1964:67.

72 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861.

73 Spencer 1981:61

74 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861.

75 There is some doubt as to the exact date of his death. Spencer (1981:61) lists 4 May 1861, but his passing was reported in the *Natal Star* of 4 May, so his death must have been prior to that date.

76 Arbuthnot 1897:18; *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 15, No. 740, 13 January 1863. The inventory of property included 320 acres in the vicinity of Richmond and five plots in the village.

77 Spencer 1981:62.

series of articles, Robinson posed the questions: “Is this no sign of progress? Is this no pledge of prosperity?”⁷⁸ Although rhetorical and typical of the optimism which infused colonial thinking at that time, at least two decades would pass before the South Coast would realise its potential.

Shipping

The *Natalie’s* single, successful entry of the Mkomanzi river in March 1861 promoted optimism that river shipping was a *fait accompli*. But this view turned out to be disappointing, for it was not until 1880 that shipping to and from the Mkomanzi river became a fairly regular reality. The dire need for an alternative means of transport tended to blind opinion as to the realities of shipping on a river such as the Mkomanzi. In his Public Works Report for 1862, Peter Paterson, the colonial engineer, pointed out that the varied influences of winds, tides and currents presented “serious, although not insurmountable obstacles to the navigation of the channel”. In addition, a sandbank in the surf sometimes barred entry or exit.⁷⁹

Alone among the newspapers of the day the *Mercury* eagerly promoted the idea of river shipping. Writing of his visit to the Umkomaas district, Robinson reported on the views put forward by John Bazley and Alexander Brander on shipping possibilities at the mouth of the Mpambinyoni river. Recognising that the shallow nature of its lagoon ruled out prospects of shipping, they saw the rocky promontory on the south side of the river mouth as affording shelter to small craft. “They calculate that the expenditure of a few hundred pounds in the construction of a landing jetty would render shipping perfectly practicable.” New Devonport, opined Robinson, could become a rival to shipping on the Mkomanzi. Indulging his readers further, Robinson provided what has turned out to be a very accurate glimpse of the Scottburgh that materialised in the twentieth century:

Imaginatively one already realises the day when marts, warehouses, shops and private dwelling houses shall make this spot conspicuous on the coast and when wealthy sheep farmers of the uplands with the enervated sugar planters on the coast shall fly to Scottburg in pursuit of pleasure and health.⁸⁰

Deployed on a busy schedule covering ports between Quelimane in Mozambique and Port Elizabeth in the Cape,⁸¹ the *Natalie’s* next visit to the Mkomanzi was only

78 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861.

79 Select documents presented to the Legislative Council, No. 28, 1862, 21, presented 15 June 1863. KCG 1910.

80 *Natal Mercury*, 9 May 1861.

81 *Natal Star*, 6 April 1861.

in May. On that occasion several women and children were among her passengers, as well as twenty tons of cargo. But the hazards of navigating the mouth of the Mkomanzi were apparent when on entering the river she struck a sandbank and had to wait for high tide before floating free. The value of her service was reflected in the cargo she took back to Durban: 40 tons of sugar from local estates, the equivalent of twelve wagon loads.⁸² At a saving of £2 and ten shillings per ton, that single voyage earned those planters whose sugar the *Natalie* had shipped an extra £100. This spurred Robinson to suggest that within a short time “shipping stations or out-ports shall be dotted along our Natal Coast”⁸³

During June and July the *Natalie* made further trips to Mozambique,⁸⁴ returning to the Mkomanzi on 6 August. But on leaving the river mouth, she met with misfortune. When the master of the *Natalie*, William Graham, decided to depart on 11 August, the effect of the spring tide on the depth of the water had diminished. On attempting to leave, the ship grounded in the river mouth. With a large swell running she was struck by a wave and swung broadside in the surf. Efforts using ropes to pull her around failed and the *Natalie* came to rest on the rocks. At the time she was carrying 736 bags of sugar, the equivalent of almost 50 tons. Only 137 bags were eventually salvaged.⁸⁵

In a letter to the colonial secretary, retired seaman Captain Pat Maxwell, whose sugar estate was on the Mkomanzi, stated that the loss of the *Natalie* was a great “inconvenience” which would “damage the interests of this district” and urged the appointment of a commission of enquiry.⁸⁶ This was convened, as a matter of course, and took place in Durban. The commission found that Captain Graham had been rash in attempting to depart on an ebbing tide with a ship fully laden with sugar,⁸⁷ but was positive as regards the prospects of shipping on the Mkomanzi. “We consider that the wreck of the *Natalie* does not detract from the value of the river Umkomazi as a place for shipment for produce at the proper season of the year”, stated the

82 *Natal Mercury*, 16 May 1861.

83 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861. In 1864, the surveyor-general (Dr. P.C. Sutherland) and port captain (William Bell) surveyed the North Coast. They found that it lacked “points or indents capable of affording shelter to shipping” and as such was unsuitable for coastal and river shipping (CSO 208, No. 1543, 28 October 1864).

84 *Natal Star*, 22 June and 25 July 1861.

85 Even though her entry was on a full spring tide, she grounded on a sandbank just inside the river mouth and remained there for two days before being able to proceed upstream (CSO 137, No. 1459, October 1861, Report on the loss of steamer *Natalie*).

86 CSO 135, No. 1229, 18 August 1861.

87 In his defence Graham claimed that he had carefully monitored the water levels and measured a depth of six feet and eight inches, a foot more water than the *Natalie* required. In his evidence Captain Maxwell considered it “an act of madness for the vessel to attempt to go out the morning she started” (CSO 137, No. 1459, October 1861, Report on the loss of steamer *Natalie*).

commissioners in their report. They also endorsed Maxwell's submission on the construction of vessels suitable for river navigation. The *Natalie*, in his view, had insufficient steam power and was at least twenty feet too long. Although the *Natalie* was condemned as a "total wreck" by the commission,⁸⁸ a report in the *Mercury* on 5 December 1861 raised hopes that it would resume service as soon as its engine had been repaired. A subsequent report in January 1862 indicated that the *Natalie* had succeeded in returning to Durban under her own power.⁸⁹ Renamed the *Congune* by her new owners she resumed service, but not to the Mkomanzi.⁹⁰

The Natal government remained determined to press on with the prospect of river port shipping on the Mkomanzi. Work began on the construction of a stone breakwater on the south side of the river mouth in October 1861, and by December a breakwater of 100 feet in length had been laid.⁹¹ Although the resident magistrate, Dunbar Moodie, made no mention at all of river port shipping in his report on Lower Mkomanzi for 1862,⁹² the eagerness of local sugar planters to see progress in this regard was reflected in a June 1862 petition to the governor signed by 32 planters in which they cited the view of marine engineer George Abernethy, then working on the Vetch pier project, that the mouth of the Mkomanzi was ideally suited for shipping. He asserted that £3 000 spent on the entrance to the river would prove an "inestimable boon to all".⁹³

Coincidentally, in June 1862 the colonial engineer, Peter Paterson, was directed by Governor Scott to conduct a survey of the capabilities of the seaboard for "shipment of coastal produce". Paterson's report was based on cursory observations as a proper survey, he said, would take eighteen months, and focused only on the coast between the Mkomanzi and Ifafa rivers. For the latter and the Mzinto river, he saw potential for the use of so-called Moses boats⁹⁴ to ferry goods from the beach to a waiting ship. Rough piers of rubble could afford some shelter for surfboats to reach a ship waiting beyond the surf line. Although he thought the Mkomanzi had potential as a small craft harbour, he advised the blasting of rocks from the mouth of the river in order to

88 CSO 137, No. 1459, October 1861, Report on the loss of steamer, *Natalie*.

89 *Natal Mercury*, 21 January 1862.

90 Until 1868, the *Congune* plied regularly between Mauritius and Durban. In 1869 she transported 1 311 gallons of rum to Adelaide, South Australia (*Natal Mercury*, 21 October 1869).

91 Select documents presented to the Natal Legislative Council, Document No. 28, 1862, presented 15 June 1863, 21. The *Natal Blue Book* of 1862, C17, reported that £582.09 had been spent on the improvement of the mouth of the Mkomanzi.

92 CSO 171, No. 689, 28 February 1863.

93 CSO 152, No. 1150, June 1862.

94 Six-man rowing boat capable of carrying a large load to a ship waiting beyond the surf line. Used in the West Indies.

minimise the risk posed to navigation.⁹⁵ Based on Paterson's recommendations, the Legislative Council allocated £4 000 in September 1862 for the improvement of the mouth of the Mkomanzi.⁹⁶ At the same time Governor Scott toured the South Coast, visiting the Mkomanzi, the Mpambinyoni, Mzinto, Mtwalume and Ifafa. His tour included a foray into Nomansland, beyond the Mzimkulu. This first visit to the area by a governor was an indication of its growing importance and was well received by local settlers.⁹⁷

Despite setbacks such as the drowning of three Africans engaged in pier construction⁹⁸ and heavy rains in March 1864, which resulted in part of the pilings on the north bank being swept away,⁹⁹ the outlook on the Mkomanzi's potential as a port remained hopeful. In anticipation of the arrival of a new steamer, the *Gnu*, in February 1865¹⁰⁰ the collector of customs, George Rutherford, visited the mouth of the Mkomanzi in September 1864. He noted that confining the outlet of the river by means of a seawall along the southern side provided easier access to the channel and that constructing wharves in the river would facilitate the exchange of cargoes and save planters 30 to 35 shillings per ton in transport costs.¹⁰¹ In September 1864 the *Albion* entered the river and loaded sugar, but was unable to depart for several days because of strong winds.¹⁰² Nonetheless, the *Mercury* cited this as proof of the viability of shipping in the Mkomanzi.¹⁰³ Despite the *Mercury's* claim, the *Albion* made no further calls to the Mkomanzi, even though the harbour works were reported as having been completed.¹⁰⁴ The *Gnu* made its maiden voyage from England, reaching Durban only in November 1865.¹⁰⁵ With a length of 70 feet and drawing eight feet of water, it was totally unsuited to river shipping. The ship later was used in the Cape to run supplies from Table Bay to Robben Island.¹⁰⁶

95 Selected Documents presented to the Natal Legislative Council, Document No. 33, presented 14 July 1862.

96 *Natal Mercury*, 5 September 1862.

97 *Natal Mercury*, 26 September 1862.

98 *Natal Mercury*, 7 August 1863.

99 *Natal Mercury*, 4 March 1864. Fourteen wagons waited ten days to negotiate the Lovu, Mpambinyoni and Mkomanzi rivers after heavy rains (*Natal Mercury*, 1 March 1864).

100 *Natal Mercury*, 29 April 1864. Lower Mkomanzi Resident Magistrate Dunbar Moodie, in his report for 1864, expressed the hope that a steamship would shortly recommence service to the district as transport difficulties were retarding progress (CSO 214, No. 144, 18 January 1865).

101 CSO 209 No. 1671, 19 September 1864.

102 *Natal Mercury*, 22 September 1864.

103 *Natal Mercury*, 1 October 1864.

104 *Natal Mercury*, 3 June 1865.

105 *Natal Mercury*, 11 November 1865.

106 *Natal Mercury*, 31 May 1866.

As a result of the failure to make river port transportation feasible, transport difficulties remained severe for the settlers of Lower Mkomanzi. In February 1864 30 locals, including William Joyner and John Bazley, petitioned the governor for a ferry at the drift on the Lovu river because of the “very vicious impediment the river presents during the rainy season”. This was not conceded, as a certain E. Pearce was operating a private boat.¹⁰⁷ Shipping on the Mkomanzi had failed to materialise despite the *Mercury*’s blandishments, and the expenditure of more than £4 500 on improving access to the mouth of the river.¹⁰⁸ The sum of money spent on the Mkomanzi was a fraction of that spent in Durban, where there was an outcry in 1864 at the expense of £113 000 on the failed Vetch pier project to improve access to Durban harbour.¹⁰⁹ Little further progress was made and by 1868 the harbour works at the mouth of the Mkomanzi were in a derelict condition.¹¹⁰

Growing European presence

Despite these problems optimism persisted that the South Coast could be colonised successfully. The *Natal Almanac* of 1863 felt that the “commercial and agricultural prospects have as yet scarcely dawned”.¹¹¹ Elsewhere in the district, which up until 1858 had been a remote wilderness, evidence of European presence was steadily growing. Robinson noted orange and banana groves on Ida Vale, the estate which belonged to Bunting Johnstone.¹¹² Situated remotely in the Mtwalume area were the two most southerly sugar estates in Natal at that time. They belonged to Joseph Few and George Compton. Robinson also made a geological observation: “Silicious symptoms are met with everywhere. Who shall say whether the golden god lies beneath these crystalline upheavals?”¹¹³

The discovery of a few specks of gold in the Mtwalume river in 1868 touched off a minor interest in speculation. William Joyner of Ifafa first alerted readers of the *Mercury* with this news and urged a government geologist to visit the area to “give an opinion on the prospects”.¹¹⁴ There was also a claim that gold had been discovered

107 CSO 199, No. 648, 15 February 1864; 18 May 1864.

108 A total of £3 074 had been spent up to 31 December 1863 (*Natal Government Gazette*, 16, No. 901, 24 May 1864). A further £1 536 was earmarked for the harbour works in 1864 (*Natal Blue Book*, 1864, C17).

109 *Natal Mercury*, 17 August 1867.

110 *Natal Mercury*, 12 November 1868.

111 *Natal Almanac*, 1863, 41-42.

112 *Natal Mercury*, 16 May 1861.

113 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861.

114 *Natal Mercury*, 14 August 1868. A second round of gold speculation began in 1887 in the Umzinto district and persisted until 1893. See chapter seven.

in the Amahlongwa river.¹¹⁵ Joyner urged people who were out of work to prospect in the rivers, but there was little public interest. Although tiny quantities of gold were found in the following months, as a report in November 1869 indicated, gold prospecting did not prove economically viable.¹¹⁶ Officially, however, the government encouraged colonists to search for gold. Law 16 of 1869 offered rewards of £1 000 and more to anyone responsible for locating a goldfield which yielded 500 ounces or more of gold over a twelve-month period.¹¹⁷

Also in this isolated southern part of Lower Mkomanzi were three Congregational American Board mission stations. The first, on the Ifafa river, had been in existence since 1848.¹¹⁸ Headed by reverend S.B. Stone, it consisted of a cluster of cottages and a school for African children.¹¹⁹ Reverend Hyman Wilder was in charge of the American Board mission station on the banks of the Mtwalume. Established in 1851, it also provided vocational training and tuition in handicraft.¹²⁰ Further south, on the Mzumbe river, a new American mission station was established under reverend Elijah Robbins.¹²¹ In 1863, using bricks made in his kiln and with the help of local labour, he built the first brick house in Umzumbe. The wattle and daub house in which he and his wife had been residing since 1861 was then used as a church and a school.¹²² Apart from attendance at Sunday services there was frequent social interaction between settlers and the men of the cloth.

David Aiken's diary of the late 1860s records the reverends Wilder, Stone and Barker, the latter belonging to the Anglican Church, as having been present at social gatherings. Aiken's records also show that settlers were not exclusive in their membership of specific denominations. Many of them attended the opening of the reverend Wilder's new church on 1 December 1867.¹²³ Robinson did note the existence of a few traders in this area¹²⁴ which would have added to the process of interaction between settlers and local Africans. In Umzinto, the only settlement of note in Lower Mkomanzi, 80 settlers were registered as members of the St. Patrick's

115 *Natal Mercury*, 20 August 1868.

116 *Natal Mercury*, 16 November 1869. A total of six ounces from the Mzinto river was bought by a Durban jeweller (*Natal Mercury*, 17 July 1869).

117 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 21, No. 1193, 28 September 1869.

118 Etherington 1978:27.

119 *Natal Mercury*, 16 May 1861.

120 Etherington 1978:27; *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861.

121 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861.

122 *Annals of Umzumbe 1860-1965*, compiled by Constance Cruikshank of Umzumbe Women's Institute, 6, MS FED, KCM 4206.

123 Diary of David Chalmers Aiken, July 1867-1870, 1-16, Ref 581, Old House Museum, Aliwal St, Durban.

124 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861.

Anglican parish.¹²⁵ The settler population of Lower Mkomanzi was given as 279 in 1862, made up of 160 males and 119 females, while the African population was put at 11 960.¹²⁶



Figure 4.5 St. Patrick's church in Umzinto

Other evidence of European presence was indicated by the issuing of a retail shop licence to Mrs. Elizabeth Welsh on the Mtwalume river in February 1860¹²⁷ and the proclamation of a public pound at the residence of John Pearse at lot number seventeen between the Mzimayi and Mzinto rivers.¹²⁸ Only in 1861 were the first government aided schools for whites established in Lower Mkomanzi. These were at Umzinto under reverend Joseph Barker and at Ifafa under Charles Paglar.¹²⁹ According to statistical returns for 1862, there were twenty-one pupils enrolled at

125 *Natal Blue Book*, 1862, S 8-9.

126 *Natal Blue Book*, 1862, T2; R2.

127 *Natal Government Gazette*, 12, No.591, 13 March 1860.

128 *Natal Government Gazette*, 12, No 604, 5 June 1860. Gould Arthur Lucas, who temporarily held the position of resident magistrate of Lower Mkomanzi until the appointment of James Dunbar Moodie in August 1860, had recommended Pearse for the job of pound master. He also stated that it was an "absolute necessity" that a pound was located in the Umzinto district, as the nearest pound was in Durban (CSO 122, No. 513, 3 May 1860).

129 CSO 130, No. 421, 23 March 1861. Mission schools were exclusively for Africans.

Umzinto and eleven at Ifafa. The difficult task of providing education in a frontier society is tangible from a report in the *Mercury* in November 1862, which noted that although the school in Ifafa had been in operation for two years, the construction of a proper schoolroom and accommodation for the teacher, Charles Paglar, had only subsequently become possible thanks to the “unwearied exertions” of William Joyner in obtaining £61 in subscriptions from a “new and struggling community”. A further £10 was anticipated from the government.¹³⁰ Besides the schools operating at Umzinto and Ifafa, the attendance of twenty children at a school on John MacKenzie’s estate at Mkomanzi was seen by the resident magistrate, W. James Dunbar Moodie, as also meriting a state grant.¹³¹



Figure 4.6 Georgina Nelson’s tombstone

Another indication of the growth of the region was the inauguration of a regular postal service between Durban and Umzinto from late 1860. Mail deliveries in both directions were scheduled twice weekly, each delivery taking a day’s travel.¹³² This came about after Moodie had complained about the inconvenience caused by postal delays, claiming that whereas mail from Pietermaritzburg usually took 36 hours to reach Durban, it took five to seven days between Durban and the South Coast.¹³³ By 1864 Umzinto enjoyed a thrice-weekly mail delivery.¹³⁴

In expectation of progress, two townships were surveyed on either side of the Mkomanzi river mouth and named North and South Barrow respectively. There was little settlement on the north bank during the period under review, while settlement on the south bank made progress only after the arrival of the railway in 1897.¹³⁵ Further evidence of the limited settlement at Umkomaas was that a

130 *Natal Mercury*, 14 November 1862.

131 CSO 170, No.600, 23 February 1863.

132 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 12, No. 625, 9 October 1860.

133 CSO 125, 14 September 1860.

134 CSO 214, No. 144, 18 January 1865.

135 In 1862 St. Brides, under reverend Arentz Tonessen, was the first church established in Umkomaas (Umkomaas Annals 1828-1980, 76, MS FED KCM 55071). When Tonessen left Umkomaas in 1876 the church closed (*Natal Mercury*, 1 February 1876).

temporary building for a public school was erected only in 1864.¹³⁶ As noted in the case of Isipingo, the formation of rifle clubs constituted evidence of organised settler presence. The Umkomaas Rifle Club was formed in February 1860. In reporting this development the *Mercury* welcomed the “strengthening of the defensive position” of the southern end of the colony.¹³⁷

The Umzinto Rifle Club was the first on the South Coast, predating Umkomaas by a few months. In December 1864 the settler defence line was extended to the Mzimkulu river with the formation of the Ifafa Mounted Rifles.¹³⁸ These clubs not only provided a degree of social cohesion among settlers in what were remote frontier areas like Lower Mkomanzi, but were also part of a local defence network. Great interest and enthusiastic participation characterised the second annual general meeting of the Umzinto Rifle Club, which took place on 31 December 1860.¹³⁹ Shooting competitions were described as convivial occasions. At the inter-club contest between Isipingo and Lower Mkomanzi, held on the Canonby estate in July 1864, post-competition festivities flourished late into the night.¹⁴⁰

In March 1860, 38 residents of the area petitioned the governor about the poor state of the roads in Lower Mkomanzi.¹⁴¹ Such complaints, however, emanated from across the colony, as the *Mercury*, noted.¹⁴² Progress in this regard proved tardy for decades. An idea of the physical challenge that roadmakers faced is provided by a Public Works Report of 1862. It stated that a new passage 30 to 40 feet wide had been cut through the bush from the Mbogintwini area to Amanzimtoti. But for residents of Lower Mkomanzi the only consolation was that a new wagon drift was to be laid out on the Mzinto river and that cuttings and culverts were to be constructed.¹⁴³

Georgina Nelson

Victorian society, as J.D. Beall has noted, regarded women as “frail, passive, delicate and decorative”.¹⁴⁴ In the words of Buckner and Francis “it was a world in which men acted and women, for the most part, simply were”.¹⁴⁵ While there certainly was

136 *Natal Mercury*, 2 February 1864.

137 *Natal Mercury*, 16 February 1860. The report listed Alex McLean as club chairman, Alexander Brander as secretary and John Higham as treasurer.

138 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 16, No. 932, 20 December 1864.

139 *Natal Mercury*, 10 January 1861.

140 *Natal Mercury*, 12 July 1864. A similar event took place in July 1863 (*Natal Mercury*, 10 July 1863).

141 The petition was presented to the Legislative Council on 14 June 1860. *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 6, 1860, 26.

142 *Natal Mercury*, 9 February 1860.

143 Select document No. 28, 1862, presented 15 June 1863. KCG.

144 Beall 1982:95.

145 Buckner & Francis 2005:36.

a tendency to perpetuate the social constraints and status associated with women, it is arguable that colonial society afforded opportunities for women to play roles they would most likely have been denied in Britain. The frontier nature of vast areas of Natal, such as Lower Mkomanzi, and the multitasking roles required within settler families in order to survive¹⁴⁶ was one pragmatic reason why Victorian attitudes towards women were moderated. The colonial secretary's records contain numerous instances of colonists applying for government posts. This was one way to obtain a measure of financial security under very trying economic circumstances.

Although Beall has stated that the *Blue Books* are not helpful in providing an accurate division of labour and that the data they contain is incomplete,¹⁴⁷ aside from those women employed as teachers, the civil lists over a twenty year period show that at least six women were employed as post mistresses.¹⁴⁸ One of them, Georgina Reynolds of Umkomaas, also held the position of ferry keeper for three years. All of the post mistresses served for lengthy periods of time – 30 years in the case of Mrs. Reynolds (later Nelson). Salaries were modest, £10 to £12 a year, which by the 1890s had risen to £15 a year,¹⁴⁹ but nonetheless, provided a modicum of independence. The position of pound mistress was also open to women; the pound mistress of Lower Mkomanzi in 1884 was a Mrs. Shooter.¹⁵⁰

Henry Reynolds' death on 18 January 1862¹⁵¹ posed a crisis for Georgina Reynolds and her six children, as she would no longer have the benefit of his income of £36 per annum as ferry keeper.¹⁵² In informing the colonial secretary of the death of her husband and noting that he had also served as postal clerk, she asked if she could be granted continuance of those offices. To underline her request she pointed out that she owned the ferry by virtue of the fact that it was built by her late husband and that it was larger than the one which the government supplied.¹⁵³ In a further bid to promote her cause, she referred to a petition which was circulating in Lower

146 Beall 1982:115; Gordon 1970:168.

147 Beall 1982:118.

148 In addition to Mrs Nelson they were: Mary Potter at Noodsberg, appointed in 1863; Elizabeth Tarboton appointed in 1874 at Byrnetown; Caroline Fox at Springvale, appointed in 1880; Mary Jane Atkinson, appointed in 1875 at Spring Grange (its name was changed to Westville in 1905); Isabella Burne at Umhlali, appointed in 1880.

149 *Natal Blue Book*, 1892/1893, C23.

150 CSO 991, No. 4814, 2 March 1884.

151 CSO 141, No. 99, 20 January 1862.

152 The amount of £36 was the standard annual income ferrymen received from the colonial government. There were thirteen official ferrymen in Natal at that time (*Natal Blue Book*, 1866, M28).

153 CSO 195, No. 231, 3 February 1864: Mrs. Reynolds was acknowledged as having exclusive right and privilege regarding the ferry boat.

Mkomanzi in support of her application for the posts.¹⁵⁴ Her request was granted and her appointments as postmistress and ferry keeper were formally approved on 9 and 17 April 1862 respectively.¹⁵⁵ However, her application for the position of postmistress was not without challenge. John McKenzie, one of the oldest residents of Lower Mkomanzi, and the new resident magistrate, Dunbar Moodie, both supported the application of a Joseph Shooter.¹⁵⁶ But support for Georgina Reynolds from the former chief postmaster, William Collins, enjoyed higher favour.¹⁵⁷

Apart from complaints by Magistrate Moodie in 1863 and 1864 that residents on the south bank of the Mkomanzi were inconvenienced because the postmistress resided on the north bank,¹⁵⁸ Georgina Nelson faced little opposition and continued as postmistress at Umkomaas until her retirement in the 1890s. After marrying Nicholas Nelson she gave up the post of ferry keeper. In February 1865 Nelson's appointment as ferry keeper became official.¹⁵⁹

The Nelsons owned and managed the Drift Hotel, which was situated four miles up the Mkomanzi.¹⁶⁰ Georgina was noted for her convivial role as hostess at the hotel, from which she finally retired in 1904.¹⁶¹ In terms of the role of women, it is of note that women managed three of the four hotels in Umkomaas in 1905. They were Mrs. Williams at the Umkomaas Hotel, Mrs. Salmon at the Rand Hotel and Mrs. Humphreys at Humphrey's Hotel.¹⁶² The response of colonial society to Georgina Nelson's death in 1911 showed that there was inherent appreciation for the role of women. Unusually for a woman at the time, her funeral was attended by a very large number of people in Umkomaas and she was accorded a black bordered obituary column in the *Mercury* headed "A pioneer colonist of Natal".¹⁶³

154 CSO 142, No. 127, 27 January 1862. In all, 36 signatures were gathered in support of Georgina being appointed to the two positions (CSO 144, No. 335, 26 February 1862).

155 *Natal Blue Book* 1862, M22, M28. Also CSO 147, No. 604. Her annual salary of £36 was confirmed, backdated to 19 January 1862.

156 CSO 142, No. 127 and 151, 10 February 1862.

157 CSO 142, 29 January 1862.

158 Report of the Commission on Re-organisation of the Postal Service, Document No .6, 1863, to Legislative Council, 4. The commission recommended a receiving box on the south bank (CSO 196, No. 393, 2 March 1864). In his response on 9 March 1864, the colonial secretary stated that he saw no reason to sanction the relocation of the facility.

159 *Natal Blue Book*, 1875, M24.

160 See advertisements carried in the October 1864 editions of the *Natal Mercury*; *Natal Directory*, 1908, 1,109.

161 *Natal Mercury*, 1 September 1904. The Drift Hotel was noted as a popular destination for honeymoon couples.

162 *Natal Mercury*, 11 May 1905. The other hotel in Umkomaas, the South Barrow, was run by a Mr. Louch.

163 *Natal Mercury*, 14 March 1911. Georgina Nelson died on 9 March 1911 at the age of 85. The *Mercury* noted that kindness and willingness to help the sick were hallmarks of Mrs. Nelson's character.

ISIPINGO HOTEL.

MRS. BINGHAM begs to tender her sincere thanks to the public generally for the liberal support she has met with since her commencement in the above line, and hopes by constant attention to business to merit a still further share of their patronage.

Good accommodation for man and horse. Every attention paid to the comfort of Ladies and Families.

A Spring 'Bus will run on and after SATURDAY the 20th of May, WEEKLY, and oftener if required, to suit the public at large, at reasonable charges. For further particulars apply at Mr. J. SMITH's, Commercial Hotel, Durban, where the 'Bus will stay; and at the Hotel, Isipingo. The 'Bus will leave Isipingo at half-past 7 a.m., and the Commercial Hotel in the afternoon at 3 o'clock. Passengers must please be ready by this hour to prevent delay.

May 15, 1865.

THE DRIFT HOTEL, LOWER UMCOMAAS.

NICHOLAS NELSON.

GOOD STABLING.

Figure 4.7 The Drift Hotel in Umkomaas, *Natal Mercury*, 1865

Grant violations

Finding a balance between the letter and the spirit of the law has always been a challenge to magistrates, as Moodie encountered in cases involving two colonists, John Peddie and Bunting Johnstone. As occupants of Crown land grants, they found

Usually only the obituaries of prominent politicians or clergymen such as bishop Colenso received black border embellishment.

themselves in breach of the conditions pertaining to those grants. Peddie was fined £10 for violating the contract because the building he had erected was deemed inferior to what was required. He was fined an additional £10 because his farm was unoccupied for a period longer than six months.¹⁶⁴ Johnstone objected to being charged with non-occupation of the 150-acre parcel of Crown land he had been granted, claiming that it was fit only for grazing. The colonial secretary declined to exempt him from non-occupation tax.¹⁶⁵ His non-compliance continued, and in 1862 Moodie noted that Johnstone owed £8 and four shillings for being in violation of the conditions of his land grant. Again Johnstone refused to pay up claiming that it was “a paltry bit of wasteland”.¹⁶⁶ By 1863 Johnstone had become exasperated by Moodie’s insistence and engaged his attorney, Charles Sinclair of Restalrig estate, to mediate on his behalf with the colonial government. After paying a fine of £4, Johnstone instructed Sinclair to cede the title deeds on the disputed land to the attorney general, Michael Gallwey, who duly agreed.¹⁶⁷ However, Johnstone’s legal difficulties were not isolated. In his report on the Lower Mkomanzi district for 1863, Moodie noted that of 71 quitrent farms, only 26 were occupied. The remaining 45 were liable for non-occupation tax.¹⁶⁸

The rancour expressed in a report in the *Mercury* on 27 December 1862 showed extreme bias by some of the residents of Lower Mkomanzi over Moodie’s magistracy. He was accused of favouring the appointment of Dr. Joseph Hooper as district surgeon over Dr. William Augustine Mahony. The truth was that Hooper had applied for the post in September 1861, nine months before a petition was filed requesting the appointment of Mahony. In official correspondence Moodie indicated that he had no particular preference for either doctor.¹⁶⁹ Hooper, who was appointed to the post in August 1862, resigned in November 1863, citing his wife’s ill-health as the reason. Dr. Mahony was then appointed in his place¹⁷⁰ and served until March 1866 when he died of consumption.¹⁷¹

Even the location of Moodie’s office and court proved problematic. Situated on John Mackenzie’s estate on the Mkomanzi,¹⁷² it proved inconvenient for residents in the Umzinto district as well as those living further south.¹⁷³ Writing in February 1862,

164 CSO 124, 25 August 1860, Surveyor General’s report.

165 CSO 131, No. 491, 1 April 1861, 9 April 1861.

166 CSO 146, No. 522, 19 March 1862.

167 CSO 166, No. 101, 6 and 28 January 1863.

168 CSO 193, No. 95, 21 January 1864.

169 CSO 154, No. 1301, 28 July 1862; CSO 151, No. 1074, 23 June 1862.

170 CSO 189, No. 2474, 10 November 1863; 17 November 1863.

171 CSO 246, No. 708, 19 March 1866.

172 CSO 167, No. 242, 21 January 1863.

173 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861.

Moodie expressed the view that the magistracy should be based in Umzinto as the chief settlement in the district.¹⁷⁴ The death of James Arbuthnot, who was also justice of the peace, added to the inconvenience of residents living south of the Mzinto river. As with road construction, the colonial government's response was tardy. But a notice in the *Government Gazette* in April 1863 calling for tenders for the construction of a district prison on the property of Bunting Johnstone near the Mzinto river provided an indication that eventually Umzinto would become the legal seat of the region.¹⁷⁵ The colonial budget for 1863 listed £900 for construction of a jail in Umzinto, but a year later the work was still incomplete.¹⁷⁶ However, a decade would pass before the colonial budget would reflect provision for offices and a courtroom for the magistrate at Umzinto.¹⁷⁷ Like Fynn before him, Moodie was obliged to travel around Lower Mkomanzi in dispensing justice.¹⁷⁸

Economic trends

According to Basil Leverton, Natal basked in what he called an “Indian summer of economic buoyancy” because of increased sugar harvests from 1863 to 1865.¹⁷⁹ Simultaneously there was an improvement in colonial credit facilities and a general commercial boom. Three new banks opened in 1863, bringing the number in business to seven.¹⁸⁰ “Natal seems destined to be plunged into a tide of progress so sudden and rapid”, noted the *Mercury* in an editorial on 5 May 1863, referring to the harbour works, the telegraph line from Durban to Pietermaritzburg, and possible railway development. The boom extended to road traffic as well, with 11 000 wagons engaged in trade from the port to the interior. These conditions “seemed to imbue all in Natal with rash over-optimism and the result was a great deal of financial mismanagement”, Leverton argued.¹⁸¹ Referring to Natal's lopsided trade balance in which imports of £591 686 were more than double the £220 267 value of exports, the *Witness* warned that the colony was “eating, drinking and wearing more than we pay for”.¹⁸²

174 CSO 143, No. 212, 3 February 1862.

175 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 15, No. 755, 28 April 1863.

176 *Natal Blue Book*, 1863, C17; CSO 167, No. 242, 8 April 1863; *Natal Blue Book*, 1864, C19.

177 *Natal Blue Book*, 1873, H2.

178 This may be part of the reason why no records of the Lower Mkomanzi court are to be found in either the Durban or Pietermaritzburg Archives.

179 Leverton 1968:95.

180 Leverton 1968:73-74.

181 Leverton 1968:79.

182 *Natal Witness*, 16 February 1864.

Fuelling economic optimism was the spectacular increase in sugar production. Exports jumped from £26 153 in 1863 to a massive £94 372 in 1864, with sugar accounting for a record 45% of Natal's exports in the latter year.¹⁸³ Sugar production more than doubled in many parts of the coast. Lower Mkomanzi's yield of 498 tons in 1863 grew to 1 032 tons in 1864, while in the Inanda division of Victoria County production climbed from 1 288 tons in 1863 to 2 576 tons in 1864.¹⁸⁴ An increase in the sugar price of five shillings per hundredweight (112 pounds) further increased optimism.¹⁸⁵ Emboldened by the growth of the sugar industry since the introduction of indentured labour, the Legislative Council passed legislation in 1864 authorising a £100 000 loan for the provision of further indentured labour. Land speculation lay at the root of this economic flurry, which caused prices to soar. As Leverton has pointed out, the Natal Land and Colonisation Company (NLCC), which was closely allied to the sugar industry, did little else but hold vast tracts of land in the hope of a price rise.¹⁸⁶ Land was collateral for credit. At government level, expenditure in all departments increased rapidly.¹⁸⁷

Editorials in the *Mercury* between October 1864 and March 1865 continued to reflect a bullish outlook. "There evidently has never been a juncture when capitalists could so readily be induced to invest money in this Colony", it stated on 1 October in reaction to the news that two loans of £50 000 each had received sanction for the Durban and Pietermaritzburg boroughs in addition to the £100 000 loan for indentured immigration. Following the news of serious business failures in Britain, while conceding that Natal was "deeply affected by the fluctuations of the English money market", the *Mercury* insisted that "prudence and circumspection" would keep Natal "free from the commotions shaking trade elsewhere".¹⁸⁸ As more negative news began filtering in from Britain, the *Mercury* persisted in its view that all was well with Natal's economy. "The prosperity of the Colony has never had a surer or better base ... There never was a time when capital might be more advantageously invested here... ", the paper declared.¹⁸⁹

183 R.F. Osborn, 1964:68; Hurwitz 1957:41.

184 *Natal Blue Book*, 1863, X3; *Natal Blue Book*, 1864, X4. The Lower Mkomanzi district received an accolade from the Agricultural Society of Durban for the quality of its 1863 sugar crop (CSO 193, No. 95, 21 January 1864).

185 *Natal Mercury*, 5 January 1864.

186 Leverton 1968:83. At the time the NLCC held over 250 000 acres. Henry (1963:16) states that the most chronic threat to Natal's economy was "hectic land speculation based largely on unsound paper financing at ruinously high rates of interest".

187 Leverton 1968:95-96.

188 *Natal Mercury*, 3 December 1864.

189 *Natal Mercury*, 23 March 1865.

Natural causes dealt the Cape's economy, which bought 28% of Natal's sugar,¹⁹⁰ a severe setback in 1863.¹⁹¹ Worse followed in 1864 when the drop in wool prices cost the Cape about £100 000. In that wool accounted for 73% of all exports from the Cape, confidence was badly shaken.¹⁹² That setback, along with the industrial recession in Britain, quickly communicated itself to Natal. As a result of its dependence on credit and overseas capital investment, by mid-1865 Natal's economy was in trouble as banks called in credit in an attempt to secure loans.¹⁹³ A rapid decline in land values followed as capital invested in property became unprofitable. By 1866 the debt on land had reached £1 250 000. Between 1864 and 1869 there were 450 insolvencies. Two of Natal's seven banks, the Natal Colonial and the Commercial and Agricultural, ceased to trade in 1867.¹⁹⁴ Reflecting on the experience, the *Mercury* identified "the necessity of having to borrow capital at high rates of interest in order to sustain enterprise" as the "primary evil" with which Natalians had to cope.¹⁹⁵ In November 1865 the *Mercury* reported that 170 white men were walking the streets of Durban unemployed. "The cry of the destitute is the new cry in Natal", it stated.¹⁹⁶ In stark contrast with its earlier assertions about the stability of Natal's economy, the *Mercury* decried 1865 as a year of calamity and misfortune without precedent in the colony's history.¹⁹⁷

Recession in Alexandra County, 1865-1866

The economic hardship experienced in the Durban and Pietermaritzburg areas, where about half of the settler population resided,¹⁹⁸ did not appear to affect the Lower Mkomanzi district in 1865. In his report for that year, Magistrate Moodie made no comments about the economy. The hut tax of £1 668 was £21 more than that collected in 1864. Although sugar production was down to 670 tons (from the record 1 032 tons of 1864) the area under sugar cultivation had increased from 1422 acres to 1 887 acres,¹⁹⁹ while requisitions for indentured labour continued to be

190 Le Cordeur 1966:253.

191 Leverton 1968:95.

192 Henry 1963:13, 16.

193 Richardson 1986:143.

194 Leverton 1968:98-100. According to the Standard Bank, Natal's economy was near collapse in 1867. Its Inspector reported that "the vitals of the community have been eaten out" (Henry 1963:21).

195 *Natal Mercury*, 10 January 1867.

196 *Natal Mercury*, 9 November 1865. So parlous was the economic situation that in May 1865 the mercantile community of Durban petitioned the government to accept payment of customs duties by promissory notes (Henry 1963:16).

197 *Natal Mercury*, 3 January 1866.

198 Guy 1983:194.

199 CSO 242, No. 336, 31 January 1866; CSO 214, No. 144, 18 January 1865.

received. In March 1866 James Arbuthnot's widow, Jane, applied for six Indians for the Arborville estate, while Captain James Greetham of Umzinto applied for sixteen indentured labourers.²⁰⁰ But their requisitions were not fulfilled. In April 1866 Natal's recruiting agent in India was instructed not to extend his operations, as the state of the economy was such that it was "very doubtful whether a large number of coolies [would] be required for a long time".²⁰¹ As it transpired, no new indentured Indian labourers set foot in Natal until July 1874.

The effects of the economic downturn were felt in Alexandra County in the latter part of 1866. Debt caused John Crocker to dispose of his Hopewell estate on the Ifafa. It was bought by the Aikens and renamed Maryville.²⁰² According to "an occasional correspondent" writing in the *Mercury* on 1 December 1866, life was "almost at a standstill" and "trade has been unusually dull". Those remarks were echoed in a subsequent report on the county which claimed that residents had had to endure "a severe and protracted struggle for bare existence".²⁰³ Yet Magistrate Moodie made no mention of the state of the economy in his report for 1866, noting instead that sugar production was up from 650 tons in 1865 to 851 tons, five licences had been granted for retail shops as opposed to three in 1865, hut tax of £1 693 was marginally up from the £1 668 of 1865 and that a second distiller had come into existence in the county in 1866.²⁰⁴

Initially it appeared that those settlers whose economic wellbeing was based on primary agricultural pursuits weathered the effects of the economic slump better than those who depended on the secondary and tertiary strata of the economy for their survival. But by 1869 even some of the "old hands" as they were called had succumbed to debt. In April 1866 George Robinson of Craigie Burn estate at Umkomaas remarked that local people were too poor to afford repairs to a dilapidated building which was used jointly as a school and a place of worship. He requested government aid of £20 to £25 for a new building. Besides stating that the government was not in a position to afford any such expenditure, the colonial secretary pointed out that the school was in decline, having only eight pupils in 1866 compared to nineteen in 1865.²⁰⁵ The failure to re-establish river shipping on the Mkomanzi dealt the expected development of the townships of North and South

200 CSO 244, No. 544, 3 March 1866; CSO 254, No. 1572, 18 August 1866.

201 Thompson 1938:39-40.

202 Spencer 1989:23.

203 *Natal Mercury*, 17 January 1867. W.J. Aiken's haberdashery and grocery store in Umzinto was declared insolvent (*Natal Mercury*, 3 January 1867).

204 CSO 264, No. 43, 28 February 1867.

205 CSO 254, No. 1577, 23 April 1866; 14 January 1867.

Barrow a severe blow. The reduction of the number of pupils at the school reflected that negative economic trend.

Despite the general economic downturn, the agricultural sector continued to flourish, as returns for 1867 showed. The sugar production of 996 tons was only 36 tons short of the record 1864 harvest, while record harvests were obtained in coffee (1 734 pounds) and tobacco (6 500 pounds). Added to that was a substantial cotton crop of 16 705 pounds.²⁰⁶ A report in April 1867 noted that “improved facilities for manufacturing sugar” were being made on several estates.²⁰⁷ At the Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition held in Durban in December, David Aiken of Maryville²⁰⁸ in the Ifafa district was commended for his coffee, ginger, dholl and cotton. The silk produced by the Umzinto estate managed by James Walker was also acclaimed.²⁰⁹ In 1866 the Umzinto estate had sought permission to cultivate coffee in addition to sugar.²¹⁰

Yet it was still apparent that financial insecurity prevailed. Indicative of this was the sharp increase in arrears owed to the government on quitrents by farmers in Alexandra County. Debt increased from £303 in 1865 to £550 in 1867.²¹¹ The close, interdependent relationships amongst the farming community of Alexandra County actually increased their vulnerability to economic downfall. As the diary of David Aiken shows, the tardiness or inability of one farmer to settle his debts potentially jeopardised the financial liquidity of others.²¹²

Although a successful farmer, Aiken was unrelenting in expanding the acreage and variety of crops he had under cultivation so as to ensure a regular income. In addition to sugar, he planted maize, coffee and cotton extensively. After making the difficult trip to Durban with 31 bags of sugar in October 1867, he expressed disappointment at being forced to accept eighteen shillings per bag rather than the eighteen shillings and sixpence he had anticipated. In September 1868 he conceded that he was “gloomy about money matters”. That may have been a consequence of the insolvency of Captain Patrick Maxwell’s Woodhouse Lea estate.²¹³ George

206 *Natal Blue Book*, 1867, X5-6.

207 *Natal Mercury*, 9 April 1867.

208 James Aiken bought Hopewell farm when its owner, John Crocker, succumbed to debt in 1866. He renamed the 610-acre property Maryville (Spencer 1989:23).

209 *Natal Mercury*, 4 January 1868.

210 CSO 259, No. 2034, 27 September 1866.

211 CSO 311, No. 1917, 18 August 1868.

212 Aiken 1867:13, with reference to the debt Captain Maxwell owed Aiken.

213 Aiken 1876:12-13, 27, 30. Maxwell died in January 1869 (*ibid.*:31).

Compton's Southern Home on the Mtwalume met a similar fate in July 1869.²¹⁴ With specks of gold having been discovered near Ifafa and in the Amahlongwa river, Aiken neglected his farming in October and November to prospect, without success, for gold and copper.²¹⁵

Sugar planting at crossroads

The NLCC, which was formed in London in 1861 to promote immigration and land development, invested substantially in the plantation economy of the coastal belt. It channelled investment into this venture in three ways: loans on mortgages to sugar planters, financial backing for its subsidiary, the Natal Plantations Company and the development of cultivated estates.²¹⁶ Early in 1867, Canonby estate on the Mkomanzi river, one of the NLCC's holdings, was in difficulty after having borrowed heavily from the company. Managed by Lewis Reynolds and George Wirsing, it was sold in 1869 for £10 000. Reynolds was kept on as manager, as was Aling Osborn of the Umtata estate in Victoria County, which was also sold off after being declared insolvent. In both cases these estates were taken over by the Natal Plantations Company. Unlike the Umzinto Sugar Company, which is discussed later, Canonby and Umtata were not allowed to languish in default, and continued in production. The NLCC felt that in the interests of the colony's export trade it was vital for productive estates to remain in business.²¹⁷

The economic slump provoked much soul-searching regarding the future of Natal's sugar industry. In 1866, in a series of editorials, the *Mercury* examined the issues confronting the sugar industry. Predictably it singled out the "want of adequate capital" as the "most oppressive difficulty". But in the light of the recession in Britain, the panacea which it offered – "the introduction of more capital must be sought as a condition of success to all" – was unrealistic.²¹⁸ On 21 February 1866 a well-attended meeting of planters, merchants and bankers took place in the Durban council chamber to discuss the credit crisis, but nothing concrete emerged.²¹⁹ Nearly a year later, after 1866 had proved to be a "clouded" and "stationary" year as regards Natal's economy, the *Mercury* faced up to the essential dilemma confronting the colony:

214 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 21, No. 1185, 27 July 1869. On 30 December 1867 Compton's house was destroyed by lightning. Aiken 1867:17.

215 Aiken 1869:30, 32

216 Edley 1991:9.

217 Edley 1991:71-73, 78-79.

218 *Natal Mercury*, 23 January 1866 and 13 February 1866.

219 *Natal Mercury*, 24 February 1866.

Natal has ever been a land of settlers without capital ... It is true that foreign capital has been imported and largely lent but that fact is in itself a leading key to our present complications.²²⁰

UMZINTO.—FOR SALE,
1 A1 600-Acre Coffee Farm
1 300-Acre do.
25 Erven in the Umzinto Village
Apply to A. BRANDER,
Umzinto, June 20, 1865. **Agent.**

UMZINTO.—NOTICE.

ANY privileges which may have been granted by former proprietors on the farms "Woodhouselee," "Smithfield," "Payneville," and adjoining properties are now null and void; and

Notice is hereby given that the owners of any Wagons, Carts, or other vehicles found off the Public Road on the above properties will be prosecuted; also, any persons found Hunting, Shooting, Cutting or Carrying away Timber or Firewood, or in any way trespassing on any of the aforesaid Farms will be dealt with as the law directs.

Pro. THE PROPRIETORS,
ALEXANDER BRANDER,
Umzinto, June 20, 1865. **Agent.**

Figure 4.8 Umzinto notice regarding private property, *Natal Mercury*, 13 July 1865

Availability of capital from the late 1850s resulted in planters relying excessively on credit. In a tract entitled *Natal in 1862*, Robert Mann, an inveterate promoter of immigration and education, advised that no one with less than £5 000 should attempt to take up sugar planting and manufacture, noting that many farmers were

220 *Natal Mercury*, 10 January 1867.

already in irretrievable debt.²²¹ By the mid-1860s much of the debt that planters had incurred was a result of the purchase of mills and equipment. Of the 76 sugar estates that existed in 1866,²²² 64 had mills.²²³ Reviewing the experience of the first 25 years of sugar planting in Natal, W.Y. Campbell singled out the system of small mills as the root cause of failure amongst planters.²²⁴ As Richardson has indicated, both in terms of the small acreage of cane cultivated by most of the planters and the expenditure that they incurred in financing the industrial aspect of sugar production, such enterprises were not only extremely vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the market but, at best, were only marginally profitable.²²⁵

The international sugar market exacerbated conditions. The *Mercury* reported in 1866 that sugar beet production in Europe was providing tough competition to sugar producers in the colonies. Easily and inexpensively grown, requiring minimal labour and with freight costs at a fraction of what sugar producers faced overseas, sugar beet posed a serious challenge to tropical sugar cane production. The establishment of central mills was seen as the solution to this challenge.²²⁶

What Jeffels had suggested in 1855 came to be accepted as the *modus operandi* of the future. The miller-cum-planter mode was no longer financially viable. Resources had to be channelled into either planting or milling, a division of enterprise which the French had implemented successfully in their sugar producing colonies. To compete with sugar beet in Europe, sugar producers had to cut the costs of production. Although the small plantation persisted as a feature of the Natal sugar industry until the 1880s, from the late 1860s “something of a revolution in sugar ownership took place”, as Peter Richardson has remarked.²²⁷

In the context of the argument for centralised milling and the consolidation of holdings, the liquidation of the Umzinto estates in 1869 was something of a contradiction.²²⁸ As an enterprise its failing was not because it was ahead of its time, it was rather a casualty of the financial slump in Britain and the loss of confidence on the part of its British investors in the colonial sugar business. In May 1863 its Cape owners sold the Umzinto Sugar Company to a British investment group. Renamed the Umzinto Plantation and Trading Company of Natal, it was re-launched in

221 Mann 1862:9.

222 *Natal Mercury*, 23 January 1866.

223 Osborn 1964:73. Of those 64 mills, 26 were on the South Coast (*ibid.*:275, 297).

224 Campbell 1885:69.

225 Richardson 1985:185-186.

226 *Natal Mercury*, 11 August 1866.

227 Richardson 1986:144.

228 *Natal Mercury*, 5 August 1869.

May 1864 with capital of £125 000.²²⁹ In August 1864 a new manager, James Walker, was appointed on a five year contract to try to revive the estate. But the financial slump of the mid-1860s, which resulted in many sugar planters becoming bankrupt, discouraged the British parent company from further investment. By 1868 the Umzinto Trading Company was under court supervision brought about by the liquidators messrs. Waddell and Thurburn of London.²³⁰ In 1870 Walker left the company which, despite investment worth £40 000, had failed to produce suitable returns. On his tour of South Coast estates in 1870 Robinson described the Umzinto estate as a “monument of desolation and failure”. But he saw hope in its future stating that “if this estate should fortunately pass into the right hands it can hardly fail to become one of the most prosperous enterprises in Natal”.²³¹

In 1873 Lewis Reynolds bought the whole estate for a mere £5 000. After his death in September 1875, it formed the basis of the company known as T. Reynolds and Sons, which was established in 1877 by Lewis’s brother, Thomas, and his two sons, Frank and Charles. Renamed in 1892 as Reynolds Bros. Ltd.,²³² it proved to be a “pointer to the development of corporate ownership” in the sugar industry, as Richardson has noted.²³³ Similar takeovers occurred in the Isipingo district and in Victoria County, where the New Guelderland estate was bought by the Glasgow and Natal Sugar Company in 1870. In the Isipingo district, the former estates of Babbs and Smart were combined with part of Dick King’s land to form the nucleus of Reunion sugar estate, owned by the Cape consortium of De Pass, Spence & Co.²³⁴

Social relations

Africans

The most serious challenge to relations between colonists and the local African population during that formative period on the South Coast occurred in 1862 as a result of a verdict Magistrate Moodie handed down in a case involving William Joyner. He and his son, Murdo Morrison, claimed to have been subjected to physical violence by a group of Africans who were trespassing on his property. But in taking his case to Moodie, Joyner found himself the victim of what he called “flagrant injustice” when Moodie fined him and Murdo £4 and £1 respectively for provocation and assault. Moodie claimed that it was wrong of Joyner to oppose the

229 *Natal Mercury*, 21 May 1864. In March 1864 a storm had severely damaged the machinery of the mill.

230 *Natal Mercury*, 27 June 1868.

231 Robinson 1872:114.

232 Osborn 1964:77, 303.

233 Richardson 1872:144.

234 Osborn 1964:191, 287-288.

Africans for having assegais. He also fined the Africans £2 each for aggression. To make matters worse, Moodie denied Joyner the right to appeal his sentence claiming that his verdict was based on “my law”. Joyner appealed for justice by publicising his plight in the press.²³⁵ The response was one of overwhelming support for him: two public meetings, two petitions, strong editorial backing from the *Mercury* and the formation of an association for the “conservation of the rights of private property”.

At Isipingo, on 5 November 1862, “an unusually large meeting took place in the schoolroom for the purpose of considering a colonist’s rights of redress from the trespass of kafirs”. The governor was petitioned to reverse Moodie’s verdict on the grounds that it was “unjust and dangerous in its tendencies”.²³⁶ Support for Joyner, as a former resident of Isipingo, was unanimous: 54 signatures were collected for the petition which was sent to Governor Scott.²³⁷

A second public meeting took place at Umzinto on 9 November. Again there was solid local support for Joyner and a petition signed by 44 local residents called for Moodie to be removed as magistrate.²³⁸ This was followed by the establishment of a “Residents’ Association on the conservation of the rights of public property”. On behalf of the association, Brander stated that in light of the “unsatisfactory manner in which judicial matters are managed in this extensive division of the country”, it was felt that measures were necessary to protect the rights and privileges “which the possession of private property should confer on the owner”. The Residents’ Association specifically wanted clarity on the rights of property owners as regards trespassing, hunting and grass burning by Africans.²³⁹

Joyner also received editorial support from the *Mercury*. An article published on 11 November 1862 claimed that Joyner was guilty only of “maintaining the inviolability of his private property and resisting unlawful intrusion”. In sarcastic vein the editorial stated that the saying about “the Englishman’s house being his castle” appeared no longer applicable in Natal as “settlers had no right to obstruct armed kafirs wherever they choose to traverse”. The editorial declared Moodie’s verdict to be “not only unjust but illegal”. Despite this furore, the initial response of the colonial secretary was that the governor did not feel obliged to comment.²⁴⁰ But in light of light public interest in the matter the government felt obliged to respond. A letter from the colonial secretary dated 27 November further outraged the settlers.

235 *Natal Mercury*, 24 October 1862.

236 *Natal Mercury*, 7 November 1862.

237 *Natal Mercury*, 14 November 1862; CSO 161, No. 1909, 8 November 1862.

238 *Natal Mercury*, 14 November 1862; CSO 161, No. 2032, 8 November 1862.

239 *Natal Mercury*, 25 November 1862.

240 *Natal Mercury*, 21 November 1862.

Erskine stated that “it would be manifestly unjust to Mr. Moodie were his Excellency to express any want of confidence in the officer before proof is afforded that he has committed an error and proved his inability to administer the laws of the Colony”.²⁴¹ Reacting to this statement, Captain James Greetham of the Umzinto Residents’ Association expressed dismay that Moodie was allowed to continue as magistrate. He also enquired whether “Moodie’s law” and his refusal to grant Joyner the right to appeal “were superior to every other institution in the Colony”.²⁴²

It is possible that the official backing given to Moodie was premised on Governor Scott’s view that colonists had a “coercive disposition” towards Africans²⁴³ and that Joyner’s conduct was construed as typical of that tendency. Also at play was the issue of what was called double government, whereby Africans were subject to both colonial and African laws. That state of affairs was strongly censured in the report of a select committee of the colonial legislature presented in August 1862.²⁴⁴ Joyner felt further aggrieved when in a subsequent case on 9 December 1862 Moodie convicted him of obstructing the passage of cattle which were being taken to the pound and fined him £10. Moodie rejected Joyner’s plea that the cattle and their herdsman were trespassing on his property based on the fact that Joyner had assembled a number of people with the clear intention of seizing five head of cattle by force.²⁴⁵

The Joyner cases suggest that some colonial officials were prepared to treat settlers with a firm hand. To his credit, Magistrate Moodie carried out his duties without fear or favour.²⁴⁶ Although the Joyner cases demonstrated the existence of settler unity and cohesion as regards what they saw as their rights, such cases were exceptional. Moodie’s reports routinely noted that there was little crime in the county, but in a fifteen page report in February 1867 he dealt at length with a cattle stabbing incident which had occurred in December 1866. Poisoned weapons were used by Africans to injure seven oxen owned by an officer of the court. Alarmed at this outrage, 45 colonists had signed a petition expressing insecurity at the turn of events. In responding to the petition Moodie felt the claim of insecurity was exaggerated.²⁴⁷ As

241 CSO 161, No. 2037, 27 November 1862.

242 *Natal Mercury*, 16 December 1862, in which Erskine’s letter of 27 November was also published.

243 *Natal Mercury*, 22 March 1864.

244 *Natal Government Gazette*, 14, No. 720, 19 August 1862. The thrust of the committee’s criticism was that African customs and traditions were at variance with colonial norms and rules.

245 *Natal Star*, 8 January 1863. There was no public opposition to Moodie’s ruling on that occasion.

246 A report in the *Natal Mercury* of 6 June 1868 concerning the Alexandra Rifles, of which Moodie was the commanding officer, conveyed the impression that he had a good rapport with his men.

247 CSO 266, No. 292, 9 February 1867; *Natal Mercury*, 15 January 1867. At this time “cattle spearing” became problematic in northwestern Queensland, Australia, as Aboriginal hunters turned their attention to settlers’ cattle as an alternative food source. This brought about violent confrontation and retaliation. Colonial administrators established the Mounted Native Police which engaged in a

the custodian of law and order he invoked the principle of chieftain responsibility in attempting to discourage such criminal activity. In practice this meant inflicting punishment on the local kraal or community if the interlopers could not be found. His action met with the *Mercury's* approval. "If the natives have reason to think that the authorities think light of this atrocious crime, they will go on cattle stabbing. But if they find they are responsible for commission of it they will soon give it up."²⁴⁸ There were no further instances of cattle stabbing in Alexandra County. But February 1868 the reverend Arentz Tonnessen of Umkomaas reported that eight head of cattle had been stabbed in the Ifumi and Umsimbazi districts of Durban County. The incident had occurred after the consumption of alcohol at a party.²⁴⁹

Apart from those incidents, there were no reports of animosity on the part of local African communities. David Aiken's diary of 1867 to 1870 suggests that he enjoyed a good rapport with the African kraals in the Umzinto district. He frequently traded with them, exchanging a horse for a bull on one occasion, and buying oxen and sacks of mealies on another.²⁵⁰

Only in October 1869 did he mention a shortage of African labour and his willingness to hire two Indian labourers.²⁵¹ However, there were colonists such as William Joyner who tended to be harsh and vindictive towards the local indigenous population. On one occasion in September 1867, Joyner rebuked Aiken for not "thrashing" his African labour when they had declined to work in the rain.²⁵²

In March 1865 the reverend John Crompton, the Durban County MLC, who also represented Alexandra County, held a public meeting in Umzinto. Besides transport matters, the most prominent item discussed was one which proposed an increase in taxation on the African population. Supporting the resolution, John Bazley of Ifafa was quoted as saying that he "rejoiced in every measure calculated to exercise a wholesome influence on the labouring population".²⁵³ At over £1 600 per annum, hut tax already constituted a substantial part of the revenue of the county for which the

"regime of terror" as they hunted down and drove Aborigines off lands desired by settlers. Where Mounted Police were not available, settlers were permitted to take matters into their own hands in banishing Aborigines from their districts. Between 1878 and 1884 a campaign to exterminate Aborigines was successfully concluded in the Mount Isa-Cloncurry region. A book entitled *Taming of the North* by Hudson Fysh, published in 1933, hailed the removal of the Aborigines and their territorial dispossession as "an economic, social and moral triumph" for colonialism (Furniss 2006:174-176).

248 *Natal Mercury*, 15 January 1867.

249 *Natal Mercury*, 6 February 1868. Law 10 of 1876 made cattle stabbing a punishable offence.

250 Aiken 1867:12.

251 Aiken 1869:33.

252 Aiken 1867:9.

253 *Natal Mercury*, 6 April 1865. Hut tax remained at seven shillings per hut until 1875.

Africans received nothing in return, unless the grants of £100 to African education at Umtwalume and £85 to American mission schools are considered. There were also small grants of £4 each to what were designated as second class schools at Ifafa and Umzumbe.²⁵⁴ By pressing for an increase in hut tax the likes of Bazley made it clear they wanted an increase in the availability of African labour at a time when dependence on indentured labour was increasing. In 1864 the indentured Indian population in Alexandra County was given as 230. By 1866 it had increased to 381.²⁵⁵

Settler society

The lack of elected representation in the Legislative Council was a sore point among settlers of Lower Mkomanzi. In reporting on his tour of the South Coast in 1861, John Robinson had recommended that an additional public representative from Durban County should be elected to cater for the growing population of Lower Mkomanzi.²⁵⁶ Although he represented Pietermaritzburg County in the Legislative Council, as a resident of Lower Mkomanzi James Arbuthnot was able to provide a political voice for settlers in that area until his death in May 1861. However, residents of Lower Mkomanzi were determined to have their own political representation in a separate electoral district.

Alexander Brander submitted a petition signed by 92 residents of Lower Mkomanzi asking for direct political representation. But it failed to ignite any substantial response when it was presented to the Legislative Council in June 1862 and was withdrawn.²⁵⁷ In June 1864, 84 electors of Lower Mkomanzi again petitioned the Legislative Council to grant them their own representation. Once again their plea was ignored.²⁵⁸ Indifference towards the South Coast's lack of political representation was also reflected in the report of a select committee on constitutional matters in 1866 which omitted any reference to Alexandra County gaining its own representation in the Legislative Council.²⁵⁹

254 *Natal Blue Book*, 1864, C19-20.

255 CSO 214, No. 144, 18 January 1865 ; *Natal Blue Book*, 1866, R4.

256 *Natal Mercury*, 23 May 1861. The Mzimkulu river was the southern boundary of Durban County at that time.

257 CSO 146, No. 538, 15 March 1862; *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 8, 1862, 100. Following clashes between the Legislative Council and the Colonial Executive Committee, which led to Scott's summary closure of the Council in August 1861, there was no official interest in enlarging the Council or in extending its representation (Report of Select Committee, *Natal Government Gazette*, 14, No. 718, 7 August 1862).

258 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 11, 77; *Natal Mercury*, 2 July 1864.

259 LC No. 5, 1866, *Natal Government Gazette*, 18, No. 1016, 17 July 1866.

Historically, the development of note at this time concerned the identity of Lower Mkomanzi. A letter to the governor dated 10 August 1865, signed by 47 local residents, “warmly desired” that the name “County of Alexandra” be adopted in place of Lower Mkomanzi.²⁶⁰ Motivating this change, Magistrate Moodie stated that the name Lower Mkomanzi had never been formally proclaimed and that in any case it was “cumbersome and unmeaning” and subject to “a great variety of modes of spelling and pronunciation”.

Colonel Bisset, the officer administering the government of the colony of Natal, subsequently issued a formal proclamation of the name “County of Alexandra”, named after Alexandra, the Princess of Wales.²⁶¹ Bisset also approved a request that the local mounted rifle clubs be known as the Alexandra Mounted Rifles.²⁶² However, the change was not replicated when it came to the establishment of local government structures for the village of Umzinto. In his reports for 1864 and 1866, Magistrate Moodie expressed disappointment that he had been unable to make headway in the formation of a town committee.²⁶³

Despite the isolated frontier nature of Alexandra County, social interaction was a regular feature of the settler community. This interaction involved mutual assistance with farm implements, church attendance, sporting events, rifle club meetings and tea and dinner parties. John Bazley of Nil Desperandum was the engineer of the district. In 1863 he installed a water-powered sugar mill on his estate.²⁶⁴

In 1867 he was praised for his water-powered mealie mill, called Little Wonder, which could grind a muid of mealies in an hour.²⁶⁵ He also had a sawmill, and was the district handyman who repaired ploughs and wagon wheels.²⁶⁶ Aiken did not have his own mill and used Joyner’s to crush his cane. Captain Maxwell’s cotton gin, which could process 500 pounds in a day, was also rented out to neighbours.²⁶⁷ Black and Baxter, the Umzinto general store, enjoyed the custom of all in the district selling a wide range of merchandise.²⁶⁸

260 CSO 229, No. 1647, 10 August 1865.

261 CSO 229, No. 1647, 21 August 1865.

262 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 17, No. 971, 12 September 1865.

263 CSO 214, No. 144, 18 January 1865; CSO 264, No. 43, 28 February 1867.

264 Spencer 1983:43.

265 *Natal Mercury*, 9 April 1867. A muid is an old French measure of capacity for corn equivalent roughly to a dry measure of eight gallons or a large sack. Walter Peace (1883:82) noted that a muid was the equivalent of 200 pounds.

266 Aiken 1867:5, 15.

267 Aiken 1867:8.

268 Aiken 1867:5-6, 8-9; 1868:19; Advertisement in *Natal Almanac*, 1870, 37.

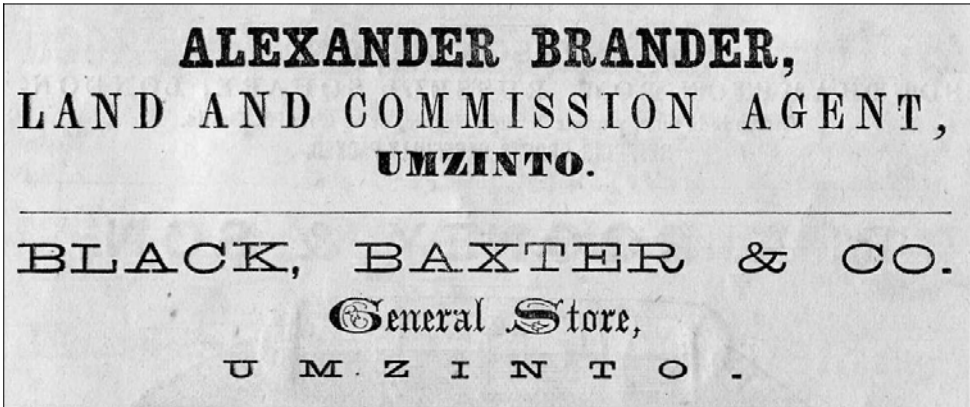


Figure 4.9 Advertisement in *Natal Almanac*, 1870

The two religious denominations, Anglican and Congregational, appeared to enjoy mutual support. Aiken attended the services of both congregations. There was frequent interaction between the reverends Wilder, Stone and Barker. The opening of Wilder's Congregational church building in December 1867 was attended by a large number of settlers.²⁶⁹ The controversial Anglican cleric, bishop Colenso, twice visited Umzinto in the late 1860s. In September 1867 he officiated at the marriage of ms. Joyner to Charles Eaglestone and was described by Aiken as "amusing" at the grand breakfast after the service. He returned in October 1869 to conduct Eaglestone's funeral service.²⁷⁰

Involvement in the Alexandra Mounted Rifles was taken very seriously. With a membership of 57 in 1866 it included almost every able-bodied male settler in the county.²⁷¹ Regular exercise drills took place. These were held from 11 am to 3 pm over two days during the week.²⁷² In May 1868 a five day camp was held which included skirmishing on foot and target shooting. At its conclusion the members were treated to a luncheon by major Moodie and his wife.²⁷³ The shooting skills of the men went on show at what was described as the "annual amusements" held at Park Rynie over a weekend in July. These family occasions were held each year from 1863. They involved rifle club shoots, horse races and other entertainment.

269 Aiken 1867:16. In 1869 the brick church building of St. Patrick's Anglican parish in Umzinto was completed (Spencer, 1983:25).

270 Aiken 1867:10; 1869:33.

271 CSO 264, No. 43, 28 February 1867.

272 Aiken 1867:4; 1868:18.

273 Aiken 1868:24. Moodie resigned as commanding officer of the AMR in November 1868. Lewis Reynolds was appointed in his place (*Natal Mercury*, 7 November 1868).

Convivial in concept, they were well-attended and proved the social highlight of the county.²⁷⁴

Another social occasion of note was the annual Umzinto race meeting, which attracted punters from Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Held over two days, it featured handicap, hurdle and flat pony races. Evenings were spent dancing, singing and drinking, according to Charles Hamilton, who attended one such occasion in the 1860s.²⁷⁵ But beyond these special occasions there was a high degree of social interaction. Distance and transport difficulties did not retard the frequency with which social visits took place in the form of tea and dinner parties. From Aiken's diary it is apparent that he had regular social contact with at least fifteen other settlers in his district. In August 1867, for example, there were eight occasions in which he was involved in social visits.²⁷⁶ The *Blue Book* for 1866 recorded a sum of £24 allocated in the colonial budget to the adult evening school at Umzinto.²⁷⁷

Settler society was consolidated in various ways. For example, 45 local residents petitioned for the establishment of a powder magazine at Umzinto. The colonial secretary assented to their request and appointed Harry Wylde-Brown, a clerk at the court, as the dispensing officer.²⁷⁸ Wylde-Brown was responsible for a stock of 2 000 pounds of gunpowder.²⁷⁹ Considerable though that stock was, it was only part of more than 5 000 pounds of gunpowder which was officially sold to 61 permit holders in Alexandra County in 1866.²⁸⁰ This reflects the extent to which firearms were a critical part of the lives of settlers, not only as a means of defence but more particularly as the means to provide food for those far from a market.

While colonisation had a negative impact on the environment, the likes of John Robinson, one of the more enlightened settlers, saw no harm in that. "It is one of the privileges of the Natalian farmer to be fettered by no game laws", he wrote in 1862. "Those bucks, partridges or pheasants and other game are the rightful prey of his gun wherever he feels disposed to interfere with them."²⁸¹

274 *Natal Mercury*, 5 July 1866; 9 July 1867; 11 July 1868

275 Hamilton 1870:157-158.

276 Aiken 1867:4-7.

277 *Natal Blue Book*, 1866, C23.

278 CSO 244, No. 544, 3 March 1866; CSO 249, No. 1017, 2 May 1866.

279 CSO 249, No. 1039, 5 May 1866.

280 CSO 264, No. 43, 28 February 1867, resident magistrate's report for 1866. Section 5 of Law 11 of 1866 facilitated the purchase of gunpowder in that a permit was required only where purchases exceeded ten pounds per annum. Africans were not permitted to purchase gunpowder unless they had been granted a permit which could be issued only by the secretary for native affairs. They also had to have written permission to own firearms (CSO 178, No. 1360, 27 May 1863).

281 Robinson 1862:44.

In the 1860s buck were still plentiful along the sparsely settled South Coast.²⁸² Charles Hamilton, who travelled extensively around Natal in the 1860s, noted on his visit to a planter's sugar estate in Ifafa that the full-time job of two of the planter's sons was to keep the household supplied with meat by shooting game.²⁸³ David Aiken recorded in his diary in August 1868 that he had shot "a large number of buck" at what he called the top of Bazley's cutting.²⁸⁴ In her autobiography Jane Arbuthnot stated that the woods around her farm in the Equeefa valley were "full of game and my boys kept us well supplied."²⁸⁵

Colonel Bisset, who was acting governor in the mid-1860s, boasted of having shot 600 head of game near Rietvlei in 1860 when he accompanied Prince Alfred on his Natal visit.²⁸⁶ Abetting this wholesale slaughter of fauna was the absence of legislation. The passage of Law 10 of 1866, to "prevent the indiscriminate destruction of certain valuable wild animals", was belated recognition that Natal's fauna was under threat of extinction. Whilst placing a complete ban on the killing of eland, hartebeest, ostrich, secretary birds and turkey buzzards, it placed only a short fifteen-week annual ban on the hunting of buck, zebra and buffalo between August and the end of November.

In contrast, Law 8 of 1866 encouraged the destruction of "noxious animals"; those which caused losses to livestock and crops. Heading the schedule was the leopard (lions, presumably, having already been exterminated). A reward of £1 per leopard killed was offered. Hyenas, jackals and crocodiles rated ten shillings per kill.²⁸⁷ The death of Richard Pennington of the Umzinto district in February 1865 as a result of having being mauled by a leopard²⁸⁸ indicated the threat such predators posed in those parts at that time.

Public works

The prison at Umzinto, completed in September 1865, was the first public building erected in the county.²⁸⁹ Apart from school grants, the only other expenditure of public money was on roads. No funding was allocated to the Mkomanzi harbour works. A decade which had begun with great promise of river shipping, following

282 Ellis 1985:89.

283 Hamilton 1870:212. The family mentioned was most likely that of William Joyner.

284 Aiken 21 August 1868, 29.

285 Arbuthnot, 1897:19.

286 Bisset 1875:196.

287 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 18, No. 1019, 7 August 1866.

288 *Natal Mercury*, 16 February 1865.

289 CSO 242, No. 336, 31 January 1866.

the service of the *Natalie* in 1861, ended in gloom with the harbour works wasting away through neglect and the Mkomanzi proving as great a physical barrier as ever. It was even reported that the river was teeming with crocodiles.²⁹⁰ Although each year colonial budgets allocated funds towards road construction and road improvement, the sums thus earmarked were inadequate and never included the construction of bridges.²⁹¹

Following floods in August 1868,²⁹² which swept away the new Queen's Bridge over the Mgeni river as well as the one over the Mlazi and caused an estimated £100 000 worth of damage in the colony,²⁹³ the Legislative Council hastily legislated funds by way of Law 17 of 1868 for repairs to roads and bridges.²⁹⁴ But no reference was made to Alexandra County in the detailing of the funding. As a correspondent from Umzinto wrote in the *Mercury*: "bridges we had none to lose so are no worse off now than we were before."²⁹⁵ Neglect of public works in the county featured in the auditor's report in 1869; despite £300 voted for a road from Ifafa to the Mzimkulu in the budget of 1867/1868,²⁹⁶ not a penny was spent.²⁹⁷ Yet in his report for 1866, Moodie had called for road construction to the new Alfred County on account of increased wagon traffic.²⁹⁸

In 1867 the new colonial Governor Robert William Keate cut back on public works in his attempt to "restore the balance of revenue and expenditure deranged by the deficits of 1865 and 1866"²⁹⁹ As a result the colonial engineer found himself bereft of adequate resources even for essential maintenance work. In terms of its contributions to the colonial coffers Alexandra County was arguably badly short-changed. In 1866 it returned £1 891 in revenue taxes and £1 693 in hut taxes,³⁰⁰ but received very little in return. To some extent the absence of direct political

290 *Natal Mercury*, 12 November 1868.

291 In 1866 a sum of £571 was budgeted for the road from Durban to the Mzimkulu (*Natal Blue Book*, 1866, C17). In 1867 a sum of £284 was allocated (*Natal Blue Book*, 1867, H4).

292 David Aiken (August 1868:29) noted in his diary that the Ifafa river was flooded and that fields were under water.

293 *Natal Mercury*, 8 September 1868. Seventeen inches of rain were recorded at Merebank and almost thirteen inches in Pietermaritzburg.

294 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 20, No. 1138, 22 September 1868.

295 *Natal Mercury*, 10 September 1868.

296 *Government Notice*, No. 80, 1867.

297 Select document No. 36, 1869, Annexure No. 2B, 23, presented to the Natal Legislative Council on 30 June 1869.

298 CSO 264, No. 43, 28 February 1867.

299 Quoted from Keate's first address to the Natal Legislative Council: *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol 19, No. 1075, 13 August 1867.

300 *Natal Blue Book*, 1866, C17; CSO 264, No. 43, 28 February 1867.

representation in the Legislative Council could be ascribed to that situation.³⁰¹ It was not until 1873 that that Alexandra and Alfred counties would elect their first member of the Legislative Council.

In closing

A state of drift continued to beset the South Coast, as the following chapter indicates. Despite obtaining representation in the Legislative Council, the South Coast was shut off from infrastructure development and languished as a backwater. Alfred County in particular was described in 1876 as an uninhabited wasteland. Also detracting from the South Coast's plight were the Langalibalele affair and the Anglo-Zulu War.

³⁰¹ In the elections of March 1866, Durban County representative, reverend John Crompton was defeated by Captain C.J. Harford. As the representative of the South Coast, Harford was conspicuous by his absence, yet he was re-elected in 1870 (*Times of Natal*, 9 November 1870).



5

A decade of lost opportunities

The 1870s

This want of labour and transport not only retard operations and paralyse progress, but they damp a man's energy and cow his spirit.

— Alexandra County correspondent,
Natal Mercury, 17 February 1874

These sentiments by the correspondent to the *Natal Mercury* provide an apt summation of the state of affairs on the South Coast during the 1870s, as this chapter will outline. What stands out is the almost complete lack of an infrastructure drive which could have created a virtuous cycle, stimulating both supply and demand, and linking the area more intimately with the colony. This was mostly because the South Coast was still regarded as a barely populated backwater of the colony. Labour was invariably in scarce supply; unlike northern Natal, there was no coal or other natural commodity in the area, and the lack of infrastructure presented a major hurdle to economic growth. Settlers in the area had to overcome major political hurdles to get the government to take infrastructural development seriously in order to get the economy moving. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines Alexandra County, and thereafter Alfred County is discussed.

Introduction

The historical record of conditions on the South Coast at the onset of the 1870s owes a huge debt to the published accounts of John Robinson and John Widdowson Welborne, following the extensive independent tours that each made of the region. Welborne, a British slate quarry proprietor who was eager to promote a railway scheme in Natal, spent eight months exploring Natal in 1869. His travels took him down the South Coast to the Mzimkulu river. He noted that the belt of coastline was “almost uninhabited, a few colonists only being located at considerable distances apart ... So sparse is the population that for two days whilst travelling through Alexandra County I failed to meet a single human being, white or black”.¹

Likewise, Robinson also noted that scattered, isolated settler communities remained a feature of the region, as he had observed during his visit in 1861. Umzinto, which was yet to be established formally as a township, was the chief settlement within the area. He described it as a “cluster of homesteads within gunshot of each other” which gave “the impression of a township”. It also had an Anglican church, St Patrick’s, which Robinson described as “one of the prettiest and most orthodox little churches in Natal”, a court house and a gaol.² Small farming communities were to be found in the districts of Umkomaas and Ifafa in Alexandra County. Alfred County, which Robinson did not visit, was described by a government commission in 1876 as a territory which lay “waste and uninhabited”, unchanged since it was annexed to Natal in 1866.³ As a region for European settlement, Robinson believed that Alexandra County was particularly fragmented as a result of the presence of several mission reserves.⁴

Alexandra County

For the most part, Alexandra County could scarcely be described as a work in progress, a reality underlined by the appearance of only one report on the county in the *Mercury* in the whole of 1870. That report in January noted that there were no new sugar estates and that George Compton’s Southern Home estate on the Mtwalumi had closed down.⁵ A year later the news was even more disappointing, with three estates reduced to weeds, no new enterprises initiated and no public works of any

1 Select document No. 27, 1870, presented to the Natal Legislative Council on 6 July 1870; J.W. Welborne to William Mansell, undersecretary of state for colonies, 22 March 1870; Leverton 1968:146.

2 *Natal Mercury*, 14 March 1871.

3 Report of Select Committee on proposed European Immigration, Natal Legislative Council No. 15, submission of D.C. Aiken, 3 October 1876, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 28, No. 1613, 17 October 1876.

4 These included the Amahlongwa, which occupied 7 464 acres; Ifafa (7 500 acres), Mtwalumi (13 407 acres), Mzumbe (8 000 acres); and Equeefa College (3 000 acres). *Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1871.

5 *Natal Mercury*, 22 January 1870.

kind.⁶ While settlers had designs on the county becoming a developed part of the colony, bridge, road, rail, port and other infrastructure was non-existent. For the economy of the region to flourish, the priority was to improve infrastructure so as to reduce transportation costs and also make it possible to send and receive goods from other parts of the colony. Such concerns consumed much of the settlers' attention.



Figure 5.1 John Robinson

6 *Natal Mercury*, 24 January 1871. The North Coast was also affected by economic hard times. New Guelderland estate, 6 525 acres in extent, was insolvent and up for public auction in 1871 (*Natal Mercury*, 7 January 1871).

Bridge over the Mkomanzi

Robinson's account made reference to Alexander Brander of Belle Mont estate, near Umzinto, as "the father of the district", to Lewis Reynolds as the "presiding genius" of Canonby estate and to the "mechanical ingenuity and enterprise" of John Bazley of Nil Desperandum estate.⁷ However, these pioneer settlers and sugar planters, along with the Landers of Mpambinyoni, the Joyners of Ifafa, the Hawksworths of Equeefa, the Aikens of Maryville, George Robinson of Craigie Burn, and others, were hostage to a common shortcoming which severely inhibited the economic potential of the region, namely transport. Aside from the ongoing belief that the Mkomanzi and Mzimkulu rivers needed to be developed for shipping⁸ – "if the district is to make any progress at all", as Robinson saw it – a bridge over the Mkomanzi was regarded as the most practical solution to the easing of transport difficulties. Robinson was convinced that "the traffic would provide a revenue more than sufficient to cover the whole cost of the bridge"⁹ There was such enthusiasm for the project that Bazley made a prototype of the bridge needed to span the Mkomanzi, which he exhibited at Black and Baxter's store in Umzinto in 1871.¹⁰ In February 1871, the *Mercury* remarked in an editorial "that year after year has slipt by without any practical effort being made in the legislature to supply so pressing and obvious a requirement". To underline the need for a bridge, the editorial estimated that during the 1871 season 1 500 tons of sugar would have to cross the river to reach Durban, while 2 500 tons of goods would have to be transported from Durban across the Mkomanzi.¹¹

Under austerity measures which Lieutenant-Governor R. W. Keate had imposed during the depression of the 1860s, Natal's economy had stabilised by 1870, its expenditure having been met by revenue and its arrears paid off.¹² Within a broader context, Natal's economy was set to benefit from two external developments: the recovery of the British economy from its slump and the discovery of diamonds in the Northern Cape, which had greatly stimulated the Overberg trade.¹³ But Keate prioritised the payment of

7 Robinson 1872:111, 108, 120.

8 Durban Port Captain Alex Airth inspected the South Coast as far as Ifafa for shipping possibilities and noted that transport "occupied the minds of inhabitants" (*Natal Mercury*, 4 February 1871).

9 *Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1871.

10 *Natal Mercury*, 12 September 1871.

11 *Natal Mercury*, 11 February 1871. Sugar production for Alexandra County in 1871 was 1 287 tons. *Natal Blue Book*, 1871, X4-5. Bridges were also urgently needed at Howick and Mooi River which were on the route of Natal's growing Overberg trade (Leverton 1968:123).

12 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 22, No. 1232, 23 June 1870. Cited by Keate in his address to the opening of the Legislative Council.

13 Hynes 1979:13; Leverton 1968:176. Australia, however, absorbed more British capital investment than any other part of the British Empire and came to be known as the "best poor man's country" (McAloon 2002:17-18). The relative wealth of Natal settlers compared to those of Queensland, Australia, is also reflected by the amount of money on deposit in banks as at 31 December 1870. Queensland banks

public servants above infrastructure development. Thus, the colonial engineer, Peter Patterson, found himself bereft of adequate resources for even essential maintenance work.¹⁴ Consequently, in 1870, five years after the prison had been built at Umzinto, the resident magistrate, Dunbar Moodie, was still awaiting the construction of a court house, magistrate's office, and quarters for prison warders.¹⁵ Yet, taxes collected from settlers in the County had increased from an average of £760 for the period 1866-1868 to £1 046 for 1869-1870.¹⁶

Hopes for a bridge over the Mkomanzi in 1871 came to naught. To their credit, despite transport difficulties, planters in Alexandra County continued to increase agricultural production. Sugar production increased from 1 287 tons in 1871 to 1 309 tons in 1872, while coffee production increased from 22 234 pounds in 1871 to 34 425 pounds in 1872. The county also produced a cotton crop of 14 172 pounds in 1872.¹⁷ As the author of a petition signed by 52 Alexandra County residents in June 1872, George Robinson claimed increased agricultural production as a pressing reason to expedite the construction of a bridge over the Mkomanzi. The petition received a sympathetic response from colonial engineer Patterson, who estimated that it could be constructed for £5 000. However, nothing came of this.¹⁸ In August 1873, George Robinson renewed his efforts for a bridge by submitting a petition to the new governor, Benjamin Pine, reminding him that £5 000 had been earmarked for a bridge in the 1872 Estimates. The 32 memorialists expressed great disappointment at the failure of the government to act as the absence of a bridge was a "great obstacle to the progress and prosperity" of the county.¹⁹ Colonial Secretary David Erskine replied that the governor would sanction the construction of the bridge when he could procure an engineer.²⁰ This delay points to the persistent treatment of Alexandra County as a backwater with its need for a bridge superseded by other issues such as the Welborne railway scheme, labour shortage in the colony, and the Langalibalele affair.²¹

held £319 702, which represented £2 per head of the settler population, while Natal's equivalent amounted to just two shillings per head of the white population (*Times of Natal*, 17 May 1871).

14 Leverton 1968:122-123.

15 CSO 369, No. 1079, 31 May 1870.

16 CSO 381, No. 740, 28 March 1871.

17 *Natal Blue Book*, 1871, X 4-5; *Natal Blue Book*, 1872, X 4-5.

18 CSO 413, No. 200, 26 June 1872; 2 August 1872.

19 CSO 448, No. 2008, 20 August 1873. The annual review of Alexandra County published in the *Mercury* on 18 February 1873 claimed that a bridge was about to be erected over the Mkomanzi. The Estimates for 1874 reflected £5 000 for the Mkomanzi bridge (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 26, No. 1453, 20 January 1874).

20 *Natal Mercury*, 23 September 1873. The colonial engineering department return for 1874 showed that a bridge over the Mkomanzi was sanctioned (CSO 486, No. 2703, 22 January 1875).

21 Reference is made to these issues later in the chapter.

Roads

The success of the diamond fields in the Northern Cape provided a spur to Natal's economy and exports increased rapidly. Sugar found a ready market on the diamond fields, while wool shipments from the interior increased in value from £120 776 in 1870 to £389 285 in 1875.²² This change in economic fortunes focused attention on transportation in Natal, in particular the poor condition of the colony's roads and its lack of railways. Poor roads meant that longer time periods were required to move freight, which, in turn, resulted in higher freight rates.²³ A *Mercury* editorial on 7 June 1873 condemned ox-wagon transport as "the very worst known to any civilised country", adding that it was

impossible to conceive any description of carriage which involves more delay, risk of breakage, wear and tear and general inconvenience than does conveyance by ox-wagon along the rough, stony, muddy, dusty and heart-breaking roads of Natal.²⁴

Alexandra County's magistrate, Dunbar Moodie, complained to the colonial secretary in March 1873 about the condition of the county's roads, which he referred to as "mere wagon tracks". His observation that overloaded wagons ploughed up the tracks which became impassable in wet weather²⁵ was echoed by Governor Pine in his address to the opening of the Legislative Council in July 1874. Pine stated that

wagons ... travel on wheels with narrow tires and when a wheel is chained, going downhill, it acts like a plough and creates a deep furrow. No road, however well made, can stand this usage. Until it is checked, it will be hopeless to keep the roads of the Colony in repair.²⁶

Although 50 African labourers were reported working on roads in Alexandra County in July 1873²⁷ and £1 400 was budgeted for road maintenance and repair in 1874,²⁸ there was no improvement and settlers submitted another petition, signed

22 Leverton 1968:127, 159.

23 Leverton 1968:167.

24 In an editorial on 2 October 1873, the *Mercury* stated that it was "unfair and improper to invite immigrants to Natal while our roads remain in their present condition".

25 CSO 436, No. 857, 31 March 1873. Exasperation with the condition of roads was also reflected in a petition signed by 222 Durban residents who asked that the road through Addington to the Point be hardened (CSO 454, No. 2601, 3 November 1873).

26 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 26, No. 1483, 31 July 1874. Sugar planter Ralph Clarence of Clare estate urged the use of lighter wagons limited to 2½ tons (and not 6 tons) as the solution and deplored the cruelty to oxen being whipped to drag overloaded wagons (*Natal Mercury*, 17 February 1874).

27 CSO 445, No. 1725, 8 July 1873.

28 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 26, No. 1453, 20 January 1874.

by 51 inhabitants, to the Legislative Council in September 1874.²⁹ Arising out of those concerns, John Robinson moved for the appointment of a select committee to consider and report on measures to bring about relief from the existing transport conditions. He cited in particular Alexandra and Victoria counties, where “hundreds of tons of sugar had been locked up for weeks and months” because of transport difficulties and feared that Natal would lose business as a result of competition from the Cape.³⁰

J.B. Aiken and the Railway Bill

Neglect of the South Coast’s infrastructural needs may, to some extent, have been ascribed to its lack of direct political representation. This changed with the passage of Law 1 of 1873 which increased the proportion of coastal representation in the Legislative Council from a third to two-fifths, and included the election of one representative for Alexandra and Alfred counties.³¹ James Burnett Aiken of Maryville estate at Ifafa put his name forward as a candidate. Endorsed by just 35 of the local eligible voters, his candidacy was unopposed.³² At a public meeting in Umzinto he indicated, *inter alia*, that the promotion of coastal shipping from the Mpambinyoni and the Mzimkulu were foremost among his political objectives.³³ The *Witness* described him as a “shrewd and energetic colonist who has a large and varied experience ... He is as anxious for railways as any man in this Colony...”³⁴ The *Mercury* noted that Aiken’s constituency was one of the largest in Natal and that “he had his work cut out for him”.³⁵ Though a newcomer to the Legislative Council, Aiken quickly showed that he was not reticent about participating in the cut and thrust of debate, his assertive style earning him editorial comment from the *Mercury* which described him as “pertinacity itself when fairly roused into opposition ... The keenness with which the gentleman follows his scent when he thinks he has got it, is worthy of a better cause than that now espoused by him”.³⁶

29 *Natal Witness*, 25 September 1874. With reference to its failure to develop a harbour on the Mkomanzi and to build a bridge, a report in the *Mercury* on 21 November 1874 accused the Legislative Council of “passing laws that are seldom carried out, voting sums of money that are never spent for the purposes for which they were intended”.

30 *Natal Witness*, 7 August 1874.

31 Leverton 1968:156; *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 25, No. 1421, 15 July 1873.

32 *Natal Mercury*, 14 August 1873. In comparison, John Hunt of Durban Borough, who was mayor of Durban from 1864 to 1866, received 207 signatures of endorsement for his candidacy. From that the fledgling state of electioneering on the South Coast may be gauged (*Natal Mercury*, 9 October 1873).

33 *Natal Mercury*, 30 August 1873.

34 *Natal Witness*, 12 August 1873; *Government Notice*, No. 190, 1 September 1873.

35 *Natal Mercury*, 4 September 1873.

36 *Natal Mercury*, 1 November 1873.

The issue in question was railway development. Aiken made his mark during proceedings of the Railway Bill which preoccupied the Legislative Council from 27 October to 15 December 1873. As matters subsequently turned out, Aiken was proved correct. Railway agitation had reached fever pitch in the election of 1873. At the civic reception held in Durban to mark his arrival as Natal's new governor, Pine was informed that railways and labour (the renewal of Indian indentured immigration) were the essential needs of the colony.³⁷ Ten of the fifteen elected members of the council supported the Welborne railway scheme which had been approved in 1872. In terms of that scheme, 345 miles of railway was to be constructed from Durban to Newcastle and from Durban to the Mkomanzi river by the Welborne Company, which was required to deposit £400 000 as security. In return, the company was to receive a subsidy of £40 000 per annum for twenty years and 2.5 million acres of Crown land. Reservations about the scheme on the part of the secretary of state for colonies, Lord Kimberley, as well as the difficulty that Welborne appeared to be having in raising the deposit, resulted in the tabling of a new bill on railways.³⁸

Aiken was castigated by Charles Barter, Ralph Ridley and John Robinson for being 'obstructive' during the initial readings of the bill. This was because of his relentless questioning of aspects of the bill. One was that the extent of the South Coast line was limited only to Isipingo. Aiken was supported by James Saunders of Victoria County who also felt that the South Coast would be "left in the lurch" as a result.³⁹ The second issue was the grant of 2.5 million acres of Crown land to the Welborne Company, mainly in Alfred County. Aiken, supported by Saunders, refused to relent. Both men argued that it was an ill-advised concession that could result in the company taking over the South Coast. Aiken's attempt to amend this clause was defeated by nine votes to four.⁴⁰ Their opposition was reproved by both the *Mercury* and the *Witness* as threatening the passage of the bill.⁴¹ When the third reading of the bill was put to the vote on 21 November 1873, Aiken opposed it again, citing "a dangerous position in disposing of the Crown lands" which he feared might be converted into "kaffir locations".⁴² Confident that the Welborne scheme would receive the assent of the British government, following the scheme's formal approval on 15 December 1873

37 *Natal Mercury*, 17 July 1873. In an editorial on 20 March 1873 the *Mercury* stated: "What Natal has wanted for years, still wants, and will continue to want until they are provided may be stated in two words – Coolies and Railways".

38 Heydenrych 1981:51-52, 54-55.

39 CSO 464, Proceedings in Committee of the Whole House on the Railway Bill No. 1, 1873, 2-4. "Mercator", in a letter to the editor (*Natal Mercury*, 6 November 1873), accused Aiken of being an "antagonist of railways".

40 CSO 464, Proceedings in Committee of the Whole House on the Railway Bill, 11 November 1873, 18.

41 *Natal Mercury*, 13 November 1873; *Natal Witness*, 14 November 1873.

42 *Natal Witness*, 25 November 1873.

by the Natal Legislative Council, the *Witness* scorned Aiken as representing only some 30 voters in Alexandra County and having “an inexplicable hatred to the leasing clauses in the Bill”.⁴³

But a change of government in Britain, together with concerns about the rights of the Zulu following the Langalibalele affair,⁴⁴ frustrated railway development under the Welborne scheme. The new secretary of state for colonies, Lord Carnarvon, opposed the bill because of the financial burden that it would place on the colony and his opposition to land concessions. Aiken thus found support at the highest level. Carnarvon was concerned that the company involved could impose “a heavy rent” on African inhabitants because, as he argued, those lands were “useless to the Company unless it could be made to yield a money profit”.⁴⁵ The scheme was officially dead in December 1874 when Carnarvon declared that the British government would not assent to it.⁴⁶ While most of Natal was dismayed at the news,⁴⁷ for the South Coast, which had been excluded from the scheme, this raised hopes of a solution to the problem of facilitating access to Durban. But it would be a long wait before anything materialised.

Seagoing transport

Although an 1870 report on Alexandra County noted that the stonework at the mouth of the Mkomanzi was “gradually disappearing”,⁴⁸ optimism about the prospects for a harbour did not fade. Following his tour of the South Coast in 1870, John Robinson remained convinced that a harbour on the Mkomanzi could become a reality.⁴⁹ In 1871, Durban Port Captain Alex Airth inspected the coast as far as Ifafa for shipping prospects but little came of that visit.⁵⁰ Worse still, after inspecting the mouth of

43 *Natal Witness*, 6 January 1874.

44 A crisis developed in 1873 when the resident magistrate of Estcourt instructed the local chief, Langalibalele, to hand in all unregistered firearms which his Hlubi tribesmen had obtained as a result of working on the Griqualand West diamond fields. Langalibalele had failed to comply with the law on gun registration and had refused an order to appear before Shepstone, the secretary for native affairs. Sensing that he was about to be deprived of his land, Langalibalele and a number of his people fled to Basutoland pursued by a force of settler volunteers. Langalibalele was subsequently deposed from his chieftom, captured and put on trial in January 1874 for treason and rebellion. He was found guilty and banished for life to the Cape colony. The affair generated adverse publicity in Britain thanks to the efforts of bishop Colenso and the Aborigines Protection Society (Guest 1989:151-156; Cuy1983:205-210).

45 *Natal Witness* of 4 December 1874 citing correspondence from Sir Julian Pauncefote of the Colonial Office to Welborne.

46 Heydenrych 1981:60-61.

47 *Natal Mercury* and *Natal Witness*, 8 December 1874.

48 *Natal Mercury*, 22 January 1870.

49 Robinson 1872:107.

50 *Natal Mercury*, 4 February 1871.

the Mkomanzi in 1872, the surveyor-general, Dr. Sutherland, informed the colonial secretary that until South Barrow, (as Umkomaas was officially called) had grown in size, there was no urgency to tackle the project.⁵¹ But the annual summary of news from Alexandra County for 1872 noted that a steam launch was being constructed which, in due course, would provide a service from the Mkomanzi.⁵²

The *Anthony Musgrave* made its first voyage to the Mkomanzi on 8 August 1873, discharging 14 tons of cargo and taking 30 tons of sugar back to Durban. The ship transported in six hours what would have taken fourteen wagons at least four days.⁵³ The *Anthony Musgrave* made three more successful trips to the Mkomanzi before her keel struck rocks in the river mouth and caused her to be stranded near the shore.⁵⁴ Uninsured, she was deemed beyond salvage and abandoned as a total wreck in February 1874.⁵⁵ In expressing sympathy with the “suffering district”, the *Mercury* urged that “every nerve should be strained to remove whatever obstacles may exist” to enable the Mkomanzi to become a port from which produce could be sent “with regularity and certainty”.⁵⁶ However, the setback which the loss of the *Anthony Musgrave* represented to Alexandra County produced two positive developments: £1 500 was allocated for work on the mouth of the Mkomanzi, which commenced in June 1874,⁵⁷ and an informal commission was established, comprising of John Milne, Durban’s harbour engineer from 1849-1858, and local residents Alex Brander, John Bazley, George Robinson, and Lewis Reynolds to investigate suitable points for beach shipping.⁵⁸

The commissioners inspected five river mouths between the Mkomanzi and the Mzimkulu and in March 1874 settled on the Mpambinyoni at Scottburgh as most suitable for beach-based shipping.⁵⁹ They engaged the services of Captain G. Walker

51 CSO 426, No. 2403, 7 December 1872. £222 in the Public Works budget of 1872 was earmarked for work at the mouth of the Mkomanzi (*Natal Blue Book*, 1872, H2-3).

52 *Natal Mercury*, 18 February 1873. There was also renewed interest in navigation prospects on the Mzimkulu river in the light of railway companies being offered land concessions in Alfred County. The *Mercury* (4 January 1871) speculated that settlers could be attracted to the area and that the close proximity of the marble quarries to the river could spur the promotion of river shipping.

53 *Natal Mercury*, 12 August 1873.

54 The voyages were reported in the 16 September, 30 October and 20 November 1873 issues of the *Natal Mercury*. See also *Natal Mercury*, 25 November 1873; CSO 458, No. 3003, 22 December 1873.

55 *Natal Mercury*, 17 February 1874.

56 *Natal Mercury*, 13 and 18 December 1873.

57 *Natal Blue Book*, 1874, H4.

58 *Natal Mercury*, 18 December 1873.

59 On 26 March 1874, Black and Baxter, the Umzinto store owners, stated in a letter to James Walker, formerly the manager of the Umzinto sugar estate, that they were “now almost certain” to have their produce shipped from the Mpambinyoni. James Walker family papers, File 17, KCM 03/3/17/8; *Natal Mercury*, 27 May 1874. Both Black and Baxter passed on in 1876 (*Natal Mercury*, 22 April 1876).

of East London to oversee the conveyance of cargo through the surf off the Mpambinyoni river mouth to a waiting ship. Captain Walker actually swam out through the surf to the backline waves to prove the ease with which cargo could be sent out to a vessel.⁶⁰ It was also announced that a shipping company was being formed and that regular seagoing transport from the Mpambinyoni would commence in August.⁶¹ The need to establish reliable alternative transportation had become urgent as the cost of overland transport to Durban, at £7 per ton, was “ruinous”, as one local correspondent noted.⁶² This was in part due to the fact that red water disease had decimated cattle herds and resulted in a dire shortage of draught animals which had caused freight rates to increase by 100 percent.⁶³

The formation of the Alexandra Shipping Company in July 1874 marked the determination of locals in Alexandra County to resolve their transport difficulties. Field Cornet Alex Brander, justice of the peace (JP) of Umzinto was managing director of the company. Directors included Lewis Reynolds (JP); the new owner of the Umzinto sugar estate; James Aiken (MLC), of Maryville estate in Ifafa; Robert Black, who had business interests in Umzinto, Equeefa estate and in Durban; A. Fass of Pietermaritzburg; and J.R. Couper, manager of Glasgow Natal Sugar in the Tugela division of Victoria County.⁶⁴ The involvement of Couper reflected the fact that the North Coast was similarly troubled by transport difficulties and that he saw potential in the Alexandra Shipping Company as providing some relief. In October 1874, a petition signed by Couper and 50 other planters of the Tugela division was submitted to the Legislative Council requesting “assistance in furthering any scheme which may have for its object the shipping of produce direct from the beach north of the Umvoti river”.⁶⁵ The upper North Coast, like the South Coast, was excluded from the proposed railway development in that the rail head was planned to extend only as far as Verulam. No shipping from the North Coast shore ever took place.

On 30 September 1874, Brander, in his capacity as managing director of the Alexandra Shipping Company, submitted a petition to the Legislative Council requesting financial aid.⁶⁶ This coincided with a report by a select committee on transport which had been published on 29 September and which, after noting that “no provision was made in the system of railways ... for the business and produce of Alexandra and Alfred counties”, recommended “liberal government assistance” to the “establishment of shipping

60 *Natal Witness*, 26 May 1874; *Natal Mercury*, 27 May 1874.

61 *Natal Mercury*, 27 May 1874.

62 *Natal Mercury*, 17 February 1874.

63 *Natal Mercury*, 31 January 1874; 12 May 1874; *Natal Witness*, 26 May 1874.

64 CSO 511, No. 869, Alexandra Shipping Company, Ltd.

65 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 22, 1874, 279.

66 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 22, 1874, 184.

facilities at certain points along the seaboard [for] the conveyance of produce”.⁶⁷ The select committee, when it reconvened, was unanimous in its recommendation that a loan of £3 000 at five percent interest be provided to Alexandra Shipping, and that for a period of two years a subsidy of ten shillings per ton be paid to the company for produce it shipped to and from the coasts of Alexandra and Alfred counties and the coast of the Tugela division.⁶⁸ The Legislative Council approved those recommendations on 18 November 1874.⁶⁹

It seemed that the South Coast would finally address its transport woes. In its prospectus, Alexandra Shipping confidently asserted that over a six month period it had proved that merchandise could be “safely, speedily and economically shipped from and landed on the beach at Scottsburg” and that once it had subscribed the requisite capital, a “suitable coasting steamer” would be purchased from England.⁷⁰ Seagoing shipping had commenced from the Mpambinyoni in August 1874 when a cutter,⁷¹ the *Phoebe*, successfully transported 419 bags of sugar to Durban after loading them from the beach at Scottburgh.⁷² Another vessel, the 80-ton *Adonis*, also made regular visits to Scottburgh, proving, as a *Mercury* report stated, that such shipping was “quite practicable”.⁷³ But just as seagoing shipping appeared to be succeeding, an improvement in the condition of cattle resulted in wagon transporters reducing their prices by 25 percent. Several sugar planters opted for the overland transport routes, thereby dealing a setback to Alexandra Shipping.⁷⁴ Although the *Adonis* made occasional trips to Scottburgh during 1875, Alexandra Shipping’s warehouse at Scottburgh languished through lack of use.⁷⁵

When Sir Garnet Wolseley, who was administrator of Natal in 1875, visited Umzinto in July, Alexander Brander chaired a public meeting at which he stressed that while roads, railways and bridges were being built in other parts of Natal, the lack of such infrastructure in Alexandra County threatened the economic security of the area.⁷⁶ By the end of 1875 the shipping enterprise quietly passed into the hands of Messrs. Crowder of Durban.⁷⁷ Promises of improved roads and works at the

67 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 26, No. 1492, 29 September 1874.

68 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 26, No. 1500, 10 November 1874, LC No. 18.

69 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 22, 1874, 439.

70 CSO 511, No. 869, 1875, 1-2.

71 A cutter is a small single-masted boat with two or more headsails.

72 *Natal Mercury*, 29 August 1874.

73 *Natal Mercury*, 26 January 1875.

74 *Natal Mercury*, 26 January 1875.

75 *Natal Mercury*, 26 January; 2 February and 16 November 1875.

76 *Natal Mercury*, 3 August 1875

77 *Natal Mercury*, 22 January 1876.

mouth of the Mkomanzi failed to materialise.⁷⁸ Of £1 500 budgeted for 1874, only £283 had been spent in over a year.⁷⁹ The lack of government interest in seagoing shipping was reflected in the colonial secretary's negative response in February 1876 to a new request, which was submitted by 178 planters and merchants of Durban and Alexandra counties, for aid in establishing seagoing shipping between the Mkomanzi and Durban.⁸⁰

Labour and sugar production

Peter Richardson has remarked that following the speculative growth of the sugar industry up to the recession of the mid-1860s, “a more highly capitalised and extensive system of large milling and planting concerns” emerged during the 1870s. In crushing cane for outside growers, entrepreneurs displayed features of the central milling system which would dominate the industry in later years.⁸¹ William Campbell of Muckleneuk argued in 1874 that central milling was being forced on planters because of “the effect of competition and the exhaustion of the soil”. He believed that acceptance of the process was logical as it was necessary to separate the business of the grower from that of the manufacturer.⁸²

Three pioneers of this larger, corporative approach to sugar emerged on the South Coast during the second half of the 1870s. They were Lewis Reynolds, Edward W. Hawksworth, and Samuel Crookes. By purchasing the 8 500-acre Umzinto sugar estate, including its mill and machinery in March 1874 for a then cut-price of £5 000,⁸³ Lewis Reynolds established a platform for what would become one of the giants of the sugar industry. After his death on 18 September 1875,⁸⁴ his brother, Thomas of Oaklands estate in Victoria County, together with Thomas' sons Frank and Charles, established T. Reynolds

78 The resident magistrate's report for 1876 for Alexandra County noted the poor condition of roads and in particular the non-existence of roads between the Mzumbe and Mzimkulu rivers (*Natal Blue Book*, 1876, 111).

79 *Natal Blue Book*, 1875, H3.

80 CSO 534, No. 3375, 29 February 1876; CSO 534, No. 3373, 27 November 1875.

81 Richardson 1985:192-193.

82 Article titled 'Central Sugar Factories,' in *Natal Almanac*, 1875, 127-128. The *Blue Book* return for 1874 (X4-5) showed the following machinery on sugar estates in Alexandra County: Canonby (18-horsepower steam mill); Craigie Burn (16-horsepower steam mill); Umzinto Sugar (18-horsepower steam mill); Ifafa William Grant (10-horsepower steam mill); Umzinto Lodge (12-horsepower steam mill); Renishaw (8-horsepower steam mill); Nil Desperandum (6-horsepower steam mill); Restalrig (10-horsepower steam mill); Cowick (10-horsepower steam mill); Undercliffe Equeefa (14-horsepower steam mill).

83 *Natal Mercury*, 14 April 1874.

84 *Natal Mercury*, 23 September 1875. Reynolds was reported as having been unconscious for four days before his death. He was held in high esteem by his fellow residents who attended his funeral in Umzinto in large numbers. In his eulogy, the reverend. Barker compared Reynolds to James Arbuthnot referring to them as “exemplary men” of the county (*Natal Mercury*, 30 September, 2 October 1875).

PROSPECTUS

OF THE

ALEXANDRA SHIPPING COMPANY, LIMITED.

CAPITAL, £6,000. In 240 Shares of £25 each.

PROVISIONAL DIRECTORS:

MR. ROBERT BLACK—Messrs. Black, Baxter & Co., Durban.
.. J. R. COUPER, J.P., General Manager Glasgow Natal Sugar Co. (Limited).
.. LEWIS REYNOLDS, J.P., of Umzinto Estate, Alexandra County.
.. A. FASS, of Maritzburg.
.. ALEX. BRANDER, J.P., Umzinto.
.. J. B. AIKEN, M.L.C., of Maryville, Alexandra County.

Bankers:

THE STANDARD BANK OF BRITISH SOUTH AFRICA (LIMITED).

Solicitor: MR. W. E. SHEPSTONE.	Office: WEST STREET, DURBAN.
-------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------

The "ALEXANDRA SHIPPING COMPANY" was formed in July 1874, to provide sea carriage for the produce of County Alexandra to Durban. The Shareholders who then entered on this enterprise were residents in Alexandra County, or proprietors of Estates there. The result of operations during the past six months has proved that, not only can produce and merchandise be safely, speedily, and economically shipped from and landed on the beach at Scottsburg—the particular point at which the Company has worked,—but that the time has now come when they ought to invite the co-operation of the Public in the establishment of regular coasting communication between Durban and various points on the seaboard of the colony.

In order to attain this, particularly with the view of extending operations at the earliest date possible to Victoria County, it is necessary that the Capital of the Company be increased to £6000, and that the Company be incorporated on a broader basis than originally intended, when the name of the Company will be altered to that of "The Alexandra and Victoria Shipping Company, Limited"

The Company will be registered under "The Joint Stock Companies Limited Liability Law, 1864."

Figure 5.2 Prospectus of the Alexandra Shipping Company, Ltd.

and Sons in 1877. Based in Esperanza, they consolidated their holdings by absorbing smaller estates such as William Grant's Ifafa estate, William Arbuthnot's Greenwood estate, and the 4 500-acre Equeefa estate, so that by 1907 Reynolds Bros., the registered name of the firm since 1892, commanded 13 134 acres.⁸⁵

In March 1875, the Hawksworth brothers opened the Equeefa Central Mill on their Hawkswood estate. It boasted a 36-horsepower engine, one of the largest in the colony, which could turn out four tons of sugar every twelve hours. When John Robinson visited Equeefa Valley in 1870, he noted that none of the estates there was older than three years⁸⁶ and predicted that Hawkswood would flourish.⁸⁷

The third pioneer of an expanded sugar operation was Samuel Crookes, who was just 21 when he arrived in Natal in September 1860 with his brother Charles. Unskilled, he initially took a job as labourer on a North Coast estate. After completing an apprenticeship as a wheelwright, he moved to the South Coast where he rented a site from Thomas Landers for his wagon building business. In November 1865 he began planting cane.⁸⁸ In 1876 with the dissolution of the partnership between Joshua, Joseph and Samuel Landers of Renishaw in the Mpambinyoni valley,⁸⁹ Crookes purchased Renishaw, which he added to his Ellingham estate.⁹⁰ By 1882, Crookes had added Thomas Landers' Maryland estate and Charles Sinclair's Restalrig estate, which were also in the Mpambinyoni valley.⁹¹ The three estates formed the basis of Crookes Bros. Ltd. which, like Reynolds Bros., came to dominate the sugar business on the South Coast.

Aside from capital, the other problem that planters faced was the labour shortage across the colony. This crisis became acute as Natal's economy shook off the effects of the depressed years of the 1860s and benefited from increased trade resulting from the opening of the diamond fields. Indentured immigration had been terminated in

85 Osborn 1964:316, 324-325; Richardson 1986:155.

86 William Arbuthnot and John Kirkman were neighbours of Hawkswood (CSO 463, No. 379, 26 January 1874).

87 *Natal Mercury*, 11 March 1875; 22 January 1870; Robinson 1872:122-123. Edward W. Hawksworth arrived in Natal in April 1869. Before immigrating he had received a grant of 100 acres of Crown land in the Equeefa valley. He purchased a further 200 acres, and with 100 acres from his father, he and his three brothers established Hawkswood. In 1883 Edward set up his own mill on Beneva. By 1908 it was producing 5 000 tons of sugar in a season. (This figure seems exaggerated given the fact that the entire county produced little more than that). He died on 2 March 1923 aged 75 (*South African A Sugar Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1923, 209-213). In Victoria County the Effingham Central Sugar mill opened at Avoca in July 1878 (*Natal Mercury*, 8 July 1878).

88 Hocking 1992:50, 59, 62.

89 *Natal Mercury*, 6 July 1876.

90 Osborn 1964:320.

91 Osborn 1964:321.

1866 because of the economic downturn, and by 1870 fewer Indians were available to planters as their contracts came to an end. Planters in Durban and Verulam held meetings to discuss the labour situation. Suggestions varied from offering inducements to Indians to remain on plantations to procuring Amatonga labour by sea from Delegoa Bay.⁹² The situation was exacerbated in 1871 by the withdrawal of 250 Indians from the labour market because they had chosen to claim their free return passage to India.⁹³

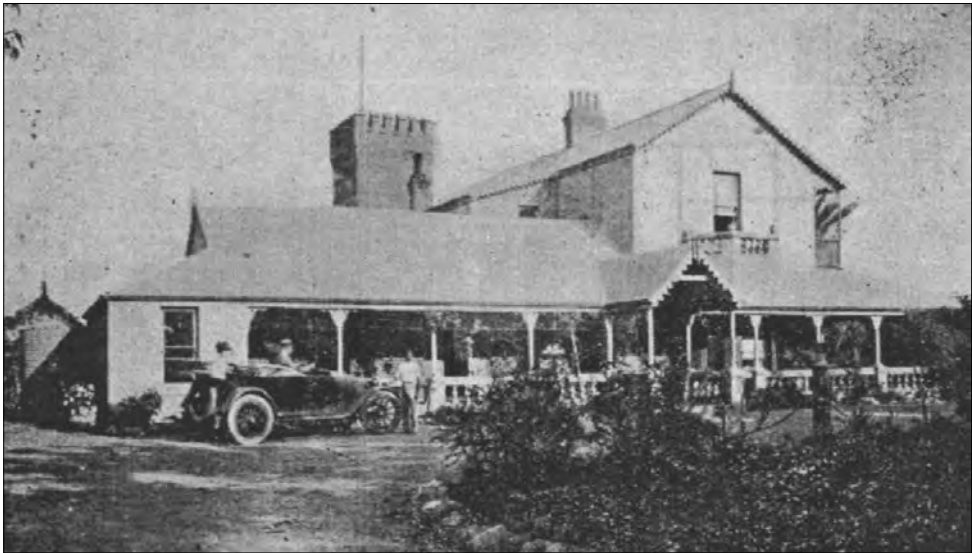


Figure 5.3 Hawkworth's homestead at Beneva

In Victoria County, sixteen planters formed a labour league in an effort to find a solution to the labour shortage.⁹⁴ In August 1871 the Chamber of Agriculture resolved that steps should be taken for the reintroduction of indentured labour.⁹⁵ From Alexandra County it was noted in 1871 that “the capriciousness and want of continuous labour [had] become the ... great evil of the district”. The result was that only one operation at a time, either milling or weeding and planting, could be carried out on plantations.⁹⁶ In late 1872 it was reported that the cry for labour was coming “from all parts’ of Natal”.⁹⁷ John Bazley of Ifafa emphasised the seriousness of the situation

92 *Natal Mercury*, 1 September, 8 September, and 18 October 1870.

93 *Natal Mercury*, 10 January 1871. A decrease in the number of Indians on plantations in Alexandra County was also noted (*Natal Mercury*, 17 February 1871).

94 *Natal Mercury*, 11 April 1871.

95 *Natal Mercury*, 22 August 1871.

96 *Natal Mercury*, 17 February, 1871.

97 *Natal Mercury*, 16 November 1872.

when he stated that “no man can keep up with sugar without a very great alteration in the labour question”.⁹⁸

As the Alexandra County’s correspondent remarked in the *Mercury* “this want of labour and transport [does] not only retard operations and paralyse progress, but they damp a man’s energy and cow his spirit”.⁹⁹ When Sir Garnet Wolseley paid a fleeting visit to Umzinto in July 1875, Alexander Brander stated at a public meeting in Wolseley’s honour that the inhabitants of Alexandra County looked forward to regular Indian immigration for labour as “the native population has almost entirely failed us”.¹⁰⁰

Despite the vagaries of the labour supply, drought conditions in 1873¹⁰¹ and floods in March 1874,¹⁰² sugar production averaged 1 200 tons for the years 1871 to 1875 in Alexandra County.¹⁰³ The reintroduction of indentured Indian labour in July 1874 served to ease the labour situation in the long term, but a report in late 1875 noted that “the supply of coolies is not yet nearly equal to the requirements of planters”.¹⁰⁴ In his annual report for 1878 Alexandra County, Resident Magistrate Gould Arthur Lucas remarked that the use of indentured labour exceeded that of African labour, with the former found to be more reliable, less troublesome, and not much more expensive.¹⁰⁵

Economic growth

Commercial developments reflected the growth of the county. In 1878 Umzinto and Umkomaas each had three supply stores; there were two in Ifafa, and one each at Equeefa and Umtwalumi. Both Umzinto and Umkomaas had licenced houses of accommodation.¹⁰⁶ By 1879 there were seventeen sugar mills, three corn/grist mills

98 *Natal Mercury*, 13 May 1873. “The grand want is labour”, reported the county correspondent in the *Mercury* on 31 January 1874.

99 *Natal Mercury*, 17 February 1874.

100 *Natal Mercury*, 3 August 1875. John Lambert states in *Betrayed Trust* (1995:18) that until the 1870s Africans enjoyed a ready market for their produce which meant that fewer of them were dependent on wages.

101 Drought conditions plagued Alexandra County again in 1876 with the lower Mkomanzi river reported as empty (*Natal Mercury*, 30 December 1876). The presence of snakes was also reported as being prolific (*Natal Mercury*, 19 February 1876).

102 *Natal Mercury*, 31 January and 10 March 1874.

103 *Natal Blue Books* 1871, X4-5; 1872, X4-5; 1873: X4-5; 1874: X4-5; 1875, X4-5.

104 *Natal Mercury*, 16 October 1875.

105 *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, JJ19. The Indian population increased from 430 in 1874 to 1 589 in 1878 in Alexandra County (*Natal Blue Books* 1874, R10; 1879, V4). In 1879 Equeefa estate employed 187 indentured Indians (Osborn 1964:314). Canonby employed 200 Indians (CSO 684, No. 621, 29 January 1879).

106 *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, JJ19.

and two distilleries in the county, which produced 8 000 gallons of rum in that year. Crop production realised 1 377 tons of sugar (down by nearly a third from the 1878 crop of 1 941 tons because of drought), 7 235 pounds of coffee, 2 500 pounds of tobacco and 13 800 pounds of cayenne pepper.¹⁰⁷ Agricultural growth was due, in part, to the increasing use of indentured Indian labour.

Political representation

As the first representative of the South Coast (1873-1877), James Burnett Aiken was a controversial figure. His most significant contribution to the region, was arguably made after his term in public office had ended.¹⁰⁸ Addressing a public meeting in Umzinto shortly after his election, he described himself as a struggling planter who felt “very diffident and unworthy” to represent the South Coast, and that he would have preferred Alexander Brander to have been the candidate.¹⁰⁹ Yet in the Legislative Council he displayed a sound knowledge of parliamentary procedure and participated prominently in the business of the chamber.¹¹⁰ But his fellow council representatives found him to be a source of annoyance, particularly during the marathon committee sessions on the Railway Bill of 1873, when he persisted in his attempts to revise key clauses. A frustrated Ralph Ridley, editor of the *Witness*, branded Aiken as “obstructive”. John Robinson (MLC) also took exception to Aiken’s unrelenting questioning, saying that it seemed “impossible to satisfy his insatiable craving” for information “or to satisfy his scruples”.¹¹¹

Aiken’s loquacious tendency also resulted in him making contradictory statements on settlers’ prospects in the South Coast. During the Railway Bill debate, he cast doubt over the worth of the South Coast as a place of settlement. He spoke of “the improbability of much colonisation in Alexandra and Alfred counties except by capitalists and that on the coast”. He described most of the land in the two counties as “too rugged and wild for European colonisation and fit only for location of kafirs”. He was castigated by Ridley who wanted Aiken to spell out which of his statements on region he would like the House to “swallow”, as Aiken had previously lauded Alexandra County as possessing “lands unequalled by any in the world for the growth of sugar”. Aiken did not respond.¹¹²

107 *Natal Blue Books*, 1878: AA4-5; 1879: B26-30; AA4-5. The Alexandra correspondent for the *Natal Witness* reported on 5 October 1878 that there was “not a particle of green” in the county and that the rivers were drying up.

108 Aiken’s initiative in opening the Mzimkulu to shipping is discussed in the final part of this chapter.

109 *Natal Mercury*, 2 September 1873.

110 See account of council business in the *Mercury* of 25 October 1873.

111 CSO 464, Proceedings in Committee of the Whole House on the Railway Bill No. 1, 27 October 1873, 2, 4.

112 CSO 464, Proceedings in Committee of the Whole House on the Railway Bill No. 1, 10 November 1873, 17.

While those contradictory statements in a committee meeting in Pietermaritzburg went unnoticed by the press, Aiken's remarks at a dinner banquet in Umzinto on 3 June 1874 earned him damning editorial commentary in the local press. The *Mercury* gave Aiken's two hour speech extensive coverage, because, it claimed "Alexandra suffers much from unfortunate isolation".¹¹³ In his wide-ranging address Aiken made derogatory remarks about "up-country men and up-country doings", and about newspaper editors (referring to Ridley and Robinson, editors of the *Witness* and *Mercury* respectively), who, he said, should be placed "under considerable restraint" as he found it unacceptable that they had such power to influence public opinion. Ridley and Robinson were incensed by Aiken's claim to being worthy of a seat on the executive of a future cabinet headed by Charles Barter.¹¹⁴ The *Mercury* dismissed Aiken as "thin-skinned" and "unfit for public life". His "detraction and abuse for the men he worked with ... materially injured his usefulness as a member and prejudiced the cause of his constituents". It urged Alexandra County to guard "against being betrayed into a semblance of an antagonistic attitude towards the Colony at large".¹¹⁵

The *Witness* condemned Aiken's speech as "bunkum" and "gasconading conceit". Accusing him of "swaggering disdain for correctness", it reminded him that the up-country folk had never spoken against expenditure on making the Mkomanzi navigable. In satirical vein the *Witness* mocked Aiken's claims to greatness: "Often lately it has been asserted that the hour would bring the man, yet few thought the fulfilment was so near at hand". Referring to Alexandra County, the editorial continued: "It is in this neglected Nazareth that the great teacher and leader of South Africa has been found. How grateful the heart of every colonist ought to be that in this her hour of direst need, Natal has found her saviour".¹¹⁶ Aiken offered no response to these withering critiques. A year later, Natal's administrator, Sir Garnet Wolseley, described Aiken as "a most silly and vain fellow" in a diary entry.¹¹⁷

Aiken's political career as the South Coast's first representative slipped into obscurity after its tumultuous first year. In fairness, though, he and the rest of the Legislative Council took a back seat in political terms following the arrival of Wolseley in April 1875. As Basil Leverton has remarked, Wolseley's brief seemed to be to reduce control of the Legislature while he examined ways of settling "Native policy" in the

113 *Natal Mercury*, 11 June 1874.

114 *Natal Witness*, 16 June 1874; *Natal Mercury*, 11 June 1874.

115 *Natal Mercury*, 11 June 1874.

116 *Natal Witness*, 16 June 1874.

117 Preston 1973:229.

wake of the Langalibalele affair.¹¹⁸ In any event, local politics was eclipsed by the presence of Wolseley, Britain's top soldier at the time, who by means of champagne, sherry, dinner invitations and flattery managed to push through political reforms which strengthened the Colonial Executive Committee, thereby serving the ends of Carnarvon's confederation plans for Southern Africa.¹¹⁹ Remarking on the dearth of news about the South Coast in 1876, a *Mercury* correspondent wrote that he was afraid readers would have "forgotten there is such a place as the Lower Umkomaas".¹²⁰ In March 1877, however, Aiken was instrumental in the formation of the Alexandra Association. Modelled on the Victoria Planters Association, which had been established a short while before, it was intended to embrace all residents. Aiken was installed as president, with William Hawkesworth as secretary.¹²¹ In due course this association evolved into the Umzinto Agricultural Society.¹²²

The insolvency of Aiken's Maryville sugar estate obliged him to resign his seat on the council in April 1877.¹²³ William Hawksworth of Equeefa estate, as the sole candidate, was duly declared the new MLC for Alexandra and Alfred counties.¹²⁴ Whereas during Aiken's tenure the South Coast experienced a short lived media prominence, albeit perhaps for the wrong reasons, the region seemed to go off the radar during Hawksworth's watch. In mitigation, public interest was consumed by railway construction and the 1879 Anglo-Zulu War during this period.¹²⁵

The extent to which official interest in the South Coast was sidelined was reflected in a memorandum that Governor Bulwer presented to Colonial Secretary Mitchell in 1878. Referring to the coal deposits of northern Natal, Bulwer indicated that he was most anxious to develop them so that "we should secure the means of providing for our future coal supply".¹²⁶ With railway construction destined to grow in the years

118 Leverton 1968:172-173.

119 Guest 1989:158-160. Confederation, as John Robinson saw it, meant relieving the home government from its responsibilities by devolving greater self-government on the colonists (*Natal Mercury*, 19 November 1874). From 1874, Secretary of State for Colonies Carnarvon attempted to pursue confederation within southern Africa as a means of consolidating imperial interests and bringing about political stability within the region.

120 *Natal Mercury*, 30 December 1876.

121 *Natal Witness*, 27 March 1877.

122 Gordon 1978:252.

123 Clause 18 of the Natal Charter of 1856 obligated a member of the Legislative Council to resign his seat in the event of bankruptcy or insolvency (Eybers 1918:191; *Government Notice*, No. 129, 29 April 1877; Osborn 1964:313).

124 *Government Notice*, No. 171, 22 June 1877.

125 The Anglo-Zulu War completely dominated the news as reported by the press. Even the business of the Legislative Council was deferred, initially from May to June and then to October, and finally to November when the session commenced.

126 CSO 646, No. 2149, 18 June 1878.

ahead, a local coal supply was of critical importance. Thus, the South Coast had even less reason to enjoy official attention.

The Anglo-Zulu War

The Anglo-Zulu War had a significant impact on the county, as it did across the rest of the colony with active service lasting ten months.¹²⁷ A total of 30 men from the Alexandra Mounted Rifles were drawn off to “the front”,¹²⁸ which meant that the unit’s local strength, which averaged around 40, was severely diminished. The resident magistrate noted in his 1879 report that planting operations were adversely affected by the absence of planters. He found only two planters present among the ten plantations in the Equeefa valley. Exacerbating the labour shortage was the fact that the bulk of “able-bodied natives” had also been drawn off to the front.¹²⁹ In April 1879, 300 members of the Alexandra Native Contingent under the command of Captain George Pigg were reported marching down West Street in Durban on their way to Thring’s Post on the Zululand border.¹³⁰

Defence matters became the foremost concern around the colony following the proclamation on 26 November 1878 of the establishment of seven colonial defensive districts.¹³¹ A defence laager was built at Umzinto containing two ammunition magazines.¹³² Exemplifying this focus, a colony-wide review of arms late in 1878 found that Umzinto had the only weapons stock on the South Coast – a collection of 50 carbines.¹³³ Despite the great distance of Alexandra from Zululand, following the British disaster at Isandlwana,¹³⁴ the local commander of the Home Defence

127 Subservience to British power was a prerequisite of the policy of confederation. Sir Bartle Frere, British high commissioner, saw the independence and might of the Zulu kingdom as a threat to British supremacy. From July 1878, his tone towards Cetewayo’s kingdom became bellicose as he sought to confront what he saw as an obstacle to his plans. On 11 December 1878 an ultimatum was delivered to Cetewayo demanding the disbandment of the king’s regiments. When the ultimatum expired on 10 January 1879, British forces invaded Zululand (Brookes & Webb 1965:135; Duminy & Ballard 1981:5-6; 62-65).

128 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 31, No. 1794, 25 November 1879: Return of Colonials. The resident magistrate claimed that 80 percent of Alexandra County’s colonists were drawn off to the war (*Natal Blue Book*, 1879, JJ15).

129 *Natal Blue Book*, 1879, JJ14-15.

130 *Natal Mercury*, 14 April 1879.

131 Laband & Thompson 1990:230. The CSO files from volume 666 are dominated by defence issues for almost 100 volumes onwards.

132 *Natal Blue Book*, 1879, JJ15.

133 CSO 685, No. 8, 7 December 1878. The Verulam area in Victoria County was found to have 100 Enfield rifles.

134 Panic gripped the settler community after the 22 January 1879 when, at Isandlwana, the British army lost 1 329 men in its greatest military disaster since the Crimean War (858 whites and 471 blacks). In Pietermaritzburg colonists were reported “plunged into the deepest mourning”; in Durban all

Corps, Stephen W. Bent, expressed alarm at the inadequate preparation of the South Coast to withstand an attack, describing the issue of fifteen rifles and 2 500 rounds of ammunition to local settlers as “quite inadequate to our requirements”. Bent also believed that buildings on Canonby estate on the Mkomanzi river offered an ideal defence point for the County.

Noting that upwards of 200 Indians were employed there, he claimed they would be available to assist in defence. Based on that assumption he requested an allocation of 100 firearms and ammunition.¹³⁵ Although Alexandra County was in no way threatened during the tragic hostilities which rocked Natal and the British Empire in 1879, as John Robinson later wrote, the towns and villages of Natal were “practically defenceless” as “all the available forces were across the [Zululand] border”. The vulnerability of the colony, he noted, was illustrated by the fact that “there was no British garrison elsewhere in South Africa to draw help from. No ocean cable existed to bear the tidings of a menaced Colony’s extremity”.¹³⁶

When the volunteers returned after an absence of eight months, 170 colonists came to Umzinto on 27 August to celebrate the return of their men in festivities that commenced with horse races and concluded with a dance that lasted well into the night.¹³⁷ They reflected in some ways what Governor Henry Bulwer had to say when he remarked in his address opening the Legislative Council on 6 November 1879:

I cannot but refer with pleasure to the public spirit shown by the Colony generally during the war ... nor can I pass the most loyal behaviour of our Native population ... the unbroken good order maintained throughout the Colony.¹³⁸

Social life

Despite its isolation, or perhaps because of it, Alexandra County’s small white settler population, which numbered only 514 in 1876,¹³⁹ had advanced beyond the family get-togethers at Park Rynie when the Alexandra Mounted Rifles staged their annual drill.¹⁴⁰ By the mid-1870s several new social institutions had developed. This was

shipping bound for the Cape was “crammed with women and children” (Duminy & Ballard 1981:65; Laband & Thompson 1983:57).

135 CSO 684, No. 621, 29 January 1879.

136 Robinson 1900:132.

137 *Natal Mercury*, 1 September 1879.

138 CSO 728, No. 5190, Encl., 3.

139 *Natal Blue Book*, 1876, V4. The settler population remained virtually unchanged for the rest of the decade listing 508 and 505 white settlers for 1878 and 1879, respectively (*Natal Blue Books*, 1878, 1879, V4).

140 The one held in 1872 was reported to have been as convivial as ever (*Natal Mercury*, 6 June 1872).

reflected in a number of ways. The first public ball in the county took place at the Umzinto school in April 1874. More than a hundred locals attended and, according to one report, dancing “was kept up with unabated vigour till daylight did appear next morning”.¹⁴¹ As an indicator of progress and prosperity, the venue for the 1875 ball was Umzinto’s newly erected Royal Hotel.¹⁴²

**ROYAL HOTEL,
UMZINTO.**

THE above newly-erected Hotel is now open, where travellers will find the best accommodation for both man and horse, at moderate charges.

Ales, Wines, Spirits, &c., &c., of the best quality.

W. THORNTON, Proprietor.

July 9, 1875. **2429 13**

Figure 5.4 The Royal Hotel opens in Umzinto. *Natal Mercury*, 13 July 1875

Settlers around Umkomaas held their first musical evening on 7 April 1874. Reported as a “rich and rare treat” which afforded “gratifying proof of social advancement”, an audience of 70 was entertained by the Umkomaas Amateurs in Price’s store.¹⁴³ As Charles Hamilton witnessed in the mid-1860s, horse racing was already an established pastime in Umzinto.¹⁴⁴ By 1871 a racecourse had also been

141 *Natal Mercury*, 28 April 1874.

142 *Natal Mercury*, 13 July 1875; 9 September 1875.

143 *Natal Mercury*, 14 April 1874. A dance was held on 19 May 1875 in the school room at Umkomaas (*Natal Mercury*, 27 May 1875).

144 Hamilton 1870:150. Horse racing was a popular sport from the earliest days of colonial life in Natal (Hattersley 1940:99).

established at Park Rynie.¹⁴⁵ The Umzinto Cricket Club was formed in 1878 with three of James Arbuthnot's five sons (St. George, William, and Fitz-James), as well as Charles Reynolds, son of Thomas and nephew of Lewis Reynolds, among the nineteen founding members.¹⁴⁶

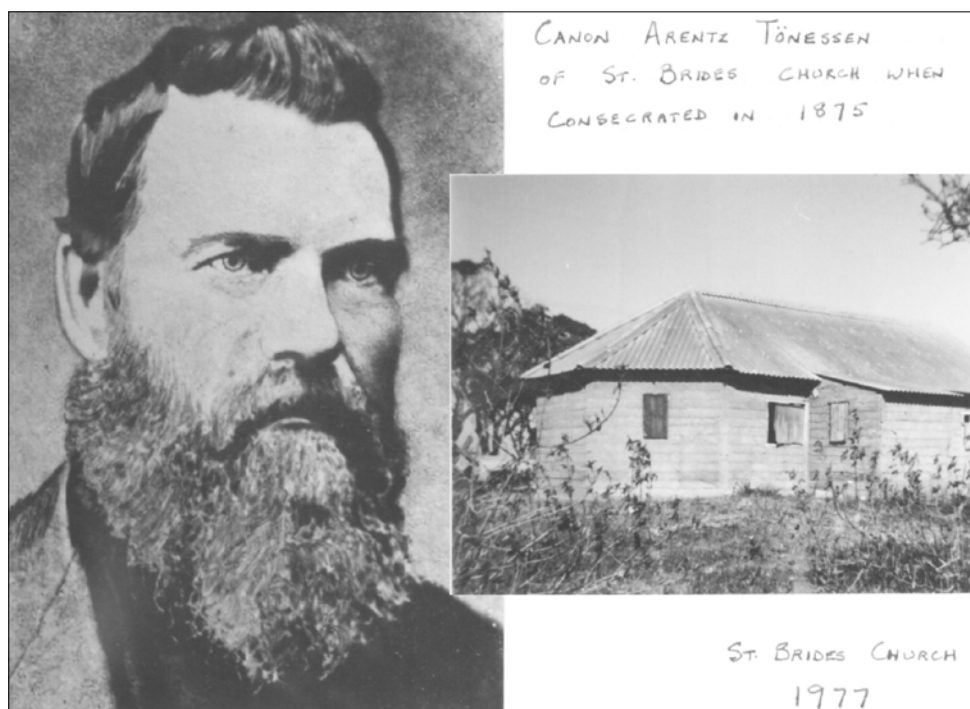


Figure 5.5 In 1862 the reverend Arentz Tonessen established the first church in Umkomaas, namely St. Brides. However, when he left the area in 1876, it stood empty for want of a pastor (*Natal Mercury*, 1 February 1876).

Church attendance remained regular with the *Natal Blue Book* for 1879 noting an average of 60 settlers attending the Sunday service at St. Patrick's Anglican church in Umzinto, while average attendance at services in Ifafa and Umkomaas were 40 and 50 respectively.¹⁴⁷ From 1878 Anglicans were also able to attend services in a church built on the estate of Hubert Arbuthnot in Equeefa valley.¹⁴⁸ In October 1879 the church building, which could accommodate 150 people, was gifted to the Church

145 Anderson 1946:28.

146 Barker 1979:2-3. A report in the *Mercury* of 11 January 1877, referred to Alexandra cricket as having been founded circa 1873. William Arbuthnot died of dysentery in 1881 (*Natal Mercury*, 13 May 1881).

147 *Natal Blue Book*, 1879, H23.

148 *Natal Mercury*, 27 April 1878.

of South Africa. Mrs. Jane Arbuthnot played a key role in mobilising funds needed to build the church.¹⁴⁹ Despite an unhappy start in 1860 when 47 settlers had submitted a petition stating their opposition to the appointment of Dunbar Moodie as resident magistrate,¹⁵⁰ 62 residents signed a letter thanking him for his sixteen years of service when he was transferred to Ladysmith in March 1876.¹⁵¹

Alfred County

John Robinson, as noted in chapter three, was dismissive about Alfred County in writing of his tour of the South Coast in 1870. “There is no European enterprise requiring notice further south”, he stated with reference to the territory beyond the Mzimkulu river.¹⁵² For most of the first twenty years after its annexation in 1866, Alfred County languished politically, socially, and economically. Murchison, its only settler community, was situated on a high table some ten miles from the coast. The magistrate’s court in Murchison was sole reason for its existence. The court house itself had collapsed in heavy rains in February 1870. Consequently, court proceedings were held in the magistrate’s house, which was one of only three wattle and daub structures in the hamlet, the remainder being African-style huts.

There was one general store, a branch of Charles Knox’s store of Umzinto. In the whole county there were six stores in 1870.¹⁵³ Between 1870 and 1875 the settler population grew from 43 to 120.¹⁵⁴ The only settler crop produced was coffee. Its production increased from 200 pounds in 1870 to 900 pounds in 1875; small amounts of Indian corn was also harvested.¹⁵⁵ J.B. Aiken remarked in 1873 that only a small area of the county’s 1 400 square miles was suitable for sugar, “the rest being suitable for grazing and growing mealies”.¹⁵⁶ The report for 1876 by Resident Magistrate James Giles corroborated this view, noting that few settlers were farmers and, of those, most were stock farmers.¹⁵⁷

149 *Natal Mercury*, 3 November 1879.

150 CSO 125, No. 937, August 1860.

151 *Natal Mercury*, 18 April 1876.

152 Robinson 1872:126.

153 CSO 351, No. 304, 9 February 1870; *Natal Mercury*, 2 April 1870.

154 *Natal Blue Books*, 1870, R10; 1875, R10.

155 *Natal Blue Books*, 1870, X4-5; 1875, X4.

156 CSO 464, Railway Bill No. 1, 11 November 1873, 18.

157 *Natal Blue Book*, 1876, JJ11-12. The lack of agricultural produce in Alfred County was indicated by Magistrate Giles in 1876 when he informed a road overseer who wanted to obtain maize meal for his labourers, that there were “no contacts for the supply of meal in this County” (CSO 563, No. 86, 8 November 1876).

Minimal government

The most conspicuous evidence of settler presence was the destruction of Crown forests. Resident Magistrate Henrique Shepstone warned in 1871 that “unless supervision of some sort is exercised, the Crown forests will ere long become valueless”. He was referring to the unchecked operations of sawyers who were decimating timber in the Ingeli range, and recommended the appointment of a supervisor to reside locally and put a stop to the “careless and wanton destruction”.¹⁵⁸ Such hopes, however, were futile in light of the colonial administration’s frugal approach to governance, as exemplified by its failure to replace the collapsed court house in Murchison and absence of a cattle pound. Shepstone had at his disposal very limited law enforcement resources. In 1872 there was one white constable assisted by eight Africans.¹⁵⁹ Three years later the size of the police force remained unchanged.¹⁶⁰ In any event, tree felling seemed a popular occupation. During July and August 1873, for instance, seventeen sawyers’ licences were issued.¹⁶¹ Shepstone’s successor, James Giles, also voiced concern for the “denuding of bush” in the vicinity of the Mzimkulu river and recommended the planting of Australian gum, wattle and blackwood, which, as fast-growing trees, would compensate for the thinning of the forests.¹⁶²

Following Giles’ appointment as resident magistrate in August 1874, the government authorised its first substantial expenditure in Alfred County when £679 was spent on a new magistrate’s office and lock-up. This was necessary following the relocation of the magistracy from Murchison to Harding in 1871. Giles also received a perk in the form of a forage allowance of three shillings per day for two horses.¹⁶³ But despite the fact that it was collecting an average of £1 400 per year in hut tax from Africans in the county,¹⁶⁴ actual government expenditure on infrastructural development such as roads, as was the case in Alexandra County, was disappointing in terms of delivery.¹⁶⁵

Instead, the colonial administration seemed more interested in what monies it could claw back from the county. A circular entitled *Return of the Savings*, which

158 Select document No. 11, 1871, presented to the Legislative Council on 2 August 1871.

159 CSO 409, No. 798, 22 April 1872; CSO 455, No. 2753, 15 November 1873.

160 CSO 505, No. 201, 14 January 1875.

161 *Natal Witness*, 15 August and 9 September 1873.

162 CSO, 494, No. 3416, 4 December 1874. Giles held the rank of major. He was a veteran of the Indian Mutiny having served in the 14th Light Dragoons. Africans in Alfred County called him “Umjwayeli”, meaning “Ever ready” (Alfred County centenary souvenir brochure. 15. KC 20385).

163 *Natal Blue Book*, 1874, H2-3; M32-33. A prisoner lock-up was first requested in 1867 (CSO 274, No. 1043, 1 June 1867).

164 *Natal Blue Books*, 1872, C2; 1873, C2, 1874, C8; 1875, C9.

165 £850 was listed in the colonial Estimates for 1874 for road improvement and maintenance in the county (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 26, No. 1453, 20 January 1874).

was sent to all departments in the civil administration by Colonial Secretary Napier Broome in 1875, claimed £170 back from Alfred County. This was based on £75 for a district surgeon, which the county did not have, and travelling expenses including the “conveyance of lunatics”, none of which had been incurred.¹⁶⁶ Almost ten years after its annexation, Alfred County did not have a pound master or a school.¹⁶⁷

Lost opportunities

The first non-agricultural development on the South Coast occurred in Alfred County. In March 1875 the Aiken brothers, James and David, proposed erecting a kiln (furnace) some seven miles up the Mzimkulu to burn lime. In 1866, the surveyor-general, Dr. P.C. Sutherland, had reported the existence of a large deposit of marble,¹⁶⁸ but almost a decade later no attempt had been made to exploit it. The Aikens noted that all the lime then used in Natal was imported from Britain and that their project would contribute to the development of the Mzimkulu for navigation.¹⁶⁹ By 1878 a marble quarry was reportedly in operation¹⁷⁰ but its development was restricted by road access and transport difficulties.¹⁷¹ Another initiative which differed from land-based agriculture was a seine (dragnet) operation near the mouth of the Mzimkulu. Managed by Robert Woolley and G. Anderson, it harvested a variety of fish amounting to ten tons in 1876. Salted and sold at £20 per ton, the fish found a ready market amongst the growing numbers of indentured Indians employed on the sugar estates around Umzinto.¹⁷² But high transport costs and poor roads put paid to this venture when it was found that fish could be obtained more cheaply from Cape Town.¹⁷³

A decade after annexation, Alfred County remained a backwater. By 1879, the only semblance of social cohesion that existed amongst its population of 225 settlers was

166 CSO 526, No. 2594, 28 August 1875.

167 CSO 526, No. 2565, 28 August 1875; CSO 485, No. 2550, 28 July 1874, Miss E.M. Joyner to Superintendent of Education Brooks.

168 Report of the surveyor-general on Alfred quarries, Select document No. 27, 1866, presented to the NLC on 9 July 1866.

169 CSO 511, No. 895, 15 March 1875.

170 *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, BB30.

171 *Natal Blue Book*, 1876, JJ11. A petition from 28 Alfred County settlers in 1875 noted that the “difficulty of transport’ was severely hampering the passage of trade and produce to and from Durban” (CSO 518, No. 1692).

172 *Natal Blue Book*, 1876, BB36-37. The number of Indians residing in Alexandra County in 1876 was given as 1 149 (*Natal Blue Book*, 1876, V4). There were no Indians resident in Alfred County in 1876. Even by 1879, only a single Indian was listed as resident in the county (*Natal Blue Book*, 1879, V4).

173 *Natal almanac and yearly register*, 1878, 103.

an attendance by 28 of them at the Lutheran church in Marburg.¹⁷⁴ The county had no school, no volunteer corps, no civic association such as the one formed in Alexandra in 1877,¹⁷⁵ and no hotel. There are no records of social functions such as dances, musical evenings, or horse races, the likes of which featured in Umzinto, Umkomaas and Park Rynie.¹⁷⁶

The only agricultural produce of note was coffee,¹⁷⁷ with a crop of 2 650 pounds produced in 1879.¹⁷⁸ Despite the lack of economic development Alfred County was the subject of much positive speculation during the last years of the decade. Among the submissions made to a select committee on European immigration in 1876 were four from colonists who saw great potential in Alfred County. Richard Higham, who had resided there since 1866, urged the granting of 100-acre plots along the coast as the best incentive for development. Robert Woolley of Lower Umzimkulu saw potential in maize and poultry farming, but opined that real development hinged on the opening of the Mzimkulu river to shipping. His thoughts were echoed by David Aiken, who cited the resources of the county – lime, marble, fishing, timber – as being closed to exploitation on account of transport logistics. David's brother James, then the MLC for Alexandra and Alfred counties, described the lack of development on the South Coast as “most lamentable”; he asserted that “if the Umzimkulu were in any other country but Natal, there would be running in and out of it steamers and sailing vessels”.¹⁷⁹ In his report for 1877, Magistrate Giles stated that the opening of the mouth of the Mzimkulu was the key to prosperity in the county, adding that such a development would enhance trade with the interior as far as Kokstad.¹⁸⁰

Aiken enterprise

Positive rhetoric notwithstanding, the champion in initiating shipping on the Mzimkulu was James Aiken, who matched words with action. In letters to the colonial

174 *Natal Blue Book*, 1879, V4; H23.

175 *Natal Witness*, 27 March 1877.

176 The first musical concert in Umkomaas was held on 7 April 1874 (*Natal Mercury*, 14 April 1874). Annual family weekends at Park Rynie were held from 1863 (*Natal Mercury*, 9 July 1866). A ball was held at the Royal Hotel in Umzinto in September 1875 (*Natal Mercury*, 9 September 1875).

177 The Alexandra County correspondent for the *Mercury* (1 February 1877) felt that Alfred County was better suited than Alexandra for the cultivation of coffee.

178 *Natal Blue Book*, 1879, AA5.

179 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 28, No. 1613, 17 October 1876. In 1874 the report of a commission tasked with investigating ways to promote white immigration proposed that free passages should be offered and that annually £10 000 should be set aside for that purpose (*Natal Government Gazette*, 22 September 1874). But the constitutional crisis brought about by the Langalibalele affair resulted in the Legislature ignoring the proposal.

180 *Natal Blue Book*, 1877, JJ9.

secretary in 1877 and 1878, he impressed upon the government the untapped potential of the river for the lower South Coast and emphasised that unless the government was proactive in developing the Mzimkulu, Natal might lose the interior trade to the Cape as a result of the development of Port St. Johns.¹⁸¹ In 1879 Aiken hired William Bazley to survey the river mouth and to quote on the cost of removing obstacles to shipping. He then asked for £350 in state assistance for Bazley to remove the rocks which, the latter claimed, would create an entrance 30 yards in width with a depth of four feet at low tide. When the government declined to consider the proposition,¹⁸² Aiken submitted a petition signed by 51 local residents asking for the removal of the rocks and noting that a steamer named the *Somtseu*, owned by T.N. Price of Durban, was ready and capable of servicing the Mzimkulu.¹⁸³

In his address to the opening of the Legislative Council on 6 November 1879, Governor Bulwer referred sympathetically to the need to develop the Mzimkulu for seagoing traffic because of the absence of a railway extension and the importance of inland trade. He noted that he had only recently toured the South Coast and was impressed by “the enterprise and energy which promised at no distant day to compete with ... Victoria County”.¹⁸⁴ Yet the government was not forthcoming with any concrete commitment on the matter.

In January 1880, when Aiken asked colonial engineer, Captain Albert Hime, to take over and complete the blasting work that Bazley had done at the mouth of the Mzimkulu, Hime declined, saying that Bazley should complete the work and then make a submission for consideration by the government for financial assistance.¹⁸⁵ Aiken informed Hime that he had made the necessary monetary arrangements to continue the works and “bring them to successful issue”. Nonetheless, in the light of Bulwer’s remarks on the subject in November, Aiken requested that the governor be informed of the private initiative that was underway and that the government should issue an appraisal of the work once it had been completed.¹⁸⁶ In his report for 1879, Giles noted

181 CSO 578, No. 295, 17 January 1877; CSO 663, No. 3868, 16 October 1878. Between them, the *Somtseu* and the *Congune* made three trips to Port St. Johns from Durban during the latter half of 1878 (*Natal Witness*, 29 August, 26 October, 21 November 1878). The *Congune*, previously named the *Natalie* before she came to grief in the mouth of the Mkomanzi in August 1861, twice cheated fate. The first occasion was, as noted, in 1861; the second was in 1873 when she sank in Durban bay but was raised and restored (*Natal Mercury*, 23 December 1873). After extensive refitting, the *Congune* resumed involvement in the coastal trade which included East London and Port St. Johns, but after 1878 her name ceased to feature in the shipping reports.

182 CSO 704, No. 2747, 23 May, 5 June 1879.

183 CSO 712, No. 3528, 24 July 1879.

184 CSO 728, No. 5190, with enclosure, November 1879, 7-8.

185 CSO 739, No. 488, 30 January, 6 February 1880.

186 CSO 743, No. 834, 23 February 1880. Although declared insolvent in 1877, Aiken joined the Durban accounting firm of William Palmer in 1878. It subsequently came to be known as Palmer and Aiken

that satisfactory progress was being made on the removal of rocks from the mouth of the Mzimkulu. He expected the first steamer to enter the river by April 1880.¹⁸⁷ The *Somtseu* made its historic first entry of the Mzimkulu in May 1880 and began a new era in the history of the South Coast.



Figure 5.6 James and David Aiken

(*Natal Mercury*, 7 January and 17 September 1878). Until 1885 Aiken lived in Durban where he was elected to represent ward two on the Durban town council, was honorary secretary of the Natal Agricultural and Horticultural Society in 1882, and president of the Natal Building Society in 1884. He returned to Alfred County late in 1885 (CSO 891, No. 223; CSO 967, No. 2488, CSO 1044, No. 4872).

187 *Natal Blue Book*, 1879, JJ21.

In closing

The chapter which follows covers perhaps the most significant period in the colonial history of the South Coast. Not only was history made with the commencement of regular shipping on the Mzimkulu and the arrival of the largest single contingent of immigrants, the Norwegians, but politically the South Coast was the most vociferous region of the colony in terms of its demands on the government. In this it was helped by the efforts of Thomas Reynolds, who, as the lone representative of the South Coast, was unremitting in his efforts on behalf of his constituents.



6

The Thomas Reynolds years

1880-1885

Remote though the County of Alexandra may be from the chief centres of population ... it nevertheless in some respects sets an example which might well be followed by other and larger communities. In no part of the colony is there more persistent and healthy discussion of public questions.

— *Natal Mercury*, 19 November 1884

Settlers on the South Coast were disappointed at the lack of infrastructural development during the 1870s, which kept them isolated from the rest of the colony, and regularly petitioned the authorities. Between 1880 and 1885, eighteen petitions emanated from settlers in Alexandra and Alfred counties concerning a wide range of issues which constituted a priority in their lives. Four petitions concerned the need to establish telegraphic links between the South Coast and Durban and Pietermaritzburg; three urged the establishment of a separate magistracy in the Lower Umzimkulu district of Alfred County; three involved harbour works and the granting of fiscal status to the river port; two petitions appealed for the construction of a bridge over the Mkomanzi; two were concerned with general colonial issues, such as opposition to the restoration of Cetewayo as Zulu king and a call for magistrates to be given the power to inflict corporal punishment; two involved matters in Umzinto, one concerned a road linking the coastal Mkomanzi area with its interior counterpart and the other referred to the layout of a township at Port Shepstone.

This chapter focuses on Thomas Reynolds because of the pivotal role he played in the economics and politics of the South Coast during the first half of the 1880s.

Introduction

From September 1880 until his death in June 1885, Thomas Reynolds, as the elected representative of the South Coast, was the conduit through whom the South Coast community expressed their needs and wishes. Born in 1820, he arrived in Natal in 1850 with his brother Lewis and settled in the Umhlali district, purchasing Oaklands estate in 1863. There he earned a reputation for “Umhlali water”, the name by which his rum was known.¹ Within the Victoria County community he was prominent during the 1860s as a captain in the Umhlali Volunteers Rifle Corps and as a member of the Victoria Coast Railway Committee.² Following Lewis’s death, he moved to the South Coast to pursue the sugar interest his brother had acquired in Umzinto. In July and August 1877, Thomas was acting resident magistrate in Alexandra County.³ In that year he established T. Reynolds and Sons in the Umzinto district with his sons Frank and Charles, while continuing to maintain his business interest in Umhlali. In 1880 he accepted a requisition signed by 40 local residents (including his two sons) to contest the Alexandra/Alfred seat in the colonial Legislative Council.⁴ Backed by 36 local residents, William Hawksworth, the sitting MLC, advertised his intention to contest the election.⁵ His candidacy was endorsed by two prominent members of the settler community – Samuel Crookes and William Bazley – whereas Reynolds enjoyed the support of, *inter alia*, the county field cornet and chairman of the Alexandra Association, Alexander Brander.

With sugar interests on both the North and South Coasts, Reynolds was a man of means;⁶ at a public meeting in Umzinto he let it be known that financially his Umzinto sugar estate had “a substantial balance on the right side”. After the meeting, electors were invited to the Royal Hotel to enjoy a “harvest home celebration” at which food and drink flowed freely in what could be described as an election sweetener.⁷ The outcome of the election, held in the final week of September, saw Reynolds triumphant.⁸ Hawksworth, however, appeared to suffer from sour grapes,

1 Osborn 1964:66, 180, 322. Despite the money he made from the sale of his rum, Reynolds stated in the Legislative Council in 1883 that liquor should not be sold to Africans and Indians as it had a “demoralising tendency” (*Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. VI, 1883, 97).

2 CSO 198, No. 509, 20 April 1864; CSO 222, No. 970, 7 June 1865.

3 CSO 602, No. 2693.

4 *Natal Mercury*, 18 August 1880. Reynolds’ third son, Arthur, did not migrate to the South Coast; he managed Glendale mill in Victoria County (Osborn 1964: 325).

5 *Natal Mercury*, 7 September 1880.

6 Despite the depressed state of the sugar industry in 1883, Reynolds invested £17 000 on a new mill and plantation called Umhlanga, situated between his Umzinto and Equeefa estates (*Natal Blue Book*, 1883, GC 44).

7 *Natal Mercury*, 24 August 1880.

8 With a few votes from Alfred County outstanding, Reynolds received 62 to 27 for Hawksworth (*Natal Mercury*, 28 September 1880).

subsequently accusing Reynolds of being out of touch with his constituents. He based his claim on the fact that Reynolds had not held a public meeting prior to the commencement of a new session of the Legislative Council. In reply, Reynolds pointed out that the Legislative Council had not met for nine months and that no one had approached him to hold a meeting during the two months he had been in Umzinto. Hawksworth's letter was endorsed by 21 local planters and in all probability was a veiled criticism of the fact that Reynolds continued to spend a great deal of his time on his Oaklands estate in Victoria County.⁹ This may explain why by the time of the 1882 election the *Mercury's* Alexandra County correspondent referred to Reynolds as "The Lord of Oaklands".¹⁰ His retort to this was: "I have been told I represent a cantankerous constituency ... which may be rather troublesome".¹¹

Accessing the Mzimkulu

The achievement of seagoing access to the Mzimkulu in 1880 was the result of private enterprise and initiative, primarily that of James Burnett Aiken, as previously noted. In a letter to Governor Colley in November 1880, Aiken claimed that he had been part of the negotiations which led to the building of a ship specifically designed to be able to enter the Mkomanzi and Mzimkulu rivers. Built in London, the schooner rigged, twin screw, 47-ton steamer *Somtseu* arrived in Durban in May 1878. At 90 feet in length, seventeen feet and six inches in width, it drew just four feet and nine inches of water and had a crew of eleven.¹² In anticipation of the need to carry out works at the mouth of the Mzimkulu, Aiken approached merchants for financial assistance. But their response was that such works were the responsibility of government. Despatches from the secretary of state published in 1879 on the subject of public works made it clear that government aid would not be forthcoming.¹³ So, on 21 July 1879, Aiken signed a contract with William Bazley to undertake the necessary works at the river mouth to render it safe for the *Somtseu* to access.¹⁴ When Aiken sought permission from Colonial Secretary Mitchell to

9 *Natal Mercury*, 30 August 1881 and 14 September 1881.

10 *Natal Mercury*, 31 May 1882. George Wirsing, the co-owner of Canonby estate with Lewis Reynolds before its sale to Natal Plantations Company in 1869, labelled Thomas Reynolds a "spiteful personality" in a letter published in the *Mercury* on 9 November 1876.

11 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 3, 1881, 112.

12 CSO 786, No. 4386, Memorial from J.B. Aiken to Colley, 11 November 1880; *Natal Mercury*, 11 May 1878.

13 LC No. 7, 1879, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 31, No. 1793, 18 November 1879. In a dispatch to Governor Henry Bulwer, dated 26 March 1879, the secretary of state for colonies, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, advised that no new public works were to be undertaken except those relating to defence or judged necessary for military purposes.

14 CSO 786, No. 4386, Aiken to Colley, 11 November 1880. Bazley's contract included two boats, oars, a raft or punt, a hawser, five spars each fifteen feet long, a ship's anchor and chain.

undertake the works, Mitchell's response was to question on whose authority Aiken was acting.¹⁵ At best the attitude of the colonial government to Aiken's proposal was one of indifference.¹⁶



Figure 6.1 Thomas Reynolds

From August to May 1880 Bazley worked “with extraordinary perseverance”, as Aiken termed it,¹⁷ in blasting outcrops of rock from the river mouth. In the meanwhile, Port St. Johns was enjoying regular visits by the *Adonis*. As the *Witness* remarked, “this port shows promise of shortly becoming something beyond a mere trading

15 CSO 786, No. 4386, 26 September and 30 September 1879.

16 A report in the *Mercury* of 26 January 1880 regretted the lack of government interest in Bazley's work.

17 CSO 786, No. 4386, Aiken to Colley, 11 November 1880.

station”.¹⁸ The potential posed by Port St. Johns to the trade from East Griqualand and Pondoland led the *Mercury* to remark that Port Shepstone could “form an effective counterpoise to the competitive action of our Cape neighbour at the mouth of the St. Johns” following the *Somtseu’s* first successful entry of the Mzimkulu.¹⁹ As an advertisement carried by the *Mercury* on 10 May 1880 stated, the *Somtseu’s* service to Port Shepstone was intended to benefit not only Alfred County, but East Griqualand as far as Kokstad.



**FOR
PORT SHEPSTONE,
RIVER UMZIMKULU.**

**For Harding and all Alfred County, Kokstadt
and all Griqualand East.**

THE S.S. “SOMTSEU” having left for the above port on the 7th inst., as advertised, will on her return again proceed thither, and continue to do so at short intervals.

All arrangements are complete in the River for the Landing, Storing, and Forwarding of Cargo; with regard to which all information will be given by Mr. D. C. AIKES, at the Drift, Lower Umzimkulu, or by the Undersigned.

For Freight, Insurance and Fares, apply in Durban or at the Point, to

T. N. PRICE.

Durban, May 8, 1880. 3542 to

Figure 6.2 The *Somtseu* sails to Port Shepstone, *Natal Mercury*, 10 May 1880

On Saturday 8 May 1880, the *Somtseu* became the first vessel to navigate the entrance of the Mzimkulu.²⁰ But the occasion was not without drama. A hawser rope from the lighter which the *Somtseu* was towing fouled one of her propellers, which inhibited steerage and caused the ship to incur “trifling damage” when it brushed up against

18 *Natal Witness*, 22 January 1880. Port St. Johns was regularly frequented by coastal steamers during the 1870s and 1880s. The *Lady Wood*, constructed in Greenwich, England, was designed specifically to service small coastal ports along the south east African coastline (Child 1980:105).

19 *Natal Mercury*, 15 May 1880.

20 Extra to the *Natal Mercury*, 14 May 1880.

a rocky outcrop.²¹ Nonetheless, this historic achievement was hailed by the *Mercury* as proof that navigation of the Mzimkulu was practicable and as a crucial means of servicing a district “beyond the reach of any calculable railway enterprise”.²² The *Somtseu*’s achievement sent out a message of hope for a district which was isolated and insulated from the rest of Natal, not merely by distance but by lack of road access. As an article in the 1880 edition of the *Natal Almanac* stated, Alfred County would “not alter much till the Umzimkulu mouth is opened for trade”.²³ Almost a year after a regular, seagoing shipping began to the Mzimkulu, the *Mercury* reported that the service had resulted in “new life amongst the people” of the Lower Umzimkulu district.²⁴ Prospects for the area were such that they also attracted the interest of shipping magnate Donald Currie, whose steamers plied between Natal and the United Kingdom. He was said to be greatly interested in the coastal trade.²⁵ The importance of seagoing transport to the South Coast was keenly felt when the only boat available for crossing the Mkomanzi was swept away by floods in November 1880 and the roads had become impassable. The *Somtseu* provided the only means by which supplies could be obtained by the Umkomaas community.²⁶

Mzimkulu harbour works: The struggle for government funding

Despite the clear benefits of shipping on the Mzimkulu, the colonial government remained sceptical about funding improvements to the river mouth and tardy in undertaking to compensate James Aiken and William Bazley for their efforts in making navigation possible. An early indication of the official stance on the issue appeared in a report issued on 27 October 1880 by the colonial secretary, C.B.H. Mitchell, and Captain Hime, the colonial engineer. Having both visited the Mzimkulu, they expressed reservations about the prospects of the establishment of a permanent channel because

21 *Natal Mercury*, 15 May 1880. The damage to the *Somtseu* was actually serious. Upon returning to Durban she underwent repair work to plates in her bow and was out of commission for a month (*Natal Mercury*, 3 and 19 June 1880). In her absence the *Buffalo* was pressed into service as T.N. Price, the *Somtseu*’s owner, indicated that he was anxious to “keep uninterrupted communication with Umzimkulu” (*Natal Mercury*, 4 June 1880 and *Times of Natal*, 26 May 1880).

22 *Natal Mercury*, 15 May 1880.

23 *Natal Almanac*, 1880:125.

24 *Natal Mercury*, 24 April 1881.

25 *Times of Natal*, 7 July 1880. In July 1880 the *Somtseu* brought in 150 tons of cargo to Port Shepstone (CSO 766, No. 3188, 16 August 1880, letter from David Aiken, agent for the *Somtseu*). The goods the ship brought to Port Shepstone included flour, rice, groceries, building materials and “kaffir goods”. The cargo with which it returned to Durban at that time was limited to wool, hides, wagon wood and fish. The saving to producers and consumers was put at £4 per ton (CSO 786, No. 4386, letter from James Aiken to Colley, 11 November 1880).

26 *Natal Mercury*, 30 November 1880.

of the vagaries of the sandbar and the difficulty Bazley was having in removing three patches of rock. Only if the works were “successfully completed and should attain the object for which they were undertaken”, would they recommend that the Legislative Council “vote the amount which may have been actually expended by the promoters of the undertaking”.²⁷ Thus, not only was compensation for Aiken and Bazley subject to an indefinite period of scrutiny, but there was also no indication that the colonial government would become financially involved in the future development of the river port.

When the newly elected South Coast representative, Thomas Reynolds, moved a motion in the Legislative Council on 2 December 1880 seeking provision in the budget of 1881 for improvements to the Mzimkulu river mouth, he did so in the knowledge that a petition on the same topic, signed by 88 South Coast residents, had already been submitted to Governor Colley.²⁸ In moving his motion Reynolds argued that the opening of the river to shipping was a “progressive step in the development of the resources of this Colony” which was the result of private enterprise. In noting that in the previous seven months the *Somtseu* had delivered 354 tons of cargo, he called on the government to become involved in further improvements to the river mouth so as to make it navigable in all seasons. Reynolds rejected the view that river shipping would facilitate smuggling, contending that if that was the case wagon transport would also be suspect. His motion was seconded by Samuel Crowder of Durban County.²⁹ But Mitchell and Hime asked that the debate be postponed until Bazley was forthcoming with further information about the construction of a 400-yard training wall which Hime estimated could cost £2 000.³⁰

Public pressure on the government to improve the mouth of the Mzimkulu received a further boost when a second petition on the subject, signed by 92 merchants and traders, was tabled in the Legislative Council on 9 December.³¹ When the debate on Reynolds’ motion resumed that day, James Saunders of Victoria County heartily endorsed the proposal that public funding should steer the project towards a conclusion and that local enterprise should be compensated for the £548 in costs that had been incurred. But once again Mitchell requested that the motion stand over until the report from Bazley had arrived.³² Mitchell, however, was stalling. A precise breakdown of the costs Aiken and Bazley had incurred was already in his hands following a letter Aiken had sent him dated 10 November. The sum of £548 was

27 LC No. 3, 1880, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 32, No. 1852, 2 November 1880.

28 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 2, 1880, 246; CSO 786, No. 4659, 29 November 1880.

29 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 2, 1880, 246-247.

30 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 2, 1880, 248.

31 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 30, 1880, 229.

32 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 2, 1880, 328-329.

made up of £200 remuneration to Bazley for ten months work with tools, dynamite, wages and provisions accounting for the balance of the expenditure. In that letter Aiken stated that he had already paid Bazley £348.³³



Figure 6.3 William Bazley

With Bazley's letter on improvements suggested for the Mzimkulu mouth having finally arrived, the debate on Reynolds' motion was resumed on 14 December. Colonial engineer Hime endorsed Bazley's plan to construct a training wall at the mouth so as to assist in defining a navigation channel. After detailing the specifics of the construction Hime revised the estimated cost to between £8 000 and £10 000. But Council members were unhappy about the lack of finality on the costs, resulting in Reynolds withdrawing his motion with the intention of bringing it back in another form.³⁴

33 CSO 786, No. 4659, 10 November 1880.

34 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 2, 1880, 371-373.

Changing his approach, Reynolds on 16 December moved that the governor prepare a report on the works carried out at the mouth of the Mzimkulu and the improvements desired. In motivation he argued that as a developed port the Mzimkulu had the potential to attract large-scale settlement, that other steamers would become involved in trade and that the cost of transporting goods to East Griqualand would be reduced by a third. Reynolds declared that harbour development on the Mzimkulu would “show the world that we are not the sleepy people in that part of the country that we are supposed to be”. Approving his motion, the council then turned its attention to a new but related item – a vote for £120 per annum to be paid to a customs officer stationed on the Mzimkulu.³⁵ In confidential correspondence with Colonial Secretary Mitchell, Alfred County’s resident magistrate, James Giles, had already indicated that he was in favour of a customs office.³⁶

After a short debate on the need to discourage illicit trafficking in which John Robinson reminded the Legislative Council of the “extensive system of smuggling in former years carried out between Durban and Port St. Johns”, the item was approved.³⁷ But it showed that the government was prioritising its own interests. Whilst it had acknowledged the role of private enterprise in opening the Mzimkulu to shipping, it had deferred the issues of compensation and future development funding. Yet, simultaneously it had not been slow in moving to protect its revenue interests by creating a customs officer post on the river. Although it was the first time that a South Coast issue had enjoyed serious political attention, the resolve and urgency which the development of the Mzimkulu deserved was lacking in both the government and the Legislative Council’s attitude. Privately Hime had stated in a letter to Mitchell that

35 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 2, 1880, 417-418; 423. Regarding the transport of goods to East Griqualand, James Aiken stated in a letter to the colonial secretary that a wagon trip to Kokstad from Port Shepstone would be three days shorter compared to the conventional overland trip (CSO 774, No. 3903, 11 October 1880). As early as 21 May 1880 Cecil Bisset applied for the position of customs officer on the Mzimkulu. In response, George Rutherford, the customs collector in Durban, stated that there was no need for such an appointment (CSO 755, No. 2052, 2 June 1880). Two years later Rutherford had changed his view, “[a]s there is every appearance of the traffic [to Port Shepstone] increasing”, he argued that the post should be filled (CSO 848, No. 304, 5 April 1882). In August 1882 approval was given to spend £67 on the erection of an eight by twelve foot wood and iron room to serve as a customs office (CSO 848, No. 304, 31 August 1882).

36 CSO, 2554, C43, Confidential Minute Papers, 26 June 1880.

37 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. II, 1880, 424. Smuggling continued to afflict the area and indeed other border areas of the colony. In May 1882, Giles, in a confidential letter to Colonial Secretary Mitchell stated that there had been a “revival lately of gun-running” into Pondoland. Mitchell promised a reward not exceeding £20 for services rendered in convicting anyone of gun-running (CSO 2555, C/15/82, Confidential Minute Papers, 20 and 27 May 1882). The resident magistrate of Newcastle complained about the smuggling of goods across the Transvaal border into Natal (CSO 2560, C58/85, Confidential Minute Papers, 14 July 1885).

“no works, of whatever magnitude, would be so effectual as to render the entrance into the river navigable in all weathers”.³⁸

Nearly a year would pass before the Legislative Council again considered issue of harbour works on the Mzimkulu. During most of that time the *Somtseu* steamed regularly twice, and sometimes three times, a month to Port Shepstone transporting goods and passengers. In between she called at the Mkomanzi river.³⁹ As the *Mercury* remarked in a report on 29 June 1881, “this redoubtable little steamer’s movements are so rapid that a daily issue of a paper can scarcely keep pace with her”. The second half of 1881, however, saw the *Somtseu*’s routine disrupted after she became stuck on the sandbar at Port Shepstone and had to undergo repairs and an overhaul at the Point in Durban.⁴⁰ Her temporary absence resulted in Umkomaas residents exclaiming “the *Somtseu* is badly wanted here”.⁴¹ But on 13 September she resumed her service to the South Coast.⁴²

Ahead of the commencement of the 1881 session of the colonial Legislative Council, Hime’s report on the works at the mouth of the Mzimkulu was published. Although he acknowledged that Bazley had ably blasted patches of rock, Hime noted that further blasting was required. To deepen the channel at the mouth by increasing the scour, he recommended the construction of a training wall some 370 yards in length packed with 2 800 cubic yards of stone which could be quarried upstream and ferried down by tramway. He estimated that the overall project could take three to four years. Venturing a personal opinion, Hime saw great benefit to Alfred County and beyond if harbour development at Port Shepstone was successful.⁴³

Reviving the issue of compensation for the work carried out on the Mzimkulu mouth, James Aiken had forwarded a memorial seeking reimbursement for the £548 he had expended.⁴⁴ Taking it up in the Legislative Council on 25 November, Reynolds cited the benefits which the lower South Coast enjoyed thanks to Aiken’s initiative. “As we are spending so much on bridges, I think this is a small amount to ask”, he argued.⁴⁵ While there was agreement on the benefits a harbour would bring

38 CSO 786, No. 4386, Hime to C.B.H. Mitchell, 14 December 1880.

39 Reports of the *Somtseu*’s voyages featured in the *Natal Mercury* on the following dates in 1881: 13 and 21 January; 2 and 24 February; 14 and 22 March; 15 and 19 April; 5, 17 and 31 May; 13, 16 and 20 June.

40 *Natal Mercury*, 3 September 1881.

41 *Natal Mercury*, 7 September 1881.

42 *Natal Mercury*, 14 September 1881.

43 LC No. 4, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 33, No. 1910, 25 October 1881.

44 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 31, 1881, 47, 18 October 1881.

45 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 3, 1881, 163. Prior to the debate on the Mzimkulu, the lack of bridges had been bemoaned by petitioners from Victoria and Klip River counties. Administrator Evelyn Wood did not quibble in recommending £5 225 for a bridge over the Incandu river near Newcastle. The Public Works loan for 1881 reflects a sum of £1 000 for the bridge. The Victoria County MLC,

to the lower South Coast, on the subject of recompense for Aiken, Harry Escombe of Durban Borough had grave reservations. “If the Council once sanctions it, it is difficult to say where the thing will end”. John Robinson was also uncertain about compensating Aiken. Frederick Moor of Weenen County did not mince his words; given the savings of £3 to £4 per ton “Aiken and Co. have already profited by their labours and should be satisfied”. Anxious to avoid setting a precedent, the Legislative Council opted to defer the matter to a select committee for a final decision.⁴⁶ Finally, in February 1882, almost two years after James Aiken had financed the initial work on the mouth of the Mzimkulu, he and Bazley received their cheques for £348 and £200 respectively from J.T. Polkinghorne, the colonial treasurer. £550 had been placed on the 1882 Estimates as Colonial Secretary Mitchell had recommended.⁴⁷

On the subject of the government taking over the development of the mouth of the Mzimkulu, George Sutton of Pietermaritzburg County posed a sceptical question which in time proved highly pertinent: “The first thing we have to consider is whether the opening of the Umzimkulu river is worth the money it is likely to cost”. In support of this he cited Hime’s comment that the expense of £10 000 did not guarantee “the mouth of the river will be kept open”⁴⁸ While no one denied the glowing prospects a harbour on the Mzimkulu would bring to Alfred County, at the same time there was a reluctance to commit to funding on a large scale. Nonetheless, while a sum of £2 000 was placed on the 1882 Estimates for harbour works,⁴⁹ the Public Works budget showed £10 000 for the Mzimkulu works.⁵⁰

Roads, a post office and a township

The Legislative Council’s slow and tepid response to the issue of works on the Mzimkulu was also reflected in its reaction to other South Coast requests. At the same time as Reynolds was motivating the case for the Mzimkulu, he was also exhorting his colleagues in the Legislative Council to place an additional sum of money on the 1881 Estimates for the road from Isipingo to Ifafa. “I think the needs of this district are as

T.W. Garland, demanded a bridge over the Mhloti river on the grounds that the county made the largest contribution to the treasury (*Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 32, 176; *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 33, No. 1918, 13 December 1881; *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 3, 158, 24 November 1881).

46 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 3, 1881, 166-168.

47 CSO 842, No. 475, 3 February, 16 February 1882; *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 3, 1881, 204-205.

48 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 3, 1881, 166. By 1907, despite the expenditure of £70 000 and much endeavour, the vagaries of nature put paid to the quest of a harbour on the Mzimkulu (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. 43, 1907, 286.)

49 *Government Notice*, No. 233, 1882, 30 May 1882.

50 *Natal Blue Book*, 1882, J4.

great as any in the Colony”, he argued, claiming that bad roads increased transport by five shillings per ton. But Hime’s response was that his budget did not cater for road hardening and the construction of weirs.⁵¹ A year later, the administrator, Evelyn Wood, stated that, subject to Legislative Council approval, weirs would be constructed over the Mbogintwini and Lovu rivers.⁵² But the colonial engineer’s report for 1882 showed only that the only road work south of Durban was the construction of a weir at the wagon drift on the Mlazi river in Durban County.⁵³

Reynolds’ request for a post office at Izingolweni in the Mtamvuna area of lower Alfred County was met with derision and disdain by some Legislative Council members. Hime objected saying that there were too few settlers in the area to justify the expense of £12 a year on a postmaster. George Sutton of Pietermaritzburg County said he had never heard of the place, while Frederick Moor of Weenen thought the Legislative Council could do no wrong in striking out a place “which has such an unpronounceable name”. But after Colonial Secretary Mitchell explained that the store owner at Izingolweni had been acting without payment as post master for some time, Reynolds’ request was approved by the Legislative Council by nine votes to five.⁵⁴ In January 1881, W. Brickhill became the first postmaster of Izingolweni.⁵⁵

Following receipt of a petition signed by Sir John Jarvis Bisset and 24 other inhabitants of Lower Umzimkulu requesting the layout of a township at Port Shepstone, a select committee chaired by Reynolds was convened to examine the prospects of the area. Published in November 1881, the committee’s report provided an extremely positive and comprehensive insight of the lower Umzimkulu area at that time. Amongst the key observations included: the successful service provided by the *Somtseu* which, in eighteen months, had transported 1 470 tons of goods at a saving of £4 per ton; that the *Somtseu* placed Durban within eight hours of the Mzimkulu, whereas the overland journey by wagon took eight days; the existence of 4 000 acres of fertile land on the banks of the Mzimkulu which was highly suited to sugar cane and coffee; the prospects for increased trade with East Griqualand; and “an inexhaustible supply of the purest lime for building and other purposes”. The report claimed that 50 *bona fide* purchasers were ready and willing to take up erven on which to erect stores and warehouses. It proposed that 200 erven of an acre each should be laid

51 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 2, 1880,283.

52 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 31, 1881, 32. In 1881 Wood described Natal roads as “mudhole tracks” (Leverson 1968:223).

53 *Natal Blue Book*, 1882, F111.

54 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 2, 1880, 200.

55 *Government Notice*, No. 52, 1881

off on the south bank of the river.⁵⁶ In response, administrator Wood indicated that “steps would be taken to carry out the recommendation of the committee” once a Bill concerning townships had been passed by the Legislative Council.⁵⁷

On 21 April 1881 the *Mercury* reported that “an excellent hotel” had been erected at the drift, about three miles up the Mzimkulu. By October 1882, local inhabitants had formed the Lower Umzimkulu District Association and enquired of the colonial secretary how they should go about forming a township. His only response was to forward the association a copy of Law 11 of 1881 concerning the establishment of townships.⁵⁸ The *Mercury*’s Port Shepstone correspondent hailed 1882 as a year of progress in that previously there had been only one building, a hotel, and a cottage. But during 1882 several buildings were under construction.⁵⁹

As a settlement, by 1882 Port Shepstone was in much the same “state of infancy as Durban was in 1850”, noted the *Mercury*, and that several buildings were under construction.⁶⁰ Social cohesion was also manifesting itself. In August 1882 the first ball was held. Fifty people from as far afield as Harding enjoyed a convivial evening on the premises of Wheeler and Company’s new store.⁶¹ Further evidence of the emergence of community may be gauged from an application to form a rifle association.⁶² In his report for 1884, the resident magistrate praised the Lower Umzimkulu Mounted Rifles for their “vigorous” spirit and “good attendance”.⁶³

Request for a magistracy in Lower Umzimkulu

Legislative Council report (number 13) on Port Shepstone’s prospects should have galvanised the government and the Legislative Council into endorsing all practical means to develop the area. Yet this was not the case and was evident in several instances. June 1882 saw the first of the petitions submitted requesting the appointment of a separate magistrate for the Lower Umzimkulu district. In it Walter Bisset and James

56 LC No. 13, 1881, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 33, No. 1914, 15 November 1881.

57 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 31, 1881, 225. Law 11 of 1881, “To provide for the establishment and local management of townships”, was promulgated on 28 December 1881.

58 CSO 876, No. 3873, 4 and 20 October 1882.

59 *Natal Mercury*, 8 January 1883. In May 1883, the *Lion* sailed to Port Shepstone with material for the erection of a church and a school (*Natal Mercury*, 18 May 1883).

60 *Natal Mercury*, 25 September and 25 August 1882.

61 *Natal Mercury*, 25 August 1882.

62 CSO 922, No. 3307, 19 and 25 August 1883.

63 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1884, B43. H.T. Bru-de-Wold, resigned as lieutenant in the Alexandra Mounted Rifles and became captain of the Umzimkulu Mounted Rifles (*Natal Mercury*, 28 February 1884). By August 1885 a Dramatic Society had been formed by a Mr. J. Woods of Tiverton estate in Lower Umzimkulu (*Natal Mercury*, 7 August 1885).

Wooley argued on behalf of the Lower Umzimkulu District Association that with Harding some 50 miles away, they had to wait for sittings of the nearest branch court at Murchison, which was very inconvenient. Although both Governor Bulwer and Colonial Secretary Mitchell favoured the relocation of the magistracy, the resident magistrate, James Giles was not convinced and consequently the matter remained unresolved.⁶⁴ In October the Lower Umzimkulu Association renewed its appeal, coupled with the request for the appointment of a district surgeon. On that occasion it argued that with increasing hire of Indian labour, the presence of a local surgeon was essential. Reinforcing this appeal and the one for a local magistracy, was the presence of 229 newly arrived Norwegian settlers.⁶⁵ But again the government failed to act decisively.

In June 1883 a fresh request for a separate magistracy was registered by means of a petition submitted by Sir John Bisset and 103 residents of Lower Umzimkulu, many of them Norwegian settlers. The petition cited the distance of 50 miles from Harding and that the absence of an immediate authority encouraged lawlessness. The initial response of the government was that “under the present circumstances” the request “could not be entertained”.⁶⁶ When Reynolds took up the fight in the Legislative Council on behalf of his constituents he claimed that within a ten mile radius the white settler population in Lower Umzimkulu numbered 600.⁶⁷ He contended that it was “the duty of the Government to see that communities are given protection which a magistracy affords”. Regarding the issue of finance and affordability, Reynolds argued that with the fines levied, magistracies were almost self-supporting. Several Legislative Council members supported Reynolds’ plea. They included Hulett of Victoria County, Escombe, Robinson and Greenacre of Durban, and Theophilus Shepstone of Pietermaritzburg County. In Robinson’s view, the establishment of a magistracy would increase the attractiveness of the area for colonisation. But Hime, who was acting colonial secretary, felt the government should not deal “piecemeal” with such requests, but rather that the approach should be via a “comprehensive system for the establishment of one or more magistracies annually”. This led Shepstone to remark that, if Hime’s policy was followed, “we will have to wait a long time”.⁶⁸

64 CSO 861, No. 2314, 19, 28, 30 June 1882.

65 CSO 878, No. 4072, 4 October 1882. The nearest surgeon was 50 miles away in Umzinto.

66 CSO 912, No. 2396, 12 June 1883; 27 July 1883.

67 Reynolds may have been exaggerating as the total number of white settlers in the whole of Alfred County for 1883 was stated as being 623 (*Natal Blue Book*, 1883, T4).

68 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 6, 1883, 496-401.

When, during the 1884 Legislative Council sitting, Reynolds linked the subject of a separate magistracy in Lower Umzimkulu to the need for a telegraph line, the response of Colonial Secretary Mitchell was blunt and dismissive. He said there was no “likelihood” of a separate magistracy being established as long as the area remained “a hamlet”.⁶⁹ After noting correspondence between the magistrates of Alfred and Alexandra counties, in which they endorsed the relocation of the Alfred magistracy to a more central place, Reynolds amended his earlier motion accordingly. But to no avail. Colonial Secretary Mitchell pointed out that relocating a magistracy was “no light thing” and that consideration would have to be given to the construction of a gaol on the new site.⁷⁰

That was the last occasion in which Reynolds attempted to persuade the Legislative Council to recognise the magisterial needs of the lower South Coast. But following his death in June 1885, the new MLC for the South Coast, General Bisset, renewed the struggle. However, despite another petition endorsed by 84 Lower Umzimkulu residents, Mitchell continued to oppose the request and Bisset’s motion was lost.⁷¹ He fared no better in 1886 when he cited a recommendation by the Native Commission advising the presence of a magistrate wherever the number of Africans exceeded 10 000. Even his reference to the fact that the hut tax collection in excess of £4 000 more than covered the annual cost of between £1 500 and £2 000 for a magistracy failed to make any impact. Acting Colonial Secretary Francis Seymour Haden cited the provision of three justice of the peace representatives as providing an alternative to the need for a separate magistracy. He also cited the economic slump which in 1886 saw unemployment increase and speculation about retrenchments in the Civil Service.⁷² Finally, in April 1889, a separate magistracy was established in Lower Umzimkulu.⁷³

Official indifference

Nonetheless, it seemed that no matter what the South Coast requested, the colonial government always had a reason for objecting and denying. When G. Young applied for the position of post master at Port Shepstone in 1883, Haden’s reply as assistant

69 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 7, 1884, 774. Public pressure on Reynolds to pursue the issue came in the form of a petition from 44 family heads (all Norwegians) who emphasized that the distance of Lower Umzimkulu from Harding was frustrating their needs for legal service. The response of the governor-in-council was that financial circumstances precluded the establishment of a separate magistracy. CSO 976, No. 3357, 8 September 1884.

70 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 7, 1884, 777.

71 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 398-400.

72 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 9, 1886, 324-325; 533-534; Leverton 1968:234, 247.

73 *Government Notice*, No. 23, 1889.

colonial secretary was that the “government has no present intention of making the appointment”.⁷⁴ When a request was made for a polling station to be situated at Port Shepstone for the 1883 elections as the only one in the county was 50 miles away at Harding, Haden’s response was to question if it was “legally necessary”, while the attorney general, Michael Gallwey, stated that he could “give no opinion on the necessity” of an additional polling place.⁷⁵

Particularly illustrative of the parsimonious and condescending attitude which prevailed against the South Coast concerned a petition in August 1885 for an annual grant of £12 for the Umzinto public library. In motivation, General Bisset noted that a portion of the newly built, £1 500 Volunteer Memorial Hall, which had been erected by private subscriptions on land donated by the Reynolds family, had been set aside for the library, and that the 400-book collection was four years old and was used by all classes.

Although the petition was agreed to by the Legislative Council, enabling Umzinto to have the first library on the South Coast beyond Isipingo, Colonial Secretary Mitchell inquired whether the books were “worn-out shilling novels or really books of reference”. James Hulett of Victoria County felt the money should be granted only if it went to the purchase of “works of a standard character ... [l]et the public supply the light reading”, he urged.⁷⁶

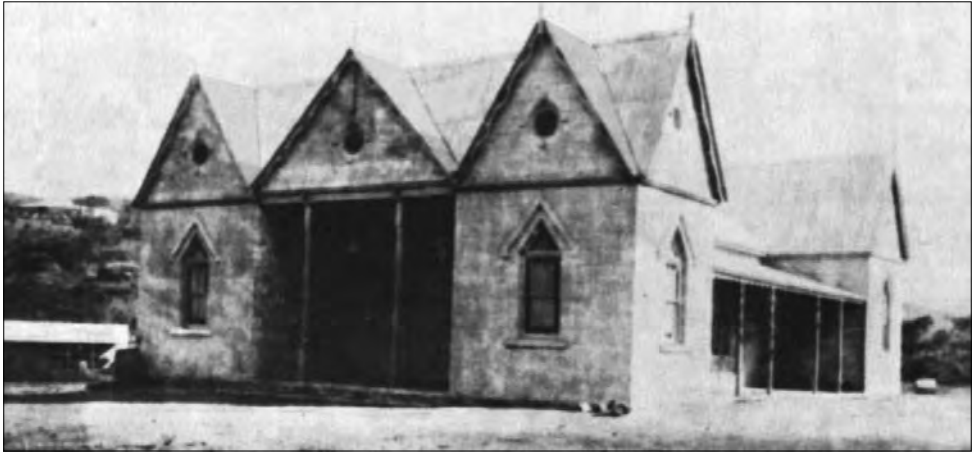


Figure 6.4 The Volunteer Memorial Hall in Umzinto

74 CSO 899, No. 1023, 16 and 20 March 1883.

75 CSO 902, No. 1378, 9 April 1883, 13 April 1883; CSO 904, No. 1580, 26 April 1883.

76 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 266; *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 36, 1885, 236, 338. In 1881 the Verulam library in Victoria County celebrated its 25th year in existence. Its book collection numbered 1 600 titles (*Natal Mercury*, 13 August 1881).

Telegraph link

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, there were more petitions put forward on the need for the extension of a telegraph line to Port Shepstone than on any other issue. In this regard, the *Mercury* provided an accurate summary of the frustrations of the South Coast and its MLC, Thomas Reynolds, in an editorial published on 19 November 1884:

Mr. Reynolds, when giving an account of his stewardship last session was hampered by the fact that he had not succeeded in securing, as he deserved to secure, the proper recognition of his constituency's needs. The plea he has so persistently put forward to the House was one that ought to have commanded a better reception ...

The first petition on the subject was from General Bisset and 35 other residents of Lower Umzimkulu. Submitted in March 1882, they requested the erection of a branch line from Kokstad to Harding and Umzinto. The concern was that the Alfred and Alexandra magistracies should be able to communicate with Pietermaritzburg and Durban. James Sivewright, the general manager of the telegraph department, estimated the cost of this line at £12 500 with annual maintenance charges at around £950. In his reply to the petitioners he said he could not recommend the extension as “the time has not yet arrived at which the importance of these coast settlements would warrant Government going to the large expense” of providing that service.⁷⁷ Sivewright gave the same reply to a second petition submitted in April by James Aiken and signed by 72 Alexandra County residents. That petition asked for a coastal link from Durban to Port Shepstone.⁷⁸ But nothing further came of those appeals.

On 19 June 1882 a third petition for the erection of a telegraph line to the Cape via Umzinto and Port Shepstone was submitted to the Legislative Council by Francis Staunton and 37 others.⁷⁹ The nearest telegraph points to Port Shepstone were Ixopo and Isipingo, both more than 60 miles distant.⁸⁰ But in presenting the petition Reynolds encountered firm opposition from Colonial Secretary Mitchell, who argued that besides the cost of £12 500 to erect the line, the upkeep of £970 per annum would far exceed the annual usage which he calculated at some £400 to £450. Also militating against the project was what Mitchell described as the “very scattered community” of the southern districts. In support of Reynolds, James Saunders of Victoria County argued that the lack of population did not justify an

77 CSO 852, No. 1462, 22 March and 27 April 1882.

78 CSO 853, No. 1536, 17 and 29 April 1882.

79 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 33, 1882, 43.

80 Peace 1883:149.

area being denied a telegraph service. Inexplicably, Reynolds then withdrew the petition instead of allowing it to go to a vote.⁸¹ For that he was taken to task by the writer of a letter in the *Mercury* who accused him of having been “frightened” by Mitchell and of ignoring the needs of a whole string of coastal settlements.⁸²

The next test Reynolds faced in representing his constituents’ demands for telegraphic connection came with the submission of a petition by David Aiken and 51 others in August 1883.⁸³ On that occasion he proved resolute, deprecating the “ignorance manifested in this House with reference to the nature of the [South Coast]”. He claimed the figures given by Mitchell the previous year were greatly exaggerated, and that the cost of a line from Isipingo to Port Shepstone was no more than £6 500, while upkeep was minimal. Promoting the Lower Umzimkulu area, Reynolds claimed that land sales amounting to almost 125 000 acres proved that the district warranted a telegraph service.⁸⁴ For the bold defence of his constituency Reynolds received praise from the *Mercury*, which asserted that the potential of Lower Umzimkulu was such that before long no part of South Africa would be “more prosperous or progressive”.⁸⁵

But once again colonial engineer Hime proved the stumbling block to the furthering of infrastructure on the South Coast. “Circumstances are hardly in such a state as to warrant the construction of this telegraph line at the present time, and I would very much prefer it if this motion were withdrawn and brought forward another year”, he stated. Mitchell echoed Hime’s feelings, pointing out that Harding and Greytown were also not connected by telegraph. Reynolds countered their negativity by pointing out that not only would the line be self-supporting, but that as an outlying district his request should be met “with special consideration”.⁸⁶ For once the elected members supported Reynolds and the vote of twelve to eleven in favour of the South Coast offered a glimmer of hope in terms of getting the item on the Estimates for the following year.⁸⁷

The 1884 session of the Legislative Council saw Reynolds moving a motion to have a sum “as may be found necessary” placed on the Estimates for 1885 for the construction of a telegraph line from Isipingo to Port Shepstone. In so doing he reminded the Legislative Council that lack of funds had been the only reason his previous request had not been implemented. On this occasion Mitchell’s line of reasoning proved quite

81 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 5, 1882, 72-73.

82 *Natal Mercury*, 22 July 1882.

83 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 34, 1883, 271.

84 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 6, 1883, 457-458.

85 *Natal Mercury*, 8 September 1883.

86 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 6, 1883, 579-580.

87 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 34, 1883, 447.

disingenuous: in the same breath he denied the need for a magistracy at Port Shepstone, while citing the absence of one as his reason for opposing the need for a telegraph line. Robinson supported Reynolds, arguing that since the Legislative Council approved a line to Greytown it could hardly be averse to constructing one to Port Shepstone, particularly as the two lines had been twinned as a project. He also pointed out that having located the Norwegian settlers in Lower Umzimkulu, the government was obligated to rectify their isolated state by bringing them into contact with the rest of the colony. Hulett of Victoria County was also adamant that Port Shepstone should be telegraphically linked, claiming it was “doubly necessary” compared to Greytown.

After further discussion a compromise was reached – a line would be built as far as Umzinto. In accepting this outcome, Reynolds said that “half a loaf is better than no bread.”⁸⁸ More than a year after Reynolds’ death the annual report of the resident magistrate for Alexandra County noted that the telegraph line to Umzinto was under construction.⁸⁹

In August 1885, as the newly elected MLC in Reynolds’ place, General John Bisset attempted to continue Reynolds’ efforts to obtain a telegraph line to Port Shepstone. In so doing he put forward the argument that it was important to be able to communicate conditions at the river mouth prior to steamers leaving Durban bound for the Mzimkulu. But once again Colonial Secretary Mitchell’s opposition proved effective.⁹⁰ As Lower Umzimkulu resident B.E. Henderson remarked in a letter published in the *Mercury*: “Anyone living here cannot help being struck at the most unreasonable and implacable dislike the Colonial Secretary always displays to it.”⁹¹

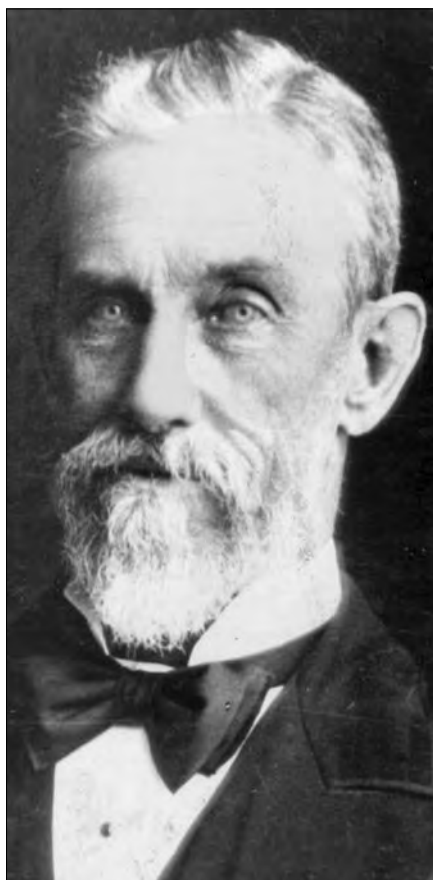


Figure 6.5 James Hulett

88 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 7, 1884, 575;773-775.

89 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1886, B14. *The Natal Advertiser* (25 November 1886) reported that work had not started and that a proper survey had yet to be done.

90 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 358-359.

91 *Natal Mercury*, 10 February 1885.

Applying for fiscal port status: 1883

As noted earlier in this chapter, when it came to prioritising their financial interests, the colonial government had not wasted any time in appointing a customs officer on the Mzimkulu. This was to ensure that the appropriate revenue had been paid on all goods brought to Port Shepstone by ship. But for local residents the logical development was for Port Shepstone to be declared a fiscal port so that goods could be sent directly from there to Cape ports and *vice versa*, instead of having to pass through Durban first, which not only wasted time but also increased freight charges because of the extra distance involved. In August 1883 a petition was received from David Aiken and 33 others proposing fiscal port status for Port Shepstone.⁹²

In motivating the request, Reynolds remarked: “We have a Customs House Officer at Port Shepstone but no Customs”. In noting that two steamers, the *Somtseu* and the *Lion*,⁹³ were providing a regular service to the Mzimkulu, and that with the settler population having increased to over 600 local commercial interests would want to be able to import and export goods directly instead of having to route their trade through Durban for reasons of customs handling. But the government opposed the petition on the grounds that there was insufficient trade to justify the expense of establishing a customs port.⁹⁴ Samuel Crowder of Durban County felt that the South Coast was asking for too much too soon and should be patient. John Walton of Newcastle dismissed Port Shepstone as a mere “roadstead” and scorned the idea of any direct trade being conducted from the Mzimkulu. As a result, Reynolds’ motion on behalf of the petitioners was lost.⁹⁵

Applying for fiscal port status: 1884

Unbowed and under pressure from the yet another petition from residents of the Lower Umzimkulu district to get the government to change its mind,⁹⁶ Reynolds renewed the case for a fiscal port at Port Shepstone during the 1884 session of the Legislative Council. Accusing the government of putting “impediments in the way

92 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 34, 1883, 297.

93 *The Lion*, a new ship of 140 tons, arrived from London early in 1883 (*Natal Witness*, 5 March 1883).

94 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 6, 1883, 400-401. Under clause 30 of Customs Ordinance 6 of 1855, Durban was the only port of entry and clearance into Natal. Any goods not brought through Durban were subject to forfeiture. The produce statistics for 1884 in Alexandra County make nonsense of the claim that there was insufficient trade: 3 940 tons of sugar, 39 048 gallons of rum, 19 600 pounds of coffee, and 4 480 pounds of cayenne (*Natal Blue Book*, 1884, X4-5).

95 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 6, 1883, 401-402.

96 CSO 963, No. 2004, May 1884. Signed by 55 residents the petition was accompanied by letters of support from General Bisset and Bru-de-Wold.

of anything that will develop the resources of the colony”;⁹⁷ he asked for the customs ordinance to be relaxed so that produce from the South Coast could be shipped directly to Cape ports from Port Shepstone and from Mzinto Bay.⁹⁸ He noted that the Norwegian settlers were disappointed that they could ship their potatoes and mealies to Durban only.⁹⁹ Henry Binns and Thomas Garland of Victoria County endorsed Reynolds’ request. John Robinson of Durban Borough argued that it was “particularly important” that Port Shepstone be made a port in the “fullest sense of the term” so as to be able to compete with Cape ports and to “nullify the disadvantages under which we are placed by the fiscal action” of the Cape government.

In predictable fashion, Colonial Secretary Mitchell opposed the idea using the excuse that it would lead to gun-running, when in actual fact he was already on record as stating that, in the government’s opinion, the time had not yet come for Port Shepstone to have fiscal port status.¹⁰⁰ Wary of the tactics of the likes of Mitchell and Hime, Reynolds withdrew his motion.¹⁰¹ Five days later, on 9 September 1884, he requested the governor to introduce a bill to allow for the shipment of goods directly from Mzinto Bay and Port Shepstone. In motivation Reynolds referred to “the depressed state of the sugar interest” and that 200 tons of sugar which had already been bought by Cape merchants was languishing in a warehouse on the Mzimkulu. Despite Mitchell’s pledge that all would be done to expedite Reynolds’ request, on 23 September, when Reynolds asked when the government would be bringing the bill, he was told that it was too late in the session to introduce such a bill to the business of the Legislative Council.¹⁰²

Undaunted, Reynolds gave notice that he wished to suspend the standing orders so as to amend the Customs Ordinance of 1855 to include reference to Port Shepstone and Mzinto Bay as export ports. Having gained approval to suspend the rules of order, Reynolds then put forward his own bill calling for Port Shepstone and Mzinto Bay to be declared export ports.¹⁰³ In what turned out to be his last session in the Legislative Council also produced his finest moments, as he demonstrated passion

97 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 7, 1884, 686.

98 On 5 September 1883 Reynolds stated in the Legislative Council that private enterprise – the Victoria Wharfage Company – was developing a facility for shipping sugar from the beach at Mzinto Bay. In 1862 colonial engineer Peter Paterson had noted the potential of this bay for shipping using surf boats to reach a steamer anchored offshore (*Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 6, 1883, 458).

99 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 7, 1884, 686. The settlement of the Norwegians is discussed later in the chapter.

100 CSO 963, No. 2004, 20 June 1884.

101 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 7, 1884, 686-688.

102 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 7, 1884, 734; 861.

103 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 7, 1884, 869.

and determination in striving to achieve an economic lifeline for his constituency which was so isolated and neglected. But colonial engineer Hime found difficulty with Reynolds wanting two customs points, the duplication of facilities weighing too heavily on the Public Works budget. In addition, he doubted whether the extent of exports from these two points would justify the expenses involved. When Thomas Garland of Victoria County urged an adjournment of the debate so that the finer details could be hammered out in committee, Reynolds demurred, stating that he wanted his bill to advance as a matter of urgency.

If anything would drive a man out of his seat in this House it would be the way anything I introduce here is treated. I don't reflect upon the Government, because they are bound up in red tape ... I am very disappointed at the way I have been met.

Despite his appeals to the Legislative Council to appreciate the depressed state of the sugar industry,¹⁰⁴ the competitive threat posed by Mauritius to Natal's sugar exports and the £3 per ton saving which fiscal port status would bring to the South Coast, the motion for his bill to pass its second reading was lost by ten votes to seven. Colonial Secretary Mitchell insisted that "nothing but a well-considered alteration of the present law will carry out the Honourable Member's wishes". Until then, the produce from the South Coast would have to be cleared through Durban and the issue deferred to the 1885 session of the Legislative Council.¹⁰⁵

The plight of the residents of the Lower Umzimkulu district was reflected in letters and reports. "A general feeling of dullness" was how a local correspondent described the mood of the area as a result of the government having disallowed the establishment of a fiscal port on the Mzimkulu.¹⁰⁶ In an editorial, the *Mercury* asked "why our Executive is so indifferent to the development of the Umzimkulu and of Alfred County as a settlement".¹⁰⁷ One letter writer described the official stance as "callousness" which had resulted in all the petitions being "relegated to oblivion".¹⁰⁸ "Shall a whole district be doomed without cause to stagnation and poverty?" the *Mercury* enquired.¹⁰⁹

104 The price of sugar per ton in London was £10 to £12 per ton compared to £23 late in 1883 (*Natal Mercury*, 6 March 1885).

105 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 7, 1884, 870-872.

106 *Natal Mercury*, 18 December 1884.

107 *Natal Mercury*, 23 December 1884; *Natal Mercury*, 23 December 1884.

108 *Natal Mercury*, 6 January 1885.

109 *Natal Mercury*, 7 January 1885.

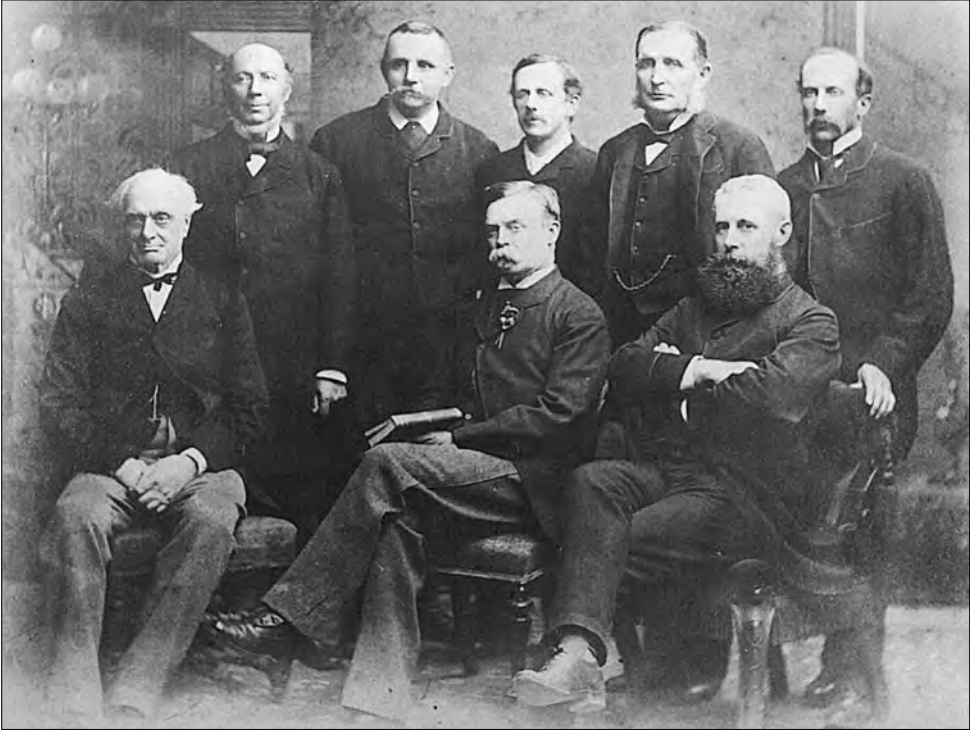


Figure 6.6 Bulwer's Executive of 1885

Applying for fiscal port status: 1885

Reynolds continued his fight for a fiscal port in the correspondence columns of the *Mercury*. In a letter published on 3 February 1885 he stated that “every thinking man in the Colony is with me when I say that from whatever cause this permission was refused, the injury done was greater than could have been contemplated”. Referring to the government as “obstructionist”, he claimed that the refusal of the government to sanction a fiscal port at Port Shepstone had resulted in the loss of thousands of pounds as planters on the Alexandra coast had entered into an agreement for their sugar to be shipped directly to East London and Port Elizabeth. Reynolds’ remarks came in the wake of a meeting of the Land and Immigration Board at which a Captain Hitchens had commented that a saving of £2 per ton could be realised on maize sent directly from Port Shepstone to East London if fiscal port status was granted. Hitchens also claimed that in the previous six months some £6 000 worth of produce had been sent out of Port Shepstone.¹¹⁰

110 *Natal Mercury*, 16 and 17 January 1885.

Nonetheless, a positive development in the situation occurred at the February meeting of the European Land and Immigration Board when it was agreed that a subsidy of ten shillings per ton would be paid on produce from Port Shepstone bound for export to Cape ports but which was first shipped to Durban. It was also agreed that port charges on such produce would be waived.¹¹¹ In welcoming this news the *Mercury* noted, derisively, that the colonial secretary had “withheld his opposition to the plan”. In devoting a lengthy editorial on the plight of settlers on the South Coast and by discussing their specific needs – a telegraph, an independent port, a new magisterial district and a bridge over the Mkomanzi – the paper displayed a focus and an “advocacy” as Reynolds termed it,¹¹² towards the South Coast which no other region enjoyed.¹¹³ This was also apparent from the fact that on four occasions in January 1885 the South Coast was the topic of editorial comment in the *Mercury*, in addition to two reports and two letters from Lower Umzimkulu residents.¹¹⁴ In February the coverage included one editorial, four reports and three letters.¹¹⁵

At the opening of the Legislative Council on 18 June, Governor Henry Bulwer conceded that while the entrance to the Mzimkulu was much improved, the “advantages of the port had not been realised and that trade hitherto has been insufficient to give any return for the heavy expenditure which has been incurred there”.¹¹⁶ That situation was partly the result of the failure of Bulwer’s administration to incentivise exports from Port Shepstone by granting fiscal port status. As a result much of the East Griqualand trade, which could have been routed through Port Shepstone, instead went via Port St. Johns and Port Grosvenor.¹¹⁷

By the end of 1884, with the coastal trade having dwindled considerably,¹¹⁸ ships like the *Somtseu* sought trade further afield in the Mozambique channel and the Eastern

111 *Natal Mercury*, 12 February 1885.

112 Letter to the editor from Thomas Reynolds, *Natal Mercury*, 3 February 1885.

113 *Natal Mercury*, 13 February 1885.

114 Editorials: 7, 16, 17 and 23 January; reports: 16 and 22 January; letters: 6 and 13 January 1885.

115 Editorial: 13 February; reports: 9, 11, 12 and 20 February; letters: two on 3 and one on 10 February.

116 *Natal Mercury*, 19 June 1885. £6 000 from the £10 000 voted for the works at the Mzimkulu mouth had been spent by 1886 (*Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 179).

117 Situated some 25 miles east of Port St. Johns at Mussel Bay on the Tezani river, Port Grosvenor was an initiative of Pondo chief Mqikela. He coveted the customs dues passing to the Cape government at Port St. Johns and hoped his port, managed by Sidney Turner, would enable him to profit independently of the Cape. But the venture, which commenced in 1885, lasted barely a year when the Cape government declared Turner’s concession from Mqikela to be invalid. The *Lion* in January 1886, was the last caller at Port Grosvenor (Child 1980:104, 108, 113-115; *Natal Advertiser*, 21 January 1886; *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 37, No. 2142, 29 September 1885; *Natal Mercury*, 15 May 1885). Maize, wood and hides were the chief exports. Colonial Secretary Mitchell disclosed in June 1885 that the total amount of goods cleared from Port Grosvenor was £3 772 (*Natal Mercury*, 1 July 1885; 21 August and 18 September 1885).

118 Child 1980:108.

Cape ports.¹¹⁹ As a result, after 20 November 1884, the record of shipping movements to the Mzimkulu published in the *Mercury* excluded reference to the *Somtseu* for more than six months.¹²⁰ The only ship that called at Port Shepstone during that time was the *Lion*, which did so on only three occasions.¹²¹ Not surprisingly, James Giles, the resident magistrate for Alfred County, noted in his report for 1885 that there had been “scarcely any revival in trade”.¹²²

Elements of handicap: The Mkomanzi – the punt, shipping, a bridge

The frustrations of the residents of Lower Umzimkulu with the lack of service delivery by the colonial government were similar to those at the northern end of the region. The Mkomanzi continued to prove as much of a barrier to access and mobility in the 1880s as it had at any previous time. The continued absence of a bridge over the river meant that reliance on the punt and on the occasional visit by a steamer was crucial to the well-being and mobility of the residents of Alexandra County. In November 1880 floods saw the level of the Mkomanzi rise twelve feet, sweeping away the boat used for crossing.¹²³ In 1881 they found themselves handicapped because after just four years the punt had rotted away. In raising the issue in the Legislative Council, Reynolds slated it as “an utter disgrace” and demanded to know from colonial engineer Hime how long the new punt was “likely to serve the public benefit”.¹²⁴ Although the new punt made of Oregon pine was in service by October 1881,¹²⁵ by 1884 it had rotted, forcing wagons to have to ford the Mkomanzi at the drift.¹²⁶ Exploiting the situation, a private ferry was charging excessively for its services, as the resident magistrate noted.¹²⁷ Indifference to the welfare and progress of the settlers on the South Coast seemed to be official policy.

In the face of the perennial problem of transport, lobbying for money to make the mouth of the Mkomanzi safer for navigation was a routine part of the local MLC’s workload. During the 1882 session of the Legislative Council, Reynolds asked for

119 Reports in the *Natal Mercury* on 8 and 24 November 1884 indicate that the *Somtseu* had sailed up the Zambesi river as well as to Delagoa Bay.

120 A report in the *Mercury* on 7 August 1885 noted that the *Somtseu* and the *Lion* had been using a lighter to send cargoes in and out of the Mzimkulu mouth because the river mouth was unsafe for shipping.

121 *Natal Mercury*, 29 January 1885; 10 March 1885; 23 July 1885.

122 *Natal Blue Book*, 1885, B56.

123 *Natal Mercury*, 30 November 1880.

124 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 3, 1881, 12.

125 *Natal Mercury*, 20 October 1881.

126 Letter to the editor from ‘X’, *Natal Mercury*, 23 October 1884.

127 *Natal Blue Book*, 1884, B57.

£500 to be placed on the Estimates for that purpose. In motivation he emphasised the potential of Alexandra County for development and settlement if it was served by reliable sea access.

Predictably, Colonial Secretary Mitchell was cautious, noting that the Legislative Council had been asked to spend moderate sums on the Mzimkulu mouth and that already the figure had escalated to £2 000. Colonial engineer Hime endorsed Mitchell's argument, warning that besides rock blasting, a training wall would be required which would push the costs beyond £500. Despite the lack of a bridge, Hime argued in favour of road transport, claiming that apart from a three mile sandy section, the road to Durban was a good one. Although the Legislative Council agreed to the £500, it was made subject to Hime undertaking a new survey of the river mouth.¹²⁸ The *Somtseu* and the *Zulu* made infrequent calls to the Mkomanzi during 1882 and 1883,¹²⁹ while the magistrates' reports for those years, as well as 1884 and 1885, noted that the only public works were at the mouth of the Mzimkulu.¹³⁰ The lament of Lucas, Alexandra County's magistrate, in his report for 1885 summed up the plight of the South Coast: "This county is almost handicapped by long and expensive carriage to Durban".¹³¹

In the face of unreliable shipping and the difficulties posed in crossing the Mkomanzi, the construction of a bridge appeared to offer a permanent solution. In 1874 a sum of £500 was placed on the Estimates for a bridge over the Mkomanzi, but nothing ever came of it. The South Coast's needs then suffered relegation, if not elimination, from the programme of public works as a result of the growth of coal mining in Northern Natal in the early 1880s.¹³² To facilitate the transport of coal and the concomitant trade, a spate of bridge-building took place in the region. Opening the Legislative Council in July 1883, Governor Henry Bulwer was able to announce that bridges over the Incandu and Sundays rivers had been opened to traffic in the previous two months. There were also bridges under construction over the Ingagani near Newcastle, the Little Sterkspruit near Greytown, and one over the Tongaat in Victoria County.¹³³

In February 1885 it was decided at a public meeting in Umzinto to appoint a committee to gather information and statistics on transport traversing the Mkomanzi in order to motivate a petition to the government for a bridge over the river. According

128 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 5, 1882, 439-441.

129 *Natal Mercury*, 27 September 1882, 21 August, 22 September, 5 and 15 December 1883.

130 *Natal Blue Books*, 1883, GG47; 1884, B59; 1885: Supplement, C2.

131 *Natal Blue Book*, 1885, B63.

132 Edgecombe & Guest 1985:311-312; CSO 764, No. 2926, 27 July 1880: Report on coal deposits in Dundee.

133 *Natal Mercury*, 7 July 1883; *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, FF94.

to Reynolds during the cane crushing season up to 120 wagons were crossing the river each week.¹³⁴ Responding to this news, the *Mercury* opined supportively: “Considering how lavishly bridges have been provided in other districts, it would be churlish to refuse a bridge across a river that ... is a great hindrance to traffic.”¹³⁵ On 12 May 1885 Thomas Reynolds presented his final petition to the Legislative Council. Signed by 99 inhabitants of Alexandra County, it listed six reasons why a bridge over the Mkomanzi was overdue. They were:

- The lack of a bridge was retarding progress;
- the punt was serviceable only during certain river conditions;
- the tidal nature of the river limited the times when fording was possible;
- flash flooding endangered the use of the punt;
- the Mkomanzi was a barrier to a major roadway; and
- the county derived little benefit despite the taxes it contributed.

In his stereotypical response colonial engineer Hime flatly rejected that “the want of a bridge over the lower Mkomanzi is a great, or indeed any, drawback on the progress of the county”. He also insisted that the punt was “adequate to the requirements” and that flash flooding was rare. To cap it all, he claimed the financial condition of the colony “did not entertain the cost of bridge”, the wide and sandy nature of the river bed entailing great expense in construction.¹³⁶ Once again the needs of the South Coast were subordinated to colonial priorities. Extension of the railway to the coalfields in northern Natal and, after 1886, to the goldfields of the Transvaal¹³⁷ simply took precedence over expensive but necessary projects such as a bridge over the Mkomanzi. Within three months of Reynolds’ death, General Bisset, the new representative of the South Coast, presented a petition signed by 72 residents of Alexandra County requesting a bridge over the Mkomanzi.

Mindful of the financial obstacles, Bisset argued in favour of the building of cheap bridges until the colony could afford more substantial ones. In response, Hime pointed out that the topographical nature of the area where the river flowed was such that

134 *Natal Mercury*, 11 February 1885.

135 *Natal Mercury*, 13 February 1885.

136 CSO 1019, No. 2173, 12 and 15 May 1885. Speaking in the Legislative Council, Hime noted that owing to financial depression it had been necessary to reduce expenditure on public works (*Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 14). Railway revenue had declined from £123 402 in 1881 to £86 865 in 1885. Shortfalls in revenue had to be made up from the general revenue (Leverson 1968:247).

137 Leverson 1968:248.

borings had indicated that for up to 41 feet the soil was too soft to hold the foundations of a bridge. As a result a sum of £2 500 on the Estimates would prove totally inadequate in addressing the cost of a bridge, even if toll fees of five shillings per wagon were factored into the calculation. As a result Bisset withdrew his motion.¹³⁸ Again, the South Coast had proved a hostage to geography and economics. But double standards were at play as the list for major projects for 1886 indicated. Besides funding for a central gaol in Pietermaritzburg costing £18 454 and £17 518 for a new lunatic asylum, £20 361 was earmarked for bridges at Bulwer and Colenso.¹³⁹

Marburg's Norwegian settlers

The arrival of 229 Norwegian immigrants in August 1882 was the single largest influx of settlers to the South Coast during the period under review. Yet despite the impetus they provided to colonising Alfred County, the Natal government did not hasten to advance its infrastructure needs.

In 1877, two missionaries, O. Witt and P.L. Friestedt, petitioned Governor Henry Bulwer for an allocation of land in the area between the upper Mkomanzi and Mzimkulu rivers for Swedish settlers. They asked for an allotment of 250 acres per family and undertook to recruit 50 families as settlers. But the response of the Land and Immigration Board was that the land requirement was too excessive and that only allotments of 100 acres could be offered. After a further exchange of correspondence nothing further developed.¹⁴⁰ In 1881 the Land and Immigration Board contemplated bringing German settlers to Marburg, but the idea was abandoned as a result of opposition from the German government. Immigration agent Walter Peace then suggested promoting settlement by Norwegians.¹⁴¹ His recruiting mission took him to the Alesund region of Norway, where he propagated the terms and conditions of immigration. They included a free passage for 50 families from London, 100 acres of land per family at fifteen shillings per acre payable over ten years, and 2 000 acres of commonage for grazing. Each immigrant was required to have £50 in cash, a doctor's certificate of good health and be Christian. Peace received 300 applications from which he produced a shortlist of 34 families.¹⁴²

On 20 July 1882 they began a 39-day voyage from Hull aboard the *Laplant* arriving off the Mzimkulu on 28 August. Brought ashore by lighters the next day, they were

138 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 396-397.

139 LC No. 9, 1886, 27, 31.

140 Winquist 1976:228-230.

141 Report of the Land and Immigration Board, 10 July 1885, *Government Notice*, No. 395, 1885, 6-7.

142 Winquist 1976:231-232.

welcomed by 400 tribesmen under Duka Fynn, who performed a war dance on the beach. It had the effect of “terrifying” the women and children who fled to a nearby shed.¹⁴³ Their shock introduction to Africa continued when they were taken to their land allotments. The Marburg area was about seven miles from Port Shepstone. There was no road to the area and many of the immigrants’ personal belongings were broken after one of the wagons overturned. The settlement area comprised two thatched, windowless, wattle and daub rondavels per family and a supply of two bags of mealie meal per family.¹⁴⁴ These huts were later condemned by General Bisset as nothing more “than a few sticks covered with grass” and that the wind rendered them useless. What little money the Norwegians could spare had had to be spent on erecting proper shelters for themselves. He criticised the Land and Immigration Board for not building barracks instead, which in time could have been converted into a school.¹⁴⁵

The Marburg settlement manifested all the characteristics of frontier life: isolation, wild, undeveloped surroundings and high survival risk. Although 30 years in time removed from what the Byrne settlers experienced, as the *Mercury* remarked, the domestic surroundings of the Marburg settlers differed little from those of the Byrne settlers.¹⁴⁶ The 100-acre allotments chosen for the new settlers varied in soil and topography. According to an initial report, five of the allotments were quite useless, being either situated on a steep slope, or possessing only rock or sand. As the agent for the Land and Immigration Board, local Norwegian settler Bru-de-Wold, who had arrived in Natal in 1862, undertook to rectify them.¹⁴⁷ A bigger challenge most of the settlers faced was the fact that only thirteen heads of families were farmers or gardeners. The skills of the others included baking, tailoring, bookselling, building and teaching.¹⁴⁸ With supplies of treacle from David Aiken and mealie meal porridge thrice a day, the settlers sustained an existence until their crops of sweet potatoes were harvested and they acquired poultry and pigs.¹⁴⁹ The net wealth of the settlers amounted to £4 000. Some of it was pooled so as to purchase agricultural implements. In addition a Committee of Seven was formed to see to the general welfare of the settlement.¹⁵⁰

143 Andreassen & Halland 1982:16; Winquist 1976:233-234. Rough sea conditions delayed the unloading of the settlers’ luggage by three days. Apart from pineapples and loquats supplied by David Aiken, they had only mealie meal to eat, but no means of cooking it (*Natal Mercury*, 5 September 1882).

144 Andreassen & Halland 1982:16-17.

145 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 338.

146 *Natal Mercury*, 5 September 1882.

147 *Natal Mercury*, 5 September 1882.

148 Winquist 1976:232.

149 Andreassen & Halland 1982:41; E. Haajem, ‘First Impressions,’ 2.

150 *Natal Mercury*, 5 September 1882.

By their second year, however, although food sufficient,¹⁵¹ the settlers found themselves hostage to the economic isolation of Lower Umzimkulu. “We could not sell anything to get money”, Edward Haajem stated in his memoirs. Another complaint was that the promise of a fishing harbour at Port Shepstone had not materialised. As a result some of the younger Norwegians drifted away and sought employment on the railway being constructed north of Pietermaritzburg. Eight families abandoned Marburg and either returned to Norway or emigrated to Australia or New Zealand. But those who stayed, like the bulk of the Byrne settlers, put down roots. On 29 August 1883 they held a dedication service in the small church they had built which also served as a school – the only one in the district.¹⁵² They also began making inquiries as to how they could obtain the franchise.¹⁵³

Economic hardship, however, persisted. Towards the end of 1884 the Norwegians addressed a long letter of complaint to the Land and Immigration Board. Chief amongst their grievances were access to a market for their produce and the lack of local fiscal port status, the absence of a local magistrate and a telegraph link. The irregular running of the steamers to the Mzimkulu after November 1884 aggravated their situation. “What is the use of staying here at all?” they asked.¹⁵⁴ This complaint, together with other correspondence, led the *Mercury* to accuse the government of a neglect which was paralysing progress in Alfred County.¹⁵⁵ Those words were given substance when a motion brought to the Legislative Council by Bisset for a loan of £300 for the Marburg settlement to purchase hand looms so as to manufacture woollen goods was defeated. Colonial Secretary Mitchell was quite callous in his rejection of the motion saying that it was “a most mistaken policy to be cuddling them and trying to bolster them”. James Hulett criticised the Land and Immigration Board for bringing out a class of people which was not suited to agriculture. His fellow Victoria County representative, Henry Binns, said it “was almost cruel to send those

151 The *Mercury* of 23 October 1882 noted that a “mealie and pumpkin” diet had been crucial to the survival of settlers in the early 1850s and that the Norwegians may also have to be “content to subsist for a year or two on such produce”.

152 Winquist 1976:236-238; *Natal Mercury*, 20 November 1883. The Land and Immigration Board reported that many settlers had stated that had they known what they would encounter in Natal, they would not have left Norway. They also criticised Walter Peace’s description of Marburg as not corresponding with what they actually experienced (*Government Notice*, 395, 1885, 6-7). Reports on the Marburg school for 1884 and 1885 indicated that 42 pupils were registered and that it was “fairly successful” (*Natal Blue Books*, 1884, U14; 1885, U6).

153 CSO 917, No. 2825, 17 and 24 July 1883.

154 *Natal Mercury*, 18 December 1884; *Natal Mercury*, 23 December 1884; *Supplement to the Natal Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1885, A78.

155 *Natal Mercury*, 23 January 1885. On 22 January 1885 the *Mercury* featured an account of personal hardship by Norwegian pastor Emil Berg. In an editorial on 23 January, the paper described Berg’s account as “a piteous tale of failure, misfortune and neglect”.

Norwegian settlers down to Marburg” where they were not within a hundred miles of a market.¹⁵⁶ Nonetheless, a report in the *Mercury* in October noted that business at Port Shepstone was “lively”, that 3 000 packages had been delivered by the *Lion*, as well as 40 tons of machinery. Local produce of 100 tons was awaiting shipment; it included coffee, beans, butter, eggs, mealies, hides, lime, marble and wood.¹⁵⁷ By the end of 1885 the *Mercury* remarked in an editorial that the “condition of the Norwegians has changed altogether for the better; they are all getting on ... every family owns a horse and the settlers admit they have gained by migration”.¹⁵⁸

Historical records reflect very little detail about a group of German immigrants who settled on the coast near the Hlangeni river at what is today known as St. Michaels on Sea. The Land and Immigration Board noted that 90 adult Germans arrived on board the *Arab* on 11 July 1883. In his report as Alfred County resident magistrate for 1884, Giles remarked that there was “an industrious German settlement” south of Port Shepstone. By 1890 most of the German and Norwegian settlers had become naturalised British subjects.¹⁵⁹

Development overview: Alfred County

The onset of seagoing shipping to and from the Mzimkulu in May 1880 provided an unprecedented stimulus to the economy and development of the Port Shepstone district. The single greatest export was lime. In 1883 David Aiken built a second kiln to keep pace with the demand for Mzimkulu lime.¹⁶⁰ The *Blue Book* for 1885 noted that 500 tons of lime had been produced at £4 per ton. Coffee production maintained a steady level in excess of 3 000 pounds per annum. The tobacco harvest reached 4 835 pounds in 1885.¹⁶¹ But, as the resident magistrate’s report for 1882 noted, nearly all the produce (referring to maize, beans, potatoes and tobacco) was grown by local Africans.¹⁶² Sugar production featured only after 1885 when Aikens’ Ruthville estate, on which a central mill had been erected, started to produce significant amounts of sugar.¹⁶³ Besides those products, hides were the most consistent product of the Lower Umzimkulu district. This was consistently reflected in shipping reports. The account

156 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 331, 334, 341, 394.

157 *Natal Mercury*, 14 October 1885.

158 *Natal Mercury*, 11 December 1885.

159 *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, FF114; *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1884, B43; *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1890-1891, B47.

160 *Natal Mercury*, 10 October 1883.

161 *Natal Blue Book*, 1885, X5.

162 *Natal Blue Book*, 1882, GG10.

163 *Natal Mercury*, 14 October 1885 and 14 November 1885. See also CSO 1044, No. 4872, 9 October 1885. After several years of residence and business in Durban, James Aiken rejoined his brother, David, on Ruthville late in 1885 (*Natal Mercury*, 9 September 1885).

of the return of goods for 1886, for example, showed that 10 014 hides were exported from the Mzimkulu mouth.¹⁶⁴ That figure excludes the hides that were transported by wagon to Durban.

Although mishaps occurred which occasionally put the *Somtseu* out of service,¹⁶⁵ the regularity with which the ship was able to bring supplies and transport local produce assisted greatly in diminishing the isolation of the lower South Coast. As a report in the *Mercury* on 5 September 1882 remarked, since the commencement of service the *Somtseu* had made twenty successful entries of the Mzimkulu.

The advent of the steamer at Umzimkulu is looked upon by the residents very much as the arrival of a stage coach used to be in the villages of merry England ... people flock in for the latest news [and] enquire anxiously for their parcels ...¹⁶⁶

Accessing Durban by means of an eight hour voyage compared to eight to ten days by wagon proved something of a revolution in transport and communication. The annual reports of the resident magistrate and the colonial engineer, meanwhile, noted steady progress in the blasting of patches of rock from the entrance of the river, as well as construction of the training wall to produce a deeper and safer entrance channel. Diving equipment for William Bazley, who was carrying out the work, was ordered from England in 1883.¹⁶⁷

Development overview: Alexandra County

Although by 1885 there were equal numbers of white settlers in both Alfred and Alexandra counties,¹⁶⁸ as the more established and older of the two, the extent of development in Alexandra was considerably greater than that of Alfred. By 1886, there were 6 035 acres under settler cultivation: 4 300 under cane, 1 200 under maize and the remainder given to beans, cayenne, tea, tobacco, coffee and potatoes.¹⁶⁹ From that in 1885, 3 400 tons of sugar were produced, 28 490 gallons of rum, 8 960 pounds of cayenne. In terms of manufacturing, there were sixteen sugar mills and four distilleries

164 LC No. 19, 1887, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 39, No. 2253, 19 July 1887.

165 In August and September 1881 the *Somtseu* underwent repairs after being aground at Port Shepstone (*Natal Mercury*, 3 September 1881). In October 1883 the ship required a boiler refit and was out of service for some weeks (*Natal Mercury*, 6 October 1883).

166 *Natal Mercury*, 28 March 1883, "A visit to Umzimkulu". The writer of this article suggested that Port Shepstone should be named after the Aikens on whose initiative shipping commenced.

167 *Natal Blue Books*, 1883, FF94; 1882, FF110.

168 There were 628 whites in Alexandra County in 1885 and 621 in Alfred County (*Natal Blue Book*, 1885, T4).

169 *Natal Mercury*, 17 April 1886.

in the county. This industry and enterprise was showcased at the Alexandra County show in Umzinto in February 1886.¹⁷⁰ It was the first exhibition of colonial industry held on the South Coast in which all the exhibits – 300 of them – were produced in Alexandra and served to highlight “what could be done in a district so far removed by natural configuration from the centres of the colony”, as the *Mercury’s* correspondent wrote.¹⁷¹ In acknowledgement of the progress and potential of Alexandra County, an editorial in the *Mercury* stated: “If only it [Alexandra] could be brought by roads and bridges and steam into closer touch with the rest of the Colony, it would soon shoot permanently ahead”.¹⁷²

Whereas Alfred County had no such public building, the Volunteers Memorial Hall in Umzinto was both a source of pride and a reflection of social cohesion in Alexandra. It was officially opened on 1 January 1883. Two days later, it was the venue of a ball attended by 100 locals. “Dancing kept up with unabated spirit until daylight” thanks to the efforts of the pianists, who included Mrs. Mary Archibald.¹⁷³ The hall was 50 feet in length, 24 feet in breadth and sixteen feet in height. It had four large side rooms and verandas and could seat 150 people. Its cost of £1 600 was funded entirely by local donations.¹⁷⁴ It was also the hub of the county’s social and sporting life – tennis and cricket. In this regard, the *Mercury’s* “Notes from Alexandra” column of January 1886 contained a significant gender observation:

Lawn tennis has become quite an institution ... Indeed there is so little excitement or pleasure for the ladies in a country place; the proper carrying out of a tennis club becomes an inestimable boon to the whole district.

The article noted that large numbers of ladies came out to play on Wednesday afternoons.¹⁷⁵ The tennis club was said to have over 70 members. A visitor to Alexandra County in 1884 remarked on the fullness of the social calendar, noting that balls, parties, picnics, cricket and tennis matches and fishing excursions “follow each other with amazing rapidity”.¹⁷⁶

170 In response to a petition from John Kirkman of the Alexandra Show Committee, the colonial government provided £25 towards the prize money (Message No. 47, *Votes and Proceedings*, 1885, Vol. 36, 208, 400).

171 *Natal Mercury*, 20 February 1886. Special guests at the exhibition included Victoria County representatives, Hulett and Saunders, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, and General Sir John Bisset (the local MLC). The *Mercury* provided extensive coverage of the exhibition on 20, 22 and 23 February 1886.

172 *Natal Mercury*, 17 April 1886.

173 *Natal Mercury*, 10 January 1883.

174 *Natal Mercury*, 22 February 1886.

175 *Natal Mercury*, 28 January 1886.

176 *Natal Mercury*, 5 August 1884.

Political engagement

During the five years that he represented Alexandra and Alfred counties in the Legislative Council, Thomas Reynolds was exposed to far more political demands and pressures than his two predecessors. The eighteen petitions referred to at the beginning of this chapter provide an outline of the scale and variety of issues he faced. Whereas the other constituencies enjoyed dual representation, Reynolds was the sole representative of two counties.

With vigilant county associations at work within both counties, Reynolds found himself under constant pressure to promote and follow up on issues. Sometimes these were misguided. In October 1881 he was obliged to present a petition signed by 58 Umzinto residents opposing the conversion of the resident magistrate's private residence into a hospital for Indians. The petition resulted from a public meeting at which outrage was expressed at the prospect of the magistrate being deprived of his residence and having to reside in a "kaffir hut".¹⁷⁷ But Reynolds' spirited oratory on behalf of his constituents was met with a blunt rejoinder from colonial engineer Hime who told him that he had the wrong end of the stick. The residence was a private one built by the previous resident magistrate, Dunbar Moodie, as the government did not provide magistrates with houses. It had been on the market for many months before it was purchased by the Indian Immigrant Trust Board, which saw it as being suitable for a hospital. "I think the Honourable Member has been carried away by the zeal of his constituents", Colonial Secretary Mitchell observed.¹⁷⁸

The election of 1882, in which responsible government was the key issue, proved very divisive. Critics of the political status quo, such as William Hawkworth, who had opposed Reynolds in the election of 1880, wanted constitutional change for Natal because of what was termed 'imperial blundering' regarding the Anglo-Zulu war and the war against the Transvaal in 1881. As Hawkworth put it, "our best interests have been trifled with by Downing street".¹⁷⁹ A public meeting on the issue in Umzinto on 5 April ended with a split vote: fifteen against and fifteen in favour of responsible government. Reynolds was opposed. For that he earned the wrath of the *Mercury*, which labelled him and those opposed to a responsible government dispensation as "refusalists".¹⁸⁰ Hawkworth immediately decided to oppose Reynolds again, running under the slogan "measures, not men".¹⁸¹ But on polling day Reynolds won narrowly by ten votes. The political rift in the community was exacerbated by a claim that

177 CSO 826, No. 3859, 24 October 1881.

178 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 3, 1881, 112-113; CSO 826, No. 3859, 10 November 1881.

179 Letter to the editor from Edward W. Hawkworth, *Natal Mercury*, 22 March 1882.

180 *Natal Mercury*, 10 and 11 April 1882.

181 *Natal Mercury*, 11 May 1882.

Reynolds had accused the polling officer in Umzinto of collusion with his opponent. Reynolds was reported to have apologised grudgingly for his remarks.¹⁸²

But differences of opinion soon melted away in the face of what was perceived as a common threat: the restoration of Cetewayo. Having been exiled from Zululand by the British in September 1879, it was proposed at a meeting in London on 15 August 1882 that Cetewayo be returned to rule over a partitioned Zululand.¹⁸³ After the massacre of British troops at Isandlwana, fear and loathing of Cetewayo was deeply entrenched in the psyche of the Natal settler community. One hundred names were attached to a petition from Alexandra County following a public meeting held at Umzinto in August 1882 to protest the idea of allowing Cetewayo to return from exile. Sugar planter John Kirkman stated that the move was “inimical to the peace” in that local Africans would regard it as an act of weakness. Colonial Secretary Mitchell subsequently confirmed that the petition had been forwarded to the secretary of state, the Earl of Kimberley.¹⁸⁴

Initially Hawksworth indicated that he would again challenge Reynolds when requisitions for the 1883 election were announced.¹⁸⁵ His chances were given a boost at a public meeting in Harding which endorsed him unanimously and slated Reynolds for “lukewarmness” in promoting a branch telegraph line to Harding.¹⁸⁶ But within days Hawksworth announced that he was withdrawing his candidacy. He gave two reasons: he wanted Reynolds “to complete his work” and to avoid an “unnecessary demand on voters” as there was talk that there would be a further election soon giving each county its own representative.¹⁸⁷ As a result, Reynolds was unopposed. But Hawksworth’s attitude to him did not soften. In a letter published in the *Mercury* he referred to Reynolds as “the member for Cloudland”, because Reynolds had declined to pursue a petition Hawksworth had submitted concerning a voters’ roll anomaly. Reynolds’ response was that the Legislative Council was not the proper tribunal for such matters and that he would take it up privately with the governor.¹⁸⁸

The issue of separate representation for the two South Coast counties was undoubtedly a sensitive one.¹⁸⁹ The resident magistrate for Alfred County, James Giles, commented

182 *Natal Mercury*, 19 and 31 May 1882.

183 Guy 1994:153.

184 CSO 871, No. 3375, 24 August 1882. John Robinson forwarded a similar petition on behalf of Durban residents (CSO 877, No. 3964, 16 October 1882). Petitions were also submitted from elsewhere in Natal (*Natal Mercury*, 2 September 1882).

185 *Natal Mercury*, 16 April 1883.

186 *Natal Mercury*, 4 May 1883.

187 *Natal Mercury*, 5 and 7 May 1883. Separate representation for the two counties occurred only from 1890.

188 *Natal Mercury*, 22 October 1883.

189 Weenen county had 374 electors, yet qualified for two representatives, while Alfred and Alexandra

in his report for 1884 that he hoped for “a whole visible Member of Council instead of a share in one whose face he never sees”.¹⁹⁰ In one of his last public meetings Reynolds faced a vote of no confidence when, on 8 December 1884, the residents of Harding castigated him for wanting to relocate the magistracy from Harding to Lower Umzimkulu. They were also furious because Harding had yet to be connected by telegraph.¹⁹¹

Notwithstanding the prevalence of narrow, parochial views, there were those in Alfred County who resented the fact that Reynolds was not a resident of their county. However, his task as the lone representative of the two southern counties was often a thankless one. When in April 1884 he asked for an additional medical officer for Alexandra County as one doctor could not possibly fulfil the roles of district surgeon as well as serve as Indian medical inspector,¹⁹² the response of the colonial secretary was unsympathetic. Alexandra County, Mitchell wrote, was not that badly off considering the district of Ixopo had been without a medical officer for years.¹⁹³

A ruptured liver ended Thomas Reynolds’ life on 10 June 1885.¹⁹⁴ Hawksworth’s desire that he “should complete his work” went unfulfilled. Indeed, for all his efforts to obtain a telegraph connection, fiscal port status for the Mzimkulu, a separate magistracy in Lower Umzimkulu and a bridge over the Mkomazi, Reynolds was unsuccessful. Yet in his endeavours he succeeded, singlehandedly, in bringing the profile of the South Coast into prominence.¹⁹⁵ As a sugar pioneer he was the first to introduce tramlines into the cane fields of Alexandra County.¹⁹⁶ Tramlines, which resembled a mini-rail system, not only greatly assisted the haulage of cane from the fields to the mill, but, of equal importance, they reduced the lapse in time between the harvesting and crushing of cane. To obtain maximum juice yields, cane needs to be crushed within a day of it being cut.¹⁹⁷ Reynolds’ innovative introduction of tramlines subsequently became

counties with 373 electors had only a single representative. Victoria County with 615 electors had three representatives (*Natal Blue Book*, 1885, M5).

190 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1884, B43.

191 *Natal Mercury*, 17 December 1884.

192 The Indian population of Alexandra County in 1884 was stated as being 2 584 (*Natal Blue Book*, 1884, B59).

193 CSO 959, No. 1631, 24 and 28 April 1884. The Alexandra County Association made the same appeal for an additional medical officer in a letter published in the *Mercury* on 23 May 1884.

194 *Natal Advertiser*, 13 June 1885. In its obituary, the *Mercury* (12 June) remarked that the name of Thomas Reynolds was a household word on the coast. Yet, surprisingly, no details about his funeral were published, nor was there any comment from South Coast residents on his passing.

195 Reynolds’ views on labour and punishment are considered in chapter nine.

196 Letter from Molly Reynolds to Killie Campbell, 28 January 1952 (Reynolds family files, MSS, KCM). Reynolds purchased the tramlines in 1880. Tramlines in cane fields were first introduced on the South Coast at Isipingo by Spence and De Pass in 1877 (*Natal Blue Book*, 1877, J14).

197 Griggs 1997:50.

commonplace. Historically, therefore, he belongs in the same category as Michael Jeffels and James Arbuthnot in pioneering sugar and settlement on the South Coast.

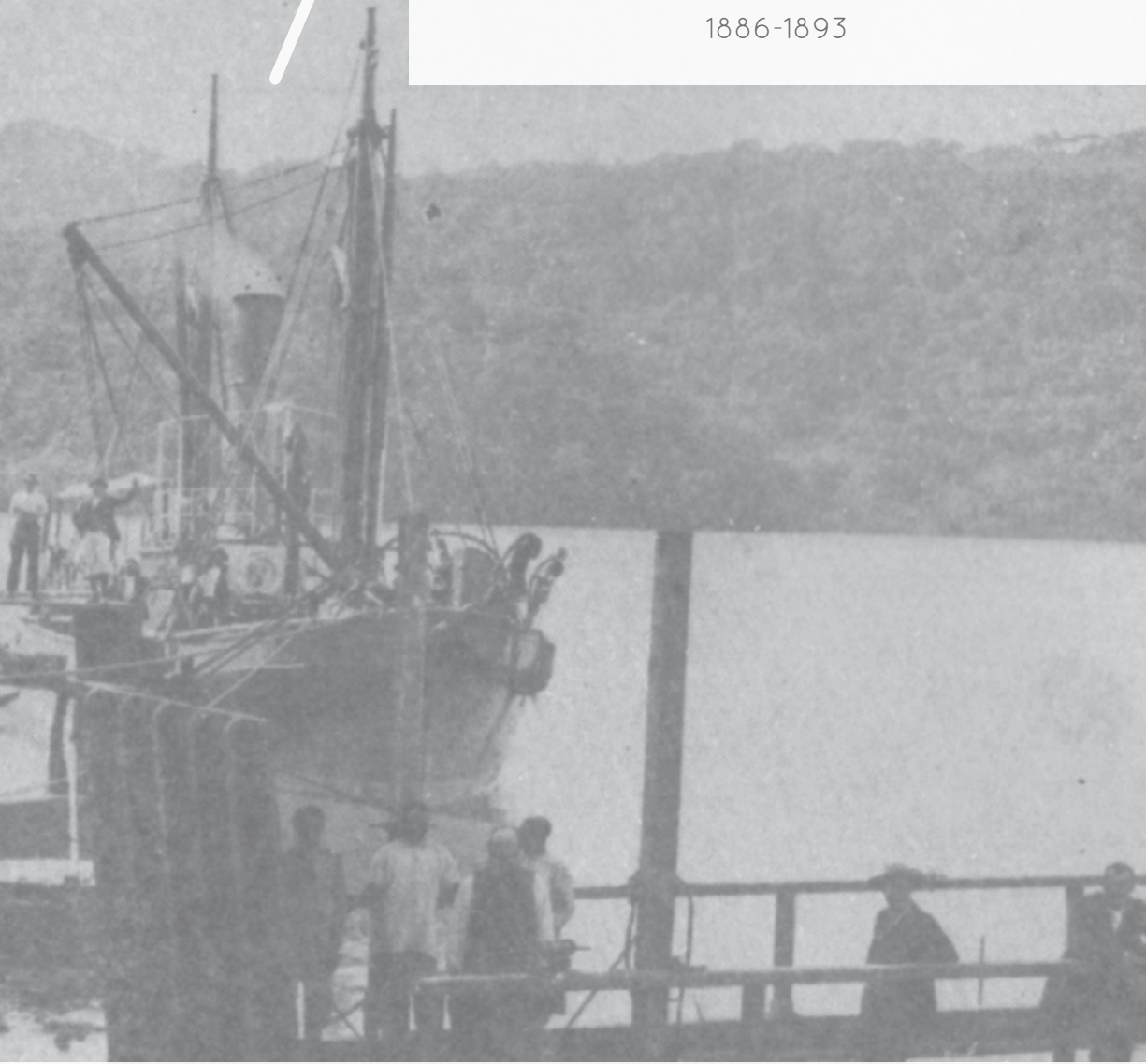
In closing

The following chapter advances the focus to the end of the representative government period in 1893 and, thus, concludes part one of this study. Although during this period the South Coast was connected by telegraph, Lower Umzimkulu was declared a separate magistracy and Port Shepstone became a fiscal port, the South Coast continued to languish in respect of infrastructure. Colonial engineer Hime refused to provide a bridge over the Mkomanzi; no plans for the extension of the railway south of Isipingo were contemplated. As such, it was described as a 'Cinderella' region. However, private enterprise flourished, particularly in regard to coastal shipping.

7

Cinderella county

1886-1893



Might I not be allowed to name your county in relation to its sisters as the “Cinderella County?”

— Governor A.E. Havelock, Umzinto, *Natal Mercury*, 27 July 1886

The prominent profile which the South Coast enjoyed during the respective tenures of Thomas Reynolds and General Sir John Bisset as public representatives dissipated in the years after 1886 due to a combination of factors. Chief amongst these was the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand which, as the *Mercury* of 2 July 1888 observed, “so completely absorbed Natalians in the vortex of gold speculations that they have little disposition to look seriously at other sources of investment... advantageous to the general well-being of the community”. As a consequence, economic focus and priorities in the colony were dominated by the northward railway extension, the development of Durban harbour and the northern Natal coal mines. Despite the difficult financial circumstances that prevailed, Governor Havelock was adamant that railway construction to Natal’s northern border had to be expedited. At the same time, the annexation of Zululand and the constitutional issue of responsible government engrossed major political attention. While those factors alone were powerful enough to ensure the relegation of the South Coast’s social and economic needs, weak, and at times factional, political representation of the South Coast in the Legislative Council, and the perennial opposition of Colonial Engineer Albert Hime to any infrastructural development of the region, exacerbated the problem and ensured its “Cinderella” status.

Introduction

An analysis of the professions listed along with the voters' roll of the mid-1880s showed agriculture as the predominant pursuit in Alexandra and Alfred counties. Of 292 registered voters, 115 were listed as farmers, that is, 39 percent of male settlers. Artisans, a category that included engineers, blacksmiths, masons, carpenters and wagon makers, accounted for 28 (9.5 percent). There were 21 (7 percent) professionals (doctors, missionaries, accountants, justice officials and teachers). There were 48 storekeepers, hotel-keepers and merchants who comprised almost 16.5 percent of the economically active white population. Thirteen (4.5 percent) were listed as 'gentlemen', while 67 in number (23 percent) had lowly occupations such as labourers, painters, carriers and lime-burners.¹ With sugar the main agricultural product on the coast,² not surprisingly the South Coast's first four Legislative Council representatives – Aiken, Hawksworth, Reynolds and Bisset – all hailed from the coast and had sugar interests.

General Sir John Jarvis Bisset

Bisset was a man of considerable social standing. In 1866, while acting governor of Natal, he had annexed Alfred County. Promoted to the rank of major-general in 1867 and awarded the title of knight commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George in 1877, Sir John Jarvis Bisset was one of the most distinguished soldiers in nineteenth century South Africa.³

As such, his candidacy to succeed Reynolds was unopposed.⁴ Although his tenure as the region's representative lasted less than two years, Bisset represented the South Coast with great energy and took up its cause vigorously. He felt that the South Coast was blatantly marginalised. Whereas Victoria County, with 615 voters, had three elected members of the Legislative Council, and Weenen County, with 374 voters, had two elected representatives, Alexandra and Alfred counties, with a combined total of 373 voters, had a single representative.⁵ Soon after his arrival in the Legislative Council in August 1885, he moved a motion seeking separate

1 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 36, No. 2071, 5 August 1884.

2 In 1886 the South Coast produced 3 121 tons to the North Coast's 7 382 tons (*Natal Mercury*, 23 February 1886).

3 De Kock 1968:78-79. Born in England in 1819, Bisset and his parents settled in the Eastern Cape in 1820. At the age of 15, he served in the Sixth Frontier War. As an adjutant in the Cape Mounted Rifles, he was severely wounded during the Eighth Frontier War (1850-1853). After serving in Canada, he retired in 1877 and returned to Natal where he settled in Lower Umzimkulu.

4 *Natal Mercury*, 16 July 1885; *Government Notice*, No. 254, 1885. He was also re-elected unopposed in 1886 (*Government Notice*, No. 332, 7 August 1886).

5 *Natal Blue Book*, 1885, M5.

representation for Alfred and Alexandra counties. Bisset attributed the absence of bridges and telegraphs on the South Coast to its unfair representation. Although his motion was agreed to by the council, no action was forthcoming on the part of the government.⁶ During the 1886 session of the Legislative Council, Bisset again raised the question of representation for the two counties. He received strong backing from the council's foremost member, John Robinson of Durban. Citing the South Coast's success in shipping operations and the Norwegian settlement at Marburg, Robinson argued that as a region it had special needs which merited stronger representation in the council. Although it was agreed that Bisset could submit an address to the governor on this issue, nothing further came of it until 1889.⁷



Figure 7.1 General Sir John Jarvis Bisset

In every respect, Bisset pursued Reynolds' agenda: a separate magistracy for Lower Umzimkulu, a telegraph link, fiscal port status for Port Shepstone and a bridge over the Mkomanzi. In August 1885, when Bisset presented a petition endorsed by 84 Lower Umzimkulu residents seeking a separate magistracy for their area, he encountered the same opposition that Reynolds had faced from Colonial Secretary Mitchell.⁸

Bisset fared no better in 1886 when he cited a recommendation by the Native Commission advising the presence of a magistrate wherever the number of Africans exceeded 10 000. Even his reference to the fact that the hut tax collection in excess of £4 000, more than

covered the annual cost of between £1 500 and £2 000 for a magistracy, failed to make any impact. Acting Colonial Secretary Francis Haden cited the provision of three justice of the peace representatives as an alternative to a separate magistracy. He also cited the economic slump which, in 1886, saw unemployment increase and

6 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 318-319.

7 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 9, 1886, 31-32. Only in 1889, with the passage of Law 5, was separate representation granted to Alfred and Alexandra counties.

8 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 398-400. Bisset's motion was defeated by fifteen votes to nine.

speculation rise about retrenchments in the civil service.⁹ Only in April 1889 was a separate magistracy established in Lower Umzimkulu.¹⁰

In August 1885 Bisset revived Reynolds' efforts to obtain a telegraph line to Port Shepstone, arguing that it was important to be able to communicate conditions at the river mouth prior to steamers leaving Durban for the Mzimkulu. But once again Colonial Secretary Mitchell's opposition proved effective.¹¹

In November 1886, when work on extending the telegraph line to Umzinto was about to commence, Bisset took the opportunity to lobby support for the extension to be carried through to Port Shepstone. Again he was supported by John Robinson who pointed out that the lower South Coast "was shut out from the rest of the Colony" because of an absence of bridges, telegraphs and open ports.¹² But it was only in 1889 that Port Shepstone finally linked by telegraph wire via Umzinto.¹³



Figure 7.2 The Mzimkulu river mouth

9 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 9, 1886, 324-325; 533-534. Bisset's motion was defeated by eighteen votes to ten. See also Leverton 1968:234, 247.

10 Proclamation No. 23, 26 March 1889, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol., 41, No. 2348.

11 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 358-359.

12 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 9, 1886, 302-303.

13 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1889, C89.

Fiscal port status

On 15 July 1885, the attorney-general, Michael Gallwey, successfully moved the second reading of the Customs Ordinance Amendment Bill to facilitate the exportation of goods from places on the coast other than Port Natal.¹⁴ Although Colonial Secretary Mitchell was prepared to give assent to the bill,¹⁵ it was referred to a select committee after its second reading. Bisset was adamant that clause four of the bill should be scrapped. It required a ship loaded at Port Shepstone with local produce for export, to proceed first to Durban to obtain a permit for its cargo.¹⁶ He was supported by Robert Fisher of Durban who agreed that this would prove “ruinous” to the coastal community.¹⁷ But Bisset encountered the same obstructionism that Reynolds had experienced. George Cato, a nominated member of the council, contended that the quarantine laws made it essential for ships to get clearance at Durban. Mitchell asserted that unless proper measures were in place, revenue would be lost. Bisset felt that George Rutherford, the collector of customs, wanted “to keep everything in Durban under his own thumb. He does not want a law passed that will take anything away from himself.” Frustrated by the turn of events, Bisset claimed that “everything is done to obstruct these two counties”. His efforts to amend the bill were defeated by seventeen votes to four.¹⁸

Despite their isolation, the residents of Lower Umzimkulu followed events in the council very closely. Upon hearing that Bisset had been defeated in his efforts to obtain fiscal freedom for South Coast ports to trade independently of Durban, they expressed “intense disappointment” at a public meeting attended by between 80 and 90 locals, said to be the biggest gathering of settlers to date in that district.¹⁹ Their plight was accurately summed up by David Aiken, chairman of the meeting, who noted that the district was at the mercy of the African Boating Company, owners of the *Somtseu*,²⁰ for supplies. He cited the extreme shortage of flour and other necessities and proclaimed that the district was “at a standstill”. These grievances and the outrage at the outcome of the amended customs law were the subject of a petition, bearing 84 signatures, to the colonial secretary.²¹

14 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 110-112.

15 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 127.

16 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 265.

17 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 294.

18 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 294-296. Rutherford was collector of customs for 35 years; he retired in 1888 (*Natal Mercury*, 28 October 1904).

19 *Natal Mercury*, 31 August 1885.

20 James & Hitchens Bros. took over from T.N. Price as agents of the *Somtseu* according to an advertisement in the *Mercury* on 18 March 1882. From late 1884, the African Boating Company of London was the owner of the ship (CSO 2568, Confidential Minute Paper, C90/1891). An advertisement in the *Mercury* of 25 November 1885 stated that the *Lion* was also owned by the African Boating Company.

21 *Natal Mercury*, 4 September 1885.

Disappointment at the way in which the customs law had been amended was justifiable. As the Lower Umzimkulu correspondent stated in a report: “The Bill is so complicated and contains so many restrictions, that it is hard to understand”.²² Promulgated as Law 11 of 1885, the only substantial difference between the original Ordinance 6 of 1855 and the revised legislation of 1885 was that Umzinto Bay and Umzimkulu were added to Port Natal as ports or places from where goods could be exported. But the devil was in the detail.²³ Bureaucratic red tape rendered the objective of independent trade from South Coast outlets prohibitive. The detailed paperwork required in advance of a ship picking up produce from Mzinto Bay or from the Mzimkulu stymied entrepreneurial endeavour. The absence of a telegraph line to communicate the details of transactions, as the law required, added to the difficulties. Lower Umzimkulu residents were outraged because the amended customs law made no material difference to their lives. A report in the *Mercury* on 7 August 1885 conceded that they were worse off than three years previously.

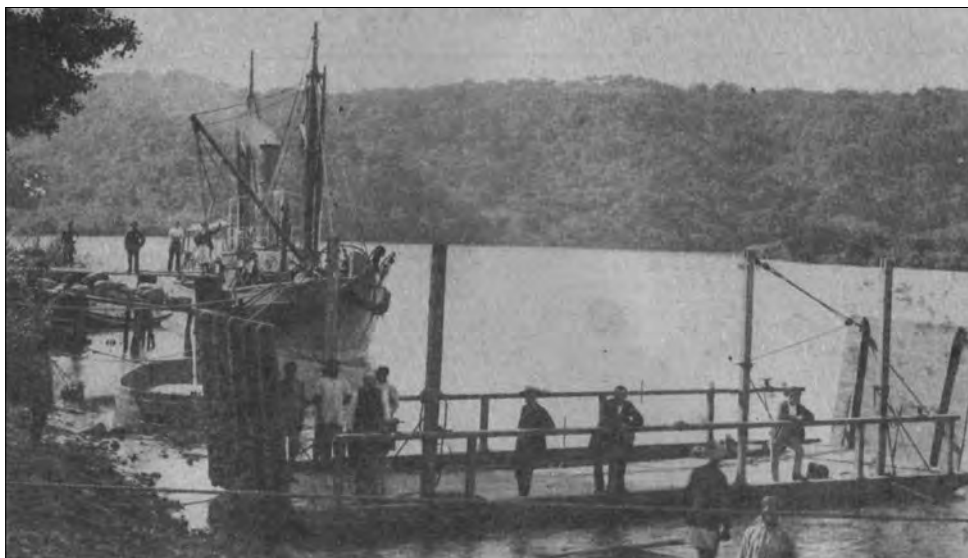


Figure 7.3 The pont and *Somtseu* at Batstones, Mzimkulu

²² *Natal Mercury*, 7 August 1885.

²³ A ship's master had first to apply to the collector of customs for permission to export colonial produce to a port outside of Natal (section 2), then he had to furnish the bill of lading to the collector within ten days showing the exact number of packages (section 3). The most difficult aspect of the new provisions required the ship's master make a declaration of oath after providing, in writing, details of the colonial produce to be taken on board and the names of the consignees for whom the produce was destined (section 4). Only when the collector of customs had issued a master certificate of clearance could the ship proceed on its voyage. Failure to abide by any aspect of this procedure was subject to a fine of £100 (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 37, No. 2144, 13 October 1885).

Bisset did not relent. In the 1886 session of the Legislative Council, he exposed the absurdity of the legislation by pointing out that a locally built ship which had taken goods directly to Cape ports from Port Shepstone could not return directly to Port Shepstone without first proceeding to Durban to obtain clearance, thereby adding almost 200 miles to its voyage. This resulted in Port Shepstone losing out to trade from East Griqualand. “It is time we had more than one port”, stated an exasperated Bisset. Besides enjoying the support of John Robinson, Bisset’s motion found favour with Pietermaritzburg representative T.P. O’Meara, who argued that the council had a duty to support Port Shepstone’s “means of being able to dispose of their goods by a cheap means of transport”.

During the financially depressed circumstances of the time the community of Lower Umzimkulu certainly needed all the economic support they could muster. Cecil Yonge of Pietermaritzburg County asked why the government had created the Marburg settlement if it was not prepared to develop the Mzimkulu as a port. Colonial Engineer Hime, predictably, referred to Port Shepstone as a “hamlet” which did not have the capacity “to enable trade to carry on with the Cape Colony”. All five government members were amongst the sixteen votes to eleven by which Bisset’s motion was defeated.²⁴

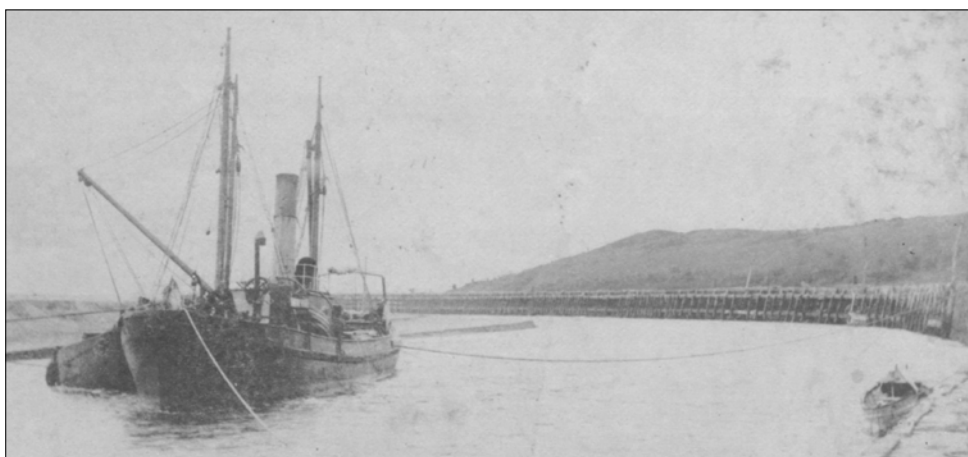


Figure 7.4 The *Somtseu* moored on the Mzimkulu, 1888

Aside from government members, jaundiced opinions about Port Shepstone also prevailed amongst some elected members of the council. F.W.B. Louch of Durban

²⁴ *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 9, 1886, 300-302. The debate took place on 11 November 1886. The government members were the colonial secretary, engineer, treasurer, attorney-general and secretary for native affairs.

County claimed that people he knew in Port Shepstone doubted its ability to prosper. Benjamin Greenacre of Durban Borough was of the view that the volume of trade was too small to justify fiscal port status.²⁵ But their views contradicted the detailed review of Port Shepstone published in the *Mercury* on 23 August 1886, which noted that 600 persons lived within six miles of Port Shepstone; that a sugar mill had commenced operating; two large tea plantations existed, the coffee industry was progressing and that the volunteer corps, with a membership of 108 members, was one of the largest in the colony.

Bridge over the Mkomanzi

On the same day that Port Shepstone's bid for fiscal port status was defeated, Bisset's efforts on behalf of the Umkomaas community also failed to muster support. Reviving the motion for a bridge over the lower Mkomanzi – a request which dated from 1871 – Bisset argued that whereas other counties derived rail benefits, Alexandra County did not. Yet despite its financial contribution to the colonial treasury, Alexandra was neglected in respect of infrastructural development. He calculated that if a toll was charged, the costs of a bridge would be defrayed. But the South Coast's nemesis, Albert Hime, again argued that whilst it was desirable to bridge every river in the colony, funding for such projects simply did not exist. Moreover, bridging the Mkomanzi would be "very expensive". He asked that Bisset postpone the request. In an attempt to mollify local opinion, Hime encouraged coastal shipping.²⁶ The state and extent of coastal shipping is discussed later in this chapter.

Factionalism

Bisset resigned his seat in order to spend time in England on private business, which meant having to miss the 1887 session of the Legislative Council.²⁷ Within a month, two candidates were announced.²⁸ In advertising his candidacy, Richard Higham of Alexandra County indicated that he enjoyed the endorsement of the aging Alexander Brander, 'The Father of the District' as he was known, and William Hawksworth.

25 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 9, 1886, 302.

26 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 9, 1886, 299-300. If Hime was referring to shipping on the Mkomanzi, his view is not borne out by the shipping records contained in the *Natal Mercury*. As a shipping gazette, the *Mercury* published daily accounts of all local shipping movements. According to those records, the last occasion a ship visited the Mkomanzi river was on 14 December 1883 (*Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1883). In the light of that information, the colonial engineer's budget of £6 706 on harbour works at the mouth of the Mkomanzi is difficult to justify (LC No. 9, 1886, 32).

27 CSO 1132, No. 1807, 14 April 1887; CSO 1134, No. 2088, 3 May 1887.

28 *Natal Mercury*, 14 June 1887.

Higham favoured responsible government and promised to pursue Bisset and Reynolds' agenda of infrastructural development.²⁹ His opponent, William Darby of Harding in Alfred County, did not publicise his policy positions. As one who enjoyed a political profile in his county, Darby evidently felt confident of voter support. His profile was premised on his outspoken criticism of Reynolds. At a public meeting addressed by Reynolds in Harding in December 1884, Darby had proposed that Reynolds resign "to make room for a more able man", but the motion was not put to a vote. He had also proposed that a working committee be appointed to "watch the movements of our present and future members of the Legislative Council".³⁰

The election result produced a distinct division. Darby defeated Higham by 78 votes to 66 but secured all his votes, bar one, in Alfred County, whereas 40 of Higham's votes came from Umzinto in Alexandra County, the balance of his votes were cast by Alfred County supporters. Coincidentally, Higham received only one vote in Darby's stronghold of Harding, while Darby recorded only one vote in Umzinto which was Higham's base.³¹ For the first time factionalism manifested itself in this far-flung constituency. The settler community of Harding, some 50 miles inland from the coast, was remote, its isolation highlighted by the lack of a telegraph connection. The absence of a telegraph line and opposition to the relocation of the magistracy from Harding to the coast had dominated Reynolds' public meeting of December 1884 in Harding.³² Nearly three years later that smouldering resentment and resistance appeared to manifest itself in the voter support Darby received. As the writer of a review of the 1887 South Coast election remarked, people in Alfred County simply voted for the Alfred man.³³ However, that factionalism was short-lived. Subsequent elections in the two counties proved a mere formality, as they were unopposed.

But grounds for division and factionalism were evident on the economic front as a comparison of the economic output of the two counties in 1886 indicates. Although similar in size³⁴ and population (616 in Alexandra County and 663 in Alfred County),³⁵ there was a wide disparity in agricultural production. The total acreage of settlers' crops in Alexandra County was 4 870 acres,³⁶ while settlers in Alfred County had only

29 *Natal Mercury*, 22 June 1887.

30 *Natal Mercury*, 17 December 1884.

31 *Natal Mercury*, 12 July 1887.

32 *Natal Mercury*, 17 December 1884.

33 *Natal Mercury*, 1 August 1887.

34 Alexandra County was 1 620 square miles in extent; Alfred spanned an area of 1,544 square miles (*Natal Blue Book*, 1886, T2).

35 *Natal Blue Book*, 1886, T4.

36 Of this, 2 987 acres were under sugar. That cultivation produced 5 900 tons of sugar, 31 048 gallons of rum, 17 900 pounds of coffee, 10 800 muids of corn, 5 488 pounds of cayenne and 1 200 pounds of tobacco (*Natal Blue Book*, 1886, X2-5). Records for African agricultural production for 1886 in Alexandra

1 290 acres under cultivation.³⁷ Only in animal husbandry did Alfred County surpass Alexandra, with the number of horned livestock belonging to settlers totalling 6 247, as opposed to 3 690 in Alexandra.³⁸

In terms of manufacturing Alexandra County boasted fifteen sugar mills and two distilleries, while Alfred County had only one steam mill and a water-powered flour mill.³⁹ The difference in agricultural productivity was also apparent at the colonial and Indian exhibition which took place at South Kensington in London in 1886. The upcountry Harding area of Alfred County did not submit any exhibits and the county was represented by only a few exhibits from the coastal Lower Umzimkulu area.⁴⁰ All the other exhibits were from Umzinto, Equeefa and Ifafa in Alexandra County.⁴¹ In accounting for their differences, it has to be borne in mind that settlement and cultivation in Alexandra County preceded that of Alfred County by at least sixteen years.⁴² Moreover, as the *Mercury* remarked in an editorial: "Alexandra is one of the few districts in which tropical agriculture and cattle farming are pursued together".⁴³ Whereas sugar constituted the basis of Alexandra County's prosperity, only the northern section of Lower Umzimkulu in Alfred County was suitable for sugar. Although the formation of the Umzimkulu Sugar Company in 1896 constituted the first fairly substantial private capital investment,⁴⁴ its progress was disappointing. This is discussed in chapter ten.

Gold fever

William Darby's tenure as the South Coast's representative in the Legislative Council coincided with a general lapse of interest in local issues. As the *Mercury* observed following the Planters' Conference held at the Durban Town Hall in July 1888,

County show 10 400 acres under corn resulting in a yield of 38 400 muids (*ibid.*:X6). These statistics are a reflection of the entire county and not simply the coastal strip.

37 The bulk of the land in Alfred County (953 acres) was under corn and yielded a harvest of 3 713 muids. A coffee crop of 260 pounds and 800 pounds of tobacco accounted for the balance of Alfred's settler agricultural output (*Natal Blue Book*, 1886, X2-4). Africans in Alfred County cultivated 7 900 acres of corn which yielded 16 900 muids (*ibid.*, X7-8).

38 *Natal Blue Book*, 1886, X10. No figures are listed as to the number of horned livestock owned by Africans.

39 *Natal Blue Book*, 1886, X4-5; Y10.

40 David Aiken, General Bisset and his son, Walter, exhibited samples of sugar, coffee, maize, rice and red beans (Catalogue Natal, CSO 1117-1119, 1886).

41 Catalogue Natal, CSO 1117-1119, 1886; SNA 1/1/84, No. 422, 8 July 1885.

42 Settler cultivation in Alexandra County began in 1858. The first substantial settler cultivation in Alfred County was by Archibald Sinclair, who planted sugar cane in 1874 (Letter to the editor, *Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1888).

43 *Natal Mercury*, 17 April 1886.

44 Osborn 1964:326. The initial investment in the Umzimkulu Sugar Company was only £25 000 in 1898, a small sum when it is recalled that Thomas Reynolds invested £17 000 in a new mill in Alexandra County in 1883 (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 50, No. 2944, 19 April 1898).

organizations such as the Victoria Planters Association and the Alexandra Association, “once so energetic and combative”, seemed to have passed into “the hibernating stage”. The *Mercury* attributed this to “the dispersion of local activities to the Gold Fields”.⁴⁵ Population statistics bear out that view: the settler population of Alexandra County dropped from 616 in 1886 to 420 in 1888, and from 663 in 1886 to 529 in 1888 in Alfred County – a total loss of 330 settlers in the two counties.⁴⁶ Detracting from the focus and energy of the Reynolds’ years was a local degree of ‘gold fever’. Already a reality in the Transvaal, it also became apparent on the South Coast. From February 1887, when the first rumours of gold deposits in the Umzinto district were propagated,⁴⁷ until 1890 there was ongoing speculation about and investment in the auriferous prospects of Alexandra County.

Within weeks of news about the discovery of what was proclaimed as the ‘golden valley’ on a farm belonging to the Reynolds brothers, Frank and Charles, Alexandra County featured regularly in the columns of the *Mercury*.⁴⁸ Within a month, trader and storekeeper Charles Knox of Umzinto was advertising the “Umzinto Gold Fields” as a “splendid investment”.⁴⁹ Knox’s view was echoed by the report of a “special commissioner” who, after spending three weeks examining the geology of the area, stated that it was “well worth the attention of our capitalists”.⁵⁰ By April a business called the Alexandra Central Syndicate had been formed to let land adjoining the ‘golden valley’.⁵¹

The Royal Hotel of Umzinto announced that it was making “considerable additions” to its capacity in order to accommodate prospectors and other “curious types” who were venturing down to Umzinto.⁵² Despite the enthusiasm and expectations which abounded, no substantial gold yields were forthcoming. Nonetheless, flagging hopes were rekindled in June of 1887 with the news that three new reefs had

45 *Natal Mercury*, 16 July 1888.

46 *Natal Blue Books*, 1886, T4; 1888, T4. Norwegians were prominent amongst those who left the South Coast to seek employment not only on the Transvaal goldfields but also in railway construction (Winquist 1976:236).

47 *Natal Mercury*, 14 February 1887. Initial gold discovery claims were made on a farm belonging to the Reynolds brothers.

48 On 21 February 1887, the *Mercury* reported that ‘golden valley’ was being guarded by police. The *Mercury*’s edition of 22 February carried an advertisement placed by the Reynolds brothers warning trespassers of prosecution if they ventured into ‘golden valley’.

49 *Natal Mercury*, 17 March 1887. Sam West, an Australian gold digger from Ballarat in Victoria County, visited the ‘golden valley’ and came away unconvinced by its prospects (*Natal Mercury*, 28 February 1887).

50 *Natal Mercury*, 18 March 1887.

51 *Natal Mercury*, 6 and 8 April 1887.

52 *Natal Mercury*, 18 March 1887. The Exchange Mart in West Street, Durban, advertised tents, marquees, portable wood and canvas houses and waterproof sheets for hire or sale for those headed for the “Umzinto Gold Fields” (*Natal Mercury*, 8 April 1887).

been discovered.⁵³ In September 1887 the Alexandra Gold Mining Company was floated with a capital of £35 000. The Reynolds brothers were amongst the major shareholders.⁵⁴ Elsewhere in the colony, gold fever was also apparent. Reports of gold discoveries came from Ixopo, Msinga, the Thukela River, and even the Berea in Durban.⁵⁵ But gold prospects in Alexandra County continued to fuel expectation.⁵⁶ Early in 1888 it was reported that a “well-defined auriferous reef” had been located; gold was visible and a yield of two ounces per ton was anticipated.⁵⁷

Crowning all this speculation was the opening of the first mining battery at Dumisa in the Umzinto district. The occasion was attended by the governor, Sir Arthur Havelock, together with 100 guests.⁵⁸ Remarking on this development, the *Mercury's* “Man in the Moon” column claimed that “the southern gold fields” had given the residents of Alexandra County “an independence and self-reliance ... which is quite refreshing.”⁵⁹ But the high hopes of fame and fortune did not materialise. The gold output at the Dumisa mine was a mere half ounce per ton of crushed ore.⁶⁰ By 1890, the columns of the *Mercury* no longer carried advertisements promoting land sales around Umzinto or inviting investment in gold mining ventures there. As the so-called Man in the Moon remarked: “Natal gold mines do not appear to be showing any strong disposition. Work is going on in many quarters but it seems to take a long time to produce any amount of gold.”⁶¹ The end of the gold dream came in March 1891 when the Natal Gold Mining Company shut down its battery in Umzinto. Six months later it was reported that the equipment at the Dumisa mine had been auctioned off.⁶² As an enterprise gold mining had not proved economically viable.

53 *Natal Mercury*, 18 June 1887. Anxious to cash in on the Transvaal gold rush, Charles Knox left Umzinto in August and settled in Elandsfontein on the Witwatersrand where he opened a store stocking mining machinery (*Natal Mercury*, 12 and 13 August 1887). By 1892 Knox had returned to the South Coast.

54 *Natal Mercury*, 15 September 1887.

55 *Natal Advertiser*, 13 May 1887; *Natal Mercury*, 27 August 1887, 5 March 1888.

56 *The Natal Advertiser*, 25 March 1887, reported that Umzinto gold was a leading topic of conversation in Durban.

57 *Natal Mercury*, 27 January 1888.

58 *Natal Mercury*, 23 October 1888.

59 *Natal Mercury*, 27 October 1888. The “Man in the Moon” column featured gossip and comment on events of the day.

60 *Natal Mercury*, 12 March 1889.

61 *Natal Mercury*, 24 May 1890.

62 *Natal Mercury*, 10 March and 25 September 1891. Production at the Dumisa mine in 1891 was reported to have been sixteen ounces from 25 tons of crushed ore. Only three ounces of gold were obtained from twenty tons of ore at the neighbouring Mimosa mine (*Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1891/92, F87-88). Prospecting did continue on a small scale. At the Alexandra Agricultural Show in 1893, a 78 ounces ingot was exhibited, the gold having come from Holman's reef in the Umzinto district (*Natal Mercury*, 10 March 1893). In 1895 gold was reported to have been discovered in the Ixopo district (*Times of Natal*, 26 March 1895).

Tardy progress

While Alexandra County pursued an elusive gold bonanza, the spotlight of real economic development settled on the coalfields of northern Natal and the gold-rich Witwatersrand. With the explosion of economic growth on the Witwatersrand, the demand for coal increased dramatically. Production in northern Natal went from 8 000 tons in 1888 to 80 000 tons in 1890.⁶³ In addition, by 1890, the Dundee Coal Company was supplying the Cape railways.⁶⁴ In sugar-rich Victoria County, a new industry had been established, namely tea. Commenced by James Liege Hulett in 1878 on his Kearsney estate, by 1888 it had become a flourishing enterprise⁶⁵ through the “sheer persistency and energy” of Hulett and others, as the *Mercury* noted.⁶⁶ By 1891 there were 25 tea estates in Victoria County which produced about 300 000 pounds of tea valued at £15 000.⁶⁷ In contrast, whatever prospects the South Coast had were hamstrung by the lack infrastructural development. As John Robinson remarked in the Legislative Council in July 1887, “the wants of this district have been lamentably neglected for years past”.⁶⁸

Whereas Reynolds had to deal with eighteen petitions during his five years on the council, only eight petitions were submitted by South Coast residents during the period 1888 to 1893. Five of them addressed the need for a bridge over the Mkomanzi, while the other three concerned the post office at Umzinto, a district surgeoncy in Lower Umzimkulu, and the need for a lighter and a warp to assist shipping at the Mzimkulu mouth. William Darby’s first order of business as the South Coast’s council representative was to request financial provision for a separate magistracy in Lower Umzimkulu. Although his motion was approved,⁶⁹ even as late as 1889, when the magistracy came into being, the Estimates did not contain any reference to funding for it.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, it would appear that the years of campaigning for recognition of Lower Umzimkulu as a separate district within Alfred County had not been lost on the colonial government.⁷¹ The announcement of the post of district surgeon for

63 Bundy 1988:184.

64 Leverton 1968:266. Customs revenues soared from £140 401 in 1886 to £369 460 in 1889, while the number of ships calling at Durban jumped from 285 in 1886 to 555 in 1889 (*ibid.*: 253).

65 Ballard & Lenta 1985:128.

66 *Natal Mercury*, 2 July 1888.

67 Brain 1985:213.

68 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 10, 1887, 242.

69 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 10, 1887, 242.

70 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 41, No. 2351, 9 April 1889. Funding for barracks and stables for the Natal Mounted Police in Lower Umzimkulu, was, however, included in the public works budget.

71 It is also possible that a highly detailed and comprehensive series of seven articles published in the *Natal Mercury* between 15 November 1888 and 16 January 1889 on developments in Lower Umzimkulu

Lower Umzimkulu⁷² served as an indicator that the inception of a separate magistracy was at hand. Without any fanfare a proclamation appeared in the *Government Gazette* in March 1889 stating that with effect from 20 April 1889 the magistracy of Lower Umzimkulu would come into existence.⁷³ Just five days before the inauguration of the new magistracy, Alex Gilson was appointed as resident magistrate.⁷⁴ As was the case when a customs officer was appointed at Port Shepstone in 1882,⁷⁵ premises for the new magistracy were an afterthought. Temporary rooms had to suffice whilst the new courthouse was under construction.⁷⁶



Figure 7.5 The *Somtseu* leaving Port Shepstone, 1892

Darby's next call on behalf of his constituents concerned the lack of public works in the two southern counties. Deprived of the benefit of railway expansion, he rightly complained that they were the most neglected region in the colony despite their financial contribution to the treasury. Specifically he called for the construction of a jetty at Mzinto Bay, a proper road from Ifafa to Port Shepstone, a punt to traverse the Mzimkulu and a bridge across the Mkomanzi.⁷⁷ The issues were referred to a select committee and £1 150 was allocated for infrastructural work.⁷⁸ But this expenditure

helped to elevate awareness of the needs and potential of the area. A.H. Bisset of Lower Umzimkulu, in correspondence with the colonial secretary, expressed anxiety as to when the new magistracy would take effect because of the inconvenience involved in travelling to the court in Umzinto (CSO 1209, No. 493, 26 January 1889).

72 Petition from 37 residents of Lower Umzimkulu (CSO 1201, No. 4869, 5 November 1888).

73 Proclamation No. 23, 26 March 1889, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 40, No. 2348. A detailed description of the extent of the Lower Umzimkulu district was published in a proclamation issued in the *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 46, No. 2702, 23 October 1894.

74 *Government Notice*, No. 287, 15 April 1889.

75 Premises were not immediately available (CSO 848, No. 304, 31 August 1882).

76 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1889, B90.

77 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 12, 1888, 153.

78 An amount of £600 was allocated to the improvement of Mzinto Bay where work commenced in November 1889; £250 was budgeted for a survey of the road from Ifafa to the Mzimkulu; £200 was to be spent on a survey to determine the location and design of a bridge over the Mkomanzi; and £100 was earmarked for a punt on the Mzimkulu (*Natal Blue Book*, 1890/91, j2-11).

was paltry considering that from Alexandra County alone hut tax collected from Africans in 1890 amounted to £3 972.⁷⁹ An 1889 petition from 88 residents of Lower Umzimkulu requesting £1 500 for a lighter to ferry goods from the steamer when the river entrance was difficult was turned down because Acting Colonial Engineer John Frederick Evelyn Barnes was sceptical as to whether the lighter's expense could be recouped.⁸⁰ Only £300 was allocated for a warp and appliances at the mouth of the Mzimkulu.⁸¹ This was a disappointment to residents as there were many occasions when conditions prevented the *Somtseu* from entering the river mouth and goods had to be ferried ashore using a lighter or surfboats.⁸²

Hime and the bridge over the Mkomanzi

The most glaring neglect of the South Coast's infrastructural needs concerned the struggle for a bridge over the Mkomanzi. In October 1888, Darby's first attempt to promote this bridge was met with what seemed the standard response from Hime's public works department: improvements to Mzinto Bay and the mouth of the Mzimkulu "would serve the district; instead of roads and bridges ... it [was] not necessary to have both at the same time".⁸³

A public meeting in Umzinto on 27 May 1889 gave rise to another petition which was submitted by William Hawksworth and 77 other South Coast residents.⁸⁴ In motivating it in the council, Darby claimed that on no fewer than fourteen occasions such petitions had been tabled but to no avail. "Every member knows thoroughly well the necessity of the bridge asked for", he declared. Acting Colonial Secretary Hime bluntly rejected Darby's plea. Hime claimed that it would be "unwise" to rush into such a project when a railway would be constructed "within the course of a very few years". Acting Colonial Engineer J.F.E. Barnes⁸⁵ cited the need to take into account the future direction of the railway as a further reason to delay the project. With support from Robinson and Hulett, the council nonetheless sanctioned a survey of the rail

79 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1890-91, B124.

80 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 13, 1889, 360.

81 *Natal Blue Book*, 1890-91, J6.

82 This niggardly attitude towards the needs of shipping at the Mzimkulu mouth was at odds with the subsidy of £1 000 per annum which the government allocated to the shipping of cargoes from Port Shepstone in the years before it became a fully fiscal port in 1893. It is also at odds with the £2 000 voted for continuing the works at the mouth of the river (*Natal Blue Book*, 1890-91, J8; *Government Notice* No. 38, 1890; *Natal Legislative Council, Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 40, 564).

83 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 12, 1888, 445.

84 CSO 1221, No. 2950; LC document No. 47, 1889. In September 1888 a petition requesting a bridge was submitted by Alex Brander and 47 other residents (*Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 40, 443).

85 Hime acted as colonial secretary when Mitchell was away, whilst Barnes acted as colonial engineer when Hime was so occupied.

route and location for a bridge.⁸⁶ Local pressure on the need for a bridge did not let up. In May 1890, in one of his last appearances in the council, Darby referred a petition on the subject from Alex Brander and 97 other residents to a select committee on public works.⁸⁷ Again the effort proved futile. But when Sir Charles Mitchell, the new governor of Natal, visited Umzinto in August he was reported as saying that a bridge over the Mkomanzi was essential.⁸⁸

Representation in the Legislative Council Law 5 of 1889 granted Alexandra and Alfred counties separate representation. Robert Montgomery Archibald of Umzinto was elected, without any opposition, as Alexandra County's Legislative Council member.⁸⁹ On 13 January 1891 he asked that finances be earmarked for the Mkomanzi bridge in the budget for 1891/92. Its absence, he said had "impeded the progress of the southern counties for thirty years" as the river was prone to tidal fluctuations and flooding and the bridge would be the only sure means of passage. Sir John Robinson, in supporting Archibald's plea, noted that the southern counties had been "shamefully neglected". But Hime declined the appeal, citing the "state of finances". Robinson, in turn, had harsh words for Hime, dismissing his "references with great distrust and apprehension".⁹⁰

Public pressure for a bridge increased with the submission of a petition from Frank Reynolds and 176 other residents of Alexandra County in August 1891. Motivating the petition before the council, Archibald cited what he termed "a wave of prosperity which has filled the coffers of the Colony to overflowing".⁹¹ Yet funds for a bridge over the Mkomanzi continued to elude Alexandra County. In reminding the council that more than a year earlier it had sanctioned a survey of the possible location of a bridge, Archibald criticised the tendency of the Public Works Department to "set aside a particular work" even though the Legislative Council had endorsed it. Once again Hime responded that the railway extension was "more pressing than this one".⁹²

86 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 13, 1889, 262-265. There were council members like H. Pinson of Pietermaritzburg who were sceptical of the need for a bridge over the Mkomanzi. Pinson claimed that a good punt was all that was needed (*ibid.*, 264).

87 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 42, 1890, 161.

88 *Natal Mercury*, 22 August 1890.

89 *Government Notice*, No. 559, 27 September 1890.

90 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 15, 1891, 32-34. In May 1889 John Robinson was awarded a knighthood.

91 Archibald's financial claim does not square with the facts. In 1890 the Natal Bank appealed for assistance from the government, and customs revenue declined by 30% in 1891 as Natal headed for a recession (Leverton 1968:267, 272).

92 Colonial Secretary Francis Haden stated that the government had to spend £80 000 on railway extension by 1893 (*Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 16, 646).



Figure 7.6 Sir Albert Hime

Robinson's response was scathing: "There is no public work in this Colony that has a greater claim to be immediately pressed forward than this bridge". Noting that the rivers to East Griqualand were bridged,⁹³ he asked why not a single bridge had been constructed on the South Coast. Lamenting that "no portion of this Colony has been so neglected as the southern coast districts", Henry Binns of Victoria County described Hime's response to Archibald's request as one of "lameness and tameness".⁹⁴ Joseph Baynes of Ixopo criticised the fact that railway work took precedence over everything the country districts required. Although the vote of nineteen to eight in favour of Archibald's motion left no doubt as to the sentiments of the council, it still did not translate into bridge construction.⁹⁵

In the Legislative Council session of 1892 a new controversy occurred: should there be only one bridge dedicated to rail, a dual purpose road and rail bridge, or two separate bridges? Hime favoured a bridge dedicated to rail only. Baynes and Dr. P.C. Sutherland (Pietermaritzburg) felt Alexandra County was entitled to a rail and a road bridge. For his part, Archibald seemed only too eager to grasp what Hime was offering. "I do not care what inconveniences are put in the way, once we have got the railway, because our object will not be to encourage wagon traffic", he stated. As a result, the council voted for £20 000 to be made available for a road traffic bridge designed to accommodate rail as well.⁹⁶ Although ultimately Hime had conceded the need for a bridge, the reality was that in 1892 there were no plans to extend the railway south of Isipingo. The construction of branch lines were to remain in abeyance until the main trunk line reached the borders of the two Boer republics.⁹⁷ It had also been understood that extension of the North and South Coast lines would take place concurrently. Yet, to his dismay, Archibald noted in the public works report in 1891 that surveys to extend the North Coast line from Verulam to Stanger had been authorised, while no such plans existed to extend the line from Isipingo southwards. "We can get nothing of the kind here", Archibald noted bitterly. Hime retorted that the survey for a line from Isipingo to Umkomaas "may not be carried out for years to come". Thus, the prospect of a bridge over the lower Mkomanzi, irrespective of design or purpose, remained elusive.

93 The Josephine bridge on the upper Mkomanzi, near Springvale, was opened in 1889 (*Natal Mercury*, 14 January 1889).

94 Hime's persistent opposition to a bridge over the lower Mkomanzi was at odds with the reputation he had acquired in Bermuda prior to coming to Natal in September 1875. As a member of the Royal Engineers he had been associated with the construction of bridges on the island (Morrell 1998:25).

95 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 16, 645-646; 674; 648. The *Mercury's* "Man in the Moon" column once (17 January 1887) cautioned Hime to "abstain from any appearance of antagonism to popular cravings for enquiry and reform".

96 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 20, 131-134; 147.

97 Natal's main trunk line reached Charlestown on the Transvaal border in April 1891. The line from Ladysmith to Harrismith was opened in July 1892.

When Governor Mitchell paid a further visit to Umzinto in October 1892, local settlers again complained about the need for a bridge over the Mkomanzi.⁹⁸ In January 1893 nature once more demonstrated that the South Coast was a hostage to its moods. Heavy rains made the Mkomanzi impassable and wagons were held up for fourteen days before it was safe to again use the punt.⁹⁹ This gave rise to an unprecedented display of anger and anti-government feelings. On 31 January “the largest and most influential meeting ever” was held in Umzinto. There was only one item on the agenda: the “intolerable state of the drift” at the Mkomanzi and the disruption of traffic which the chairman of the meeting, Frank Reynolds, described as “a monument of shame and dishonour to the Government”. Archibald commented that “the enterprise of the County [was] being strangled” as a result of the impediments to traffic and transportation. After others had roundly castigated the government for “years of cold neglect”, the meeting resolved on a very unusual step: the appointment of a select committee to convey the grievances of Alexandra County to the highest authorities of the realm, in this case the office of the secretary of state for colonies, the Marquis of Ripon. In so doing, it was noted that it was “a sad thing that any section of the Natal colonists should be forced to face the consideration of so serious a step”.

The implication of this, as the *Mercury* reporter stated, was that “not a single man there believed that any redress could be obtained from the Government”.¹⁰⁰ The serial refusal by Hime, the colonial engineer, to build a bridge meant that the residents of Alexandra County had to endure the same primitive, undeveloped transport system for over three decades until 22 September 1897 when the first train steamed across the newly completed Mkomanzi bridge.¹⁰¹

Coastal shipping

On two occasions in the council during the period 1885-1893, Hime expressed himself positively on the prospects of coastal shipping.¹⁰² His public works budgets routinely took into account development of the Mzimkulu river mouth which by

98 *Natal Mercury*, 13 October 1892.

99 *Natal Mercury*, 20 January, 2 February 1893.

100 *Natal Mercury*, 2 February 1893. There is no record of a dispatch from Alexandra County to the secretary of state. Moreover, the governor would not have taken the embarrassing step of appointing a select committee to report directly to Ripon, particularly at a time when the colony was on the verge of embarking on a responsible government dispensation. However, in terms of Law 11 of 1893, which concerned a £100 000 loan, a sum of £20 000 was set down for the construction of a bridge over the lower Mkomanzi (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 45, No. 2621, 27 June 1893).

101 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1897, C39.

102 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 9, 1886, 299-300; Vol. 12, 1888, 445.

June 1892 had absorbed £24 462.¹⁰³ As discussed in chapter six, coastal shipping played a critical role in the economy of the South Coast. But, as the record of shipping movements listed in the appendix indicates,¹⁰⁴ the service provided by the various ships was often irregular and unreliable.¹⁰⁵ There were several reasons for this.

In the first place, commercial interests determined the destinations of small coastal steamers. As early as 1880 a report in the *Witness* noted that Port St. Johns was enjoying regular visits by the *Adonis* and showed “promise of shortly becoming something beyond a mere trading station”.¹⁰⁶ East London, Port Alfred and Port Elizabeth were also frequently ports of call for the Durban-based coastal steamers, as was Delagoa Bay in Mozambique. For a brief period in 1885-1886, Port Grosvenor, on the Pondoland coast, was also on the list of destinations. Mishaps disrupted shipping schedules. In the second half of 1881 and in 1882, for instance, the *Somtseu* was out of commission after being stuck on a sandbar at Port Shepstone.¹⁰⁷

The *Lion's* schedule was similarly disrupted in 1883.¹⁰⁸ Change of ownership of vessels also affected the service the South Coast received. The *Somtseu* was sold three times in the 1880s.¹⁰⁹ Bad weather and unsuitable conditions in the Mzimkulu river mouth also accounted for the irregular shipping service South Coast experienced.

103 *Natal Blue Book*, 1891-1892, J9. In 1889 a sum of £600 was allocated to improvements at Mzinto Bay (*Natal Blue Book*, 1890-1891, J2).

104 The majority of the entries have been sourced from the *Natal Mercury*, the subhead of which read “Shipping Gazette”. Its comprehensive, daily publication of shipping movements to and from Durban surpassed that of other newspapers.

105 Whereas in 1880, 26 voyages to and from the Mzimkulu occurred, there were only 15 in 1881, four of which were to the Mkomanzi river. In the whole of 1882 only three visits were recorded. Eight were made in 1883, shared between the Mzimkulu and the Mkomanzi. Sixteen were made in 1884, but only four in 1885 – all to Port Shepstone. Twenty were made in 1886, half of them to Mzinto Bay. In 1887, nineteen of the 33 voyages concerned only Mzinto Bay, which continued to dominate in 1888, enjoying seventeen of the 28 voyages undertaken. Coastwise traffic slumped in 1889 and 1890 when only eleven voyages in total were recorded. The frequency of voyages improved in 1891 when 29 voyages were made, of which only seven concerned Mzinto Bay. 1892 proved the busiest year of the period under review in this chapter when 39 voyages took place, fourteen of them involving Mzinto Bay. In 1893 only one of the 22 voyages involved Mzinto Bay.

106 *Natal Witness*, 22 January 1880. The *Witness's* observation proved accurate. Port St. Johns, which handled trade from East Griqualand, enjoyed regular visits by steamers until the early years of the first decade of the 20th century.

107 *Natal Mercury*, 3 September 1881; 26 October 1882.

108 *Natal Mercury*, 12 and 17 November 1883.

109 It was sold by T.N. Price in 1882 to James and Hitchens Bros.; in 1885 to the London-registered African Boating Company; and in 1889 to C.G. Smith (*Natal Mercury*, 18 March 1882; 30 November 1885; Osborn 1966:31). In 1887 the *Somtseu* was thoroughly overhauled, with new boilers and new cabins fitted (*Natal Mercury*, 15 June 1887).

Mzinto Bay

Although river shipping first took place on the Mkomanzi in 1861, despite attempts to improve its sea entrance, it was an infrequent destination. The last occasion that a ship called there was in December 1883.¹¹⁰ Around that time, Thomas Reynolds stated in the Legislative Council that private enterprise was interested in developing a facility for shipping at Mzinto Bay.¹¹¹ With the Umzinto district as the main sugar-growing area of Alexandra County, Mzinto Bay was conveniently placed.

Just as private enterprise had initiated work on the entrance of the Mzimkulu (Aiken and Bazley), local planters supported the Umzinto Sugar Company in developing a warehouse and offshore facility to send their sugar to Durban. Anchored 250 yards offshore and connected by hawser to the beach, the *Carnarvon* loaded the first cargo of sugar from Mzinto Bay, some 60 tons, on 25 June 1886. The *Mercury's* correspondent noted that Mzinto Bay placed the trade of Alexandra County within six hours of Durban and, at £2 and 6 pence per ton, was up to fifteen shillings per ton cheaper than wagon transport.¹¹²

Until 1889, Mzinto Bay proved a regular destination for the *Lion* and the *Somtseu*. According to a report in the *Mercury* “this service is now becoming an accomplished fact and is much appreciated by the planters down south”.¹¹³ In its first season of operation, 1 400 tons of sugar was moved through Mzinto Bay. So impressed was the owner of Umzinto Shipping company, E. Bradley, that at a public meeting in Umzinto on 24 January 1887 he sought to commit planters to a five year transport contract.¹¹⁴

Following William Darby's appeal in the council for the government to make improvements to Mzinto Bay,¹¹⁵ £600 was allocated in 1889.¹¹⁶ Colonial Engineer J.F.E. Barnes reported in June 1890 that a channel adequate for the safe entry of lighters had been formed by the removal of sunken rocks and a tramway and jetty had been constructed from the store sheds. In Barnes' view, the expenditure of an additional £500 on moorings, a slipway and the removal of more rocks would further improve the facility.¹¹⁷ By 1891, however, lack of maintenance had rendered the tramline

110 *Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1883.

111 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 6, 1883, 458.

112 *Natal Mercury*, 1 July 1886.

113 *Natal Mercury*, 6 January 1887.

114 *Natal Mercury*, 27 January 1887. There was no indication as to whether Bradley secured any contractual commitments. By 1893 his company was in liquidation (*Natal Mercury*, 20 June 1893).

115 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 12, 1888, 445.

116 *Natal Blue Book*, 1889, j2-3.

117 LC No. 19, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 42, No. 2429, 1 July 1890.

useless.¹¹⁸ Then the lighter was damaged, thereby completely handicapping the loading of cargo. With 200 tons of sugar awaiting transport in the shed at Mzinto Bay, planters had to hire wagons to get it to Isipingo from where it was railed to Durban.¹¹⁹ In March 1892, Reynolds Bros. again advertised for wagons to transport sugar from Mzinto Bay to Isipingo.¹²⁰ Despite those setbacks, the records show that fourteen trips were made to Mzinto Bay in 1892.¹²¹

But in terms of seagoing transport, Mzinto Bay was doomed. By June 1892, the Umzinto Shipping Company was in financial difficulty and by June the following year it was in liquidation.¹²² Unsheltered from the northeast wind, the bay was plagued by heavy seas. When Archibald requested funds for repairs to its facilities in 1892, Hime refused, saying that he had “not the slightest desire to do anything at Umzinto Bay” and that he had no objection “to see the works go to wreck and ruin”.¹²³ The weather took care of that. A severe storm struck the South Coast on 7 October 1893.¹²⁴ Amongst the widespread damage it caused was the destruction of the outer part of the jetty at Mzinto Bay.¹²⁵ In any event, it had ceased to function as a shipping point in January 1893, when the *Gertie* was the last caller.¹²⁶

Mzimkulu mouth

Despite the valiant efforts of William Bazley in attempting to reduce the navigation hazards which the mouth of the Mzimkulu posed to shipping,¹²⁷ and the funding of £16 096 which the government had committed by 1889,¹²⁸ the vagaries of the ocean and the river itself defied Bazley’s efforts. This was particularly evident in 1889 when only five voyages were made in the entire year. In accounting for the absence of the *Somtseu* from the Mzimkulu for almost a year – May 1889 to April 1890 – a local correspondent stated that “the bar has much to answer for”, referring to the sandbar which obstructed entry. This hiatus in service not only inconvenienced the residents of Lower Umzimkulu but also caused a spike in the prices of goods and services.¹²⁹

118 “Umzinto Notes”, *Natal Mercury*, 25 November 1891.

119 *Natal Mercury*, 28 December 1891; 19 January 1892.

120 *Natal Mercury*, 12 March 1892.

121 See Appendix.

122 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 18, 128; *Natal Mercury*, 20 June 1893.

123 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 18, 127-128.

124 *Natal Mercury*, 10 October 1893.

125 *Natal Blue Book*, 1893-94, C32.

126 *Natal Mercury*, 9 January 1893.

127 See Bazley (2000) for a detailed account.

128 *Natal Blue Book*, 1889, J6-7.

129 *Natal Mercury*, 14 December 1889.

In 1887, following the wrecking of the *Alfredia* which had been providing a regular service to Port Shepstone, a local correspondent described the loss of the ship as “a calamity to this district”.¹³⁰

Nonetheless, in a detailed report on the Mzimkulu harbour works in 1890, Acting Colonial Engineer J.F.E. Barnes was optimistic about developments there. He noted that 4 000 cubic yards of dangerous rocks had been removed so as to produce a channel suitable for navigation. The construction of a training wall some 1 050 feet in length facilitated the water flow through the channel and reduced the potential of the sandbank to encroach and close the river mouth in dry seasons. Politically these factors, as well as Barnes’ references to the development of the limestone quarry upstream, promoted confidence which in turn ensured that funding would continue.¹³¹ As long as the *Somtseu*, which had become the sole service provider, made successful voyages to Port Shepstone, the Legislative Council could not withhold funding.¹³² In March 1893 a report noted that the *Somtseu* had carried the first shipment of Natal Portland Cement from the Aiken brothers’ factory on the Mzimkulu to Durban.¹³³ But the good news did not last indefinitely. In his report on public works in 1893-1894, Barnes advocated funding for a small dredger to keep the river mouth open.¹³⁴

Fiscal port

In June 1892, Harry Escombe of Durban Borough raised the question of fiscal port status for Port Shepstone. In so doing, he noted the “unnecessary hardship” which was retarding development of Port Shepstone because coasters bringing produce from Cape ports destined for Port Shepstone had first to obtain customs clearance in Durban.¹³⁵ Seemingly taking his cue from Escombe, J.F. Rethman, Alfred County’s representative, moved an address to the governor requesting the conversion of Port Shepstone into an independent port of entry and departure. The immediate response of Colonial Secretary Francis Haden was encouraging, but Hime expressed concern over the loss of revenue by the railways on goods transported to East Griqualand if goods from the Cape entered Natal at Port Shepstone. His view was criticised by F.R.

130 *Natal Mercury*, 1 August 1887.

131 LC No. 19, 1890, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 42, No. 2429, 1 July 1890.

132 The colonial engineer’s report for 1891-1892 noted that a further £3 000 was voted for work on the river mouth (*Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1891-92, C49).

133 *Natal Mercury*, 21 March 1893. Confidence in the future of the river as a shipping point was also reflected in the local construction of a 60 foot, 24 ton schooner, the *Sobantu*. With a draught of only four feet, it was designed to access the Mzimkulu mouth on any tide (*Natal Mercury*, 10 October 1893).

134 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1893-94, C32.

135 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 18, 132.

Moor (Weenen County), J.W. Payn (Durban County) and W. Baynes (Lions River). Payn deprecated Hime’s argument as “an injustice to the people of Alfred” and asked: “Why should we debar these people, who are denied the benefit of the railway, from having goods entering at their own port?” Whereas Thomas Reynolds would have relished such support, Rethman meekly declared that he was “entirely in the hands of the House” and was willing to compromise. But, notwithstanding Hime’s objections and Rethman’s irresolution, the motion was carried.¹³⁶

Port Shepstone was granted fiscal port status by Law 3 of 1893.¹³⁷ The struggle had taken over a decade and meant, in effect, that the importing and exporting of goods to and from the Mzimkulu could be conducted independently of Durban, quarantine periods could be imposed on ships and fines levied. Surprisingly, this significant achievement passed without any fanfare as the colony was focused on the upcoming responsible government elections. The government probably agreed because the volume of trade Port Shepstone could handle would never rival that of Durban, and Mzimkulu’s worth as a port would be short-lived as the railway network spread rapidly throughout South Africa. The granting of fiscal port status to the lower South Coast, it may be argued, amounted to a few crumbs from the legislative table: it did not cost anything as there already was a customs office and officer in place.

Evaluation of “Cinderella” status

In terms of settler-initiated, private enterprise, Governor Havelock’s reference to the South Coast as being “Cinderella country” was inaccurate.¹³⁸ This was particularly apparent as far as the region’s chief enterprise, sugar, was concerned. As Peter Richardson has observed, the period after 1874 was characterised by the emergence of consolidated land holdings as far as sugar planting was concerned. Leading the way in that direction were the Reynolds brothers in Alexandra County.¹³⁹ Having established T. Reynolds and Sons in 1877, they consolidated their holdings by absorbing smaller estates such as William Grant’s Ifafa estate, William Arbuthnot’s Greenwood estate, and the 4 500 acre Equeefa estate so that by 1907 Reynolds Bros., the registered name of the firm since 1892, commanded 13 134 acres.¹⁴⁰ Their bold approach was exemplified by Thomas Reynolds’ purchase of a mill and a new estate named Umhlanga for £17 000 in 1883, when the sugar industry was in a

136 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 19, 298-299.

137 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 45, No. 2619, 13 June 1893.

138 *Natal Mercury*, 27 July 1886.

139 Richardson 1986:155.

140 Osborn 1964:316, 324-325; Richardson 1986:155.

depressed state.¹⁴¹ The Reynolds were also innovative. In 1880 Thomas was the first in Alexandra County to have tramlines installed in his cane fields so as to speed up haulage to the mills.¹⁴²

In 1893 the mill at Esperanza, owned by Reynolds Bros., was the first in Natal to be electrified.¹⁴³ By 1889 the estates owned by Charles and Frank Reynolds had become the largest employers of labour (including indentured labour) on the South Coast, employing between 800 and 1 000 hands.¹⁴⁴ The trend of consolidation initiated by Reynolds Bros. was replicated by the Crookes family of the Scottburgh area. In 1895, following the addition of the Renishaw estate to the Restalrig and Maryland estates, the firm of Samuel Crookes and Sons was established. In 1913 it became a limited liability company known as Crookes Bros. Ltd.¹⁴⁵

Besides their pioneering initiative in opening the Mzimkulu to navigation, the enterprise and determination of the Aiken brothers saw the establishment of the Umzimkulu Marble, Lime and Cement Company, the first of its kind in the colony.¹⁴⁶ They also built a school in Port Shepstone.¹⁴⁷ The four acres of ground on which the Lower Umzimkulu district hall was built were donated by the Bisset family. The cost of the building was privately subscribed and formally opened in July 1890.¹⁴⁸ On the initiative of the residents of Marburg, in February 1890 powers were granted to a town committee over roads, water, sanitation, land and animals.¹⁴⁹ By 1890 the majority of the white population of Alfred County, 507 of the 695 settlers, resided

141 *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, GG44. Craigie Burn estate on the Mkomanzi was up for auction in 1883 (*Natal Mercury*, 17 February 1883).

142 GSO 760, No. 2554, 7 and 15 July 1880.

143 "Notes from Umzinto", *Natal Mercury*, 2 March and 20 July 1893.

144 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1889, B87. At the time sugar estates were being consolidated in Natal, the reverse was occurring in Queensland, Australia. Whereas the only aspect of sugar planting which the Natal government had subsidised was the importation of Indian labour until the subsidy was terminated by the passage of Act 37 of 1894, between 1894 and 1897 the Queensland government provided £500 000 towards the erection of eleven central mills and encouraged small farmers to establish themselves on the land. As a result the number of small sugar farmers rose from 366 in 1893 to 2 610 by 1901 (Griggs 1997:52, 55). The situation as regards subsidisation and labour in the cane fields of Queensland was contradicted by what prevailed in Natal. As a *Mercury* editorial stated on 29 January 1870, "sugar planting in Natal was not a pursuit for men of small means or for countries devoid of coloured labour". Also see Megarrity (2006:2, 12).

145 Osborn 1964:321. Similar mergers and consolidations were occurring in Victoria County. Under David Don and Marshall Campbell the Natal Estates Company was launched in 1895. It rapidly acquired several of the pioneer estates such as Milkwood Kraal, Effingham and Umtata (*ibid.*:252).

146 A report of the company's AGM was published in the 2 November 1893 edition of the *Mercury*.

147 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1890-91, B46.

148 *Natal Mercury*, 4 August 1890.

149 *Government Notice*, No. 123, 1890.

in the Lower Umzimkulu district.¹⁵⁰ An excerpt from the “Man in the Moon” column¹⁵¹ regarding developments in Port Shepstone by 1891 dispels any notion of Cinderella status:

What a progressive spot is Umzimkulu. Less than twenty years ago it was grand wilderness ... Today, sugarcane, coffee, tea, limes, thousands of trees greet the eye ... Telegraph wire spans the river; daily posts, a court house, gaol, church and school, district hall, cricket and tennis clubs, volunteer corps are all established.

For the most part, the achievements listed in this excerpt were the result of private initiative. The same applied to the extension of commerce where by 1893 there were 35 stores in Alexandra County, 23 of which were Indian-owned.¹⁵² The education of Africans, to which reference is made in chapter eight, was entirely in the hands of missionaries whose schools at Ifafa, Umtwalume and Umzumbe continued to receive satisfactory reports.¹⁵³

But where the South Coast did merit the Cinderella label was in terms of its lack of state-initiated infrastructural development. With the exception of Alexandra and Alfred, every other county in the colony had bridges. Along with Umvoti County, by 1893 the South Coast still lacked railway development. In fact, in 1893 plans to extend a railway down the coast had yet to be drawn. Although the government had financed the development of the Mzimkulu river mouth, shipping there was dependent on private enterprise. Difficulties in discharging cargo¹⁵⁴ and the existence of lucrative Cape and Delagoa Bay markets resulted in erratic and irregular calls being made at Mzimkulu.¹⁵⁵ This had a negative effect on commercial development. By 1894 the cement industry, for example, was reported as dormant because of the unreliability of shipping from the Mzimkulu.¹⁵⁶ The extension of the telegraph and formation of a separate magistracy in Lower Umzimkulu came about only after years of public pressure and frustration. Although by 1893 construction of the new road to Port Shepstone had reached Umzumbe and the condition of roads in Alexandra County

150 *Natal Blue Book*, 1890/91, T4.

151 *Natal Mercury*, 10 January 1891.

152 *Natal Blue Book*, 1892-93, B95. Indian enterprise is discussed in chapter nine.

153 *Natal Blue Book*, 1890-91, U38, 54, 65-66.

154 A report in the *Mercury* on 25 November 1888 noted that the *Somtseu* had had to wait 25 hours off the Mzimkulu before entering and that both its entry and departure had been hazardous. Six years later things were hardly different. A report in the *Mercury* of 25 May 1894 on access to the Mzimkulu stated: “At the best of times the crooked channel and shallow water on the bar make it very risky work”.

155 See Appendix.

156 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1893-94, H102.

was said to be good,¹⁵⁷ appeals for such development had been made routinely since 1860.¹⁵⁸ Transport woes were the bane of South Coast residents for forty years until the railway crossed the Mkomanzi in September 1897. As John Robinson stated in 1889, “the most productive and fertile section of the Colony has, for the past forty years, been cut off from direct communication”.¹⁵⁹

The blame for that rested with the government and, in particular, with Albert Hime as colonial engineer and head of public works. In this regard, Basil Leverton has branded the Public Works Department as the Cinderella of the colonial administration, noting also that it was plagued by chronic labour shortage.¹⁶⁰ However, those views do not complete the picture. Compared with the coal fields of northern Natal and the need for railway construction to be extended in the direction of the gold-rich Witwatersrand, the South Coast simply had no investment appeal.

The excuses Hime regularly paraded regarding the cost and difficulty involved in constructing a bridge over the Mkomanzi were devoid of credibility compared with the costs and engineering difficulties posed by railway construction to Newcastle.¹⁶¹ Natal’s economic need to connect with the coal fields and the gold fields was the absolute priority. As Governor Havelock stated, it was his “earnest desire to hasten construction of the line of railway to the northern frontier and that every available means of furthering the rapid and satisfactory completion of the work will be adopted”.¹⁶²

Weak representation in the Legislative Council after the departure of Thomas Reynolds and General Bisset also needs to be factored into the reasons why the South Coast was “Cinderella country”. William Darby hailed from Harding, a rural backwater. Parochial in his outlook he was out of his depth in the Legislative Council in Pietermaritzburg, where his participation in and contribution to debate was negligible. He lacked experience in and exposure to the wider world which both Reynolds and Bisset brought to their roles in public life. Illustrative of Darby’s low profile on issues of the day was his stance on whether or not Natal should have a responsible government dispensation: “I care not two straws myself what form of government we have, but I want the people who will bear the brunt of it to know

157 *Natal Blue Book*, 1892-93, B96.

158 The first appeal for improved roads and drifts by the residents of what was then known as Lower Mkomanzi can be found in a report in the *Mercury* on 9 February 1860.

159 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 13, 1889, 264.

160 Leverton 1968:284. In 1894 there were only 24 bridges in the entire colony (*ibid*).

161 LC No. 12, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 40, No. 2318, 4 September 1888. The cost of the 114-mile extension from Ladysmith to the Transvaal border was put at over £1 million by the engineer, M.W. Carr, and involved “very heavy works” and steep gradients.

162 Message No. 17, 2 September 1888, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 40, No. 2319.

what it is they will be voting for”.¹⁶³ Critical of Reynolds when he represented the South Coast, Darby once suggested that a committee be appointed to “watch the movements of our members of the Legislative Council”.¹⁶⁴ There is no evidence that during his tenure Darby was the subject of such scrutiny.

When, at long last, Alexandra and Alfred counties received separate representation in the council following the election of 1890, the presence of Robert M. Archibald for Alexandra County and John F. Rethman for Alfred County made no appreciable difference to the political profile of the South Coast. Capable of perfunctory tasks such as presenting petitions, they were political ‘pygmies’ compared to John Robinson and Henry Binns. Neither Archibald nor Rethman showed the guile and vigour which Reynolds and Bisset displayed in representing the needs of the South Coast. The extent of Archibald’s political blandness was well-illustrated by the advertisement he placed to announce his platform for the 1893 election. His main statement read as follows: “It appears to me that our chief efforts should be directed toward railway extension to the Transvaal”. In a secondary statement he permitted himself to note that “we should spare no effort to open up our Colony by means of railways and roads ...”¹⁶⁵

Representing a county that was crying out for a bridge over the Mkomanzi and for a railway, Archibald’s policy platform was shamefully weak in its lack of specific county needs. Yet he was elected unopposed. Thomas Kirkman, the other Alexandra County candidate – the two southern counties each qualified for dual representation in the new Legislative Assembly – could not have been less specific in his policy platform. He undertook to “advance the interests of the Colony and of this County according to my judgment and ability”.¹⁶⁶ Kirkman was also elected unopposed.

Significantly, the *Mercury*’s Country Notes column featuring Alexandra County on 31 October 1893 did not mention either Archibald or Kirkman in expressing the hope that the county’s struggle to resolve its transport woes would finally be addressed. Instead the column pinned its hopes on Sir John Robinson, Natal’s first prime minister, with the words: “He has proved a friend to Alexandra County ... and we ask his Government to help us in obtaining a railway to Umzinto”.

163 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 13, 344. A responsible government dispensation meant an increase in the number of public representatives on whom greater policy-making powers and responsibilities were devolved. However, laws passed still had to receive royal assent before they could be carried out.

164 *Natal Mercury*, 17 December 1884.

165 *Natal Mercury*, 6 September 1893.

166 *Natal Mercury*, 6 September 1893.

In closing

In contrast with the representative government era which ended in 1893, the onset of the responsible government dispensation resulted in a flurry of infrastructure expenditure on the South Coast. This is examined in part three. But before passing onto the remaining period of colonisation, a review of how that process affected other races is appropriate at this point. Accordingly, part two of this study focuses on the indigenous African community and the role and treatment of Indian immigrants.

Part 2

A black and white landscape photograph. In the foreground, there is a dense forest of trees. A wide river or estuary flows through the middle ground, with a bridge crossing it on the right side. On the left bank, there is a small, light-colored building. In the background, a large, rounded hill or mountain rises against a hazy sky. The overall scene is a wide, open landscape.



8

A review of African interaction with colonisation

The benefits of education are becoming year by year more appreciated by the native races.

— Fred B. Fynney (Inspector of Native Education),
Natal Blue Book, 1885, U72

In almost every aspect of their lives, Africans were affected by colonialism. This review outlines their experience from their confines in the location system which Shepstone devised, their attempts at enterprise, their exposure to education opportunities and health care, their labour contribution and their clashes with the colonial authorities over issues such as alcohol consumption and environmental exploitation.

Introduction

The settler mindset which prevailed during the period under review was the product of a series of experiences. Following the Sixth Frontier War in the Eastern Cape, the 1857 mutiny in India, the Morant Bay rebellion of 1865 in Jamaica, and the 1845-1872 Maori wars in New Zealand, there was a rise in settler influence over the colonial state which, as the policy of confederation in South Africa (which sought to bring the Boer republics, British colonies, and independent African groups under common control) intended, was to consolidate settler domination and hegemony.¹ That outlook received endorsement from Anthony Trollope, a prolific English novelist of the Victorian era. Arising from his tour of South Africa in 1877, he published a two-volume work in which he supported the idea of white supremacy which he saw as being necessary to “civilise” the indigenous African.²

Settler presence on the South Coast of Natal was never threatened by hostility from the local African population. Incidents of cattle stabbing in the late 1860s were few and isolated. During the Langelibalele crisis of 1873-1874 the daily reports of the resident magistrate for Alexandra County described the situation as “perfectly quiet”.³ Although fear gripped the colony in the wake of the British defeat at the Battle of Isandlwana in January 1879, settlers were never in danger due to what Governor Henry Bulwer described as “the most loyal behavior of our Native population”.⁴

Land and labour

The contradictions between Natal’s settler ideology and economic reality “were no more vividly revealed than in the debate over land”, argues Jeff Guy. Citing Governor Henry Bulwer’s estimation of the extent of Natal’s land surface, Guy points out that only two million acres were reserved for Africans, who numbered about 300 000 in the late 1870s, six million acres for white settlers, who numbered 20 000, with the remaining four million acres left unoccupied and uncultivated. But that was not the only reality of the skewed land allocation. Half of the African population did not live within the location reserves. They dwelled on private land or Crown land and thus were “vulnerable to attempts at land reform and opportunistic financial speculation in land”.⁵

1 Secretary of State Glenelg repudiated Cape Governor Sir Benjamin D’Urban’s reference to the Xhosa as “irreclaimable savages”. Settler outrage at atrocities perpetrated by Xhosa tribesmen in which over 400 homesteads were burnt and 40 whites perished, included demands for the confiscation of Xhosa property and the execution of any Xhosa who could be shown to have had a part in the killing of settlers (Lester 1998: 9-11, 13).

2 Davidson 1973: 455.

3 CSO 454, No. 2696, 25 November 1873- 10 January 1874.

4 CSO 728, No. 5190, Encl., 6 November 1879, 3. Bulwer’s reference was to Africans across the colony.

5 Guy 2013:463-464.

Complaints about the shortage of African labour were a constant refrain of settlers. From as early as 1864 it was reported from Ifafa in Alexandra County that African labour was scarce.⁶ The submission of 103 applications for Indian indentured labour in Alexandra County in 1866 indicated the extent of settlers' frustration with the lack of availability of local labour and their belief in the reliability of Indian labour and unreliability of African labour.⁷ The suspension of indentured immigration to Natal from 1866 to 1874 added to the labour woes that settler farmers experienced. As a case in point, William Hawksworth of Undercliff estate in the Equeefa valley wrote to Governor Benjamin Pine in 1873, requesting him to grant an order to the Alexandra resident magistrate to compel fifty Africans, who were residing on Hawksworth's estate, to make themselves available to assist in the erection of his new mill.⁸ Following the resumption of indentured immigration in 1874, the resident magistrate of Alexandra County, Gould Lucas, noted in 1878 that the use of Indian labour exceeded that of African labour and that Indian labour was found to be more reliable, less troublesome, and only marginally more costly.⁹

There were several reasons for the lack of labour. One was that Africans who owned land or had access to land were not prepared to work for poor reward under conditions where they were rigidly controlled. The relatively stable relationship between settlers and the indigenous African population on the South Coast can be ascribed in part to Shepstone's location system which ring-fenced African land ownership.¹⁰ Resentment was expressed at the assignment of land to the Mnini chieftainship, because it resulted in the isolation and separation of Alexandra and Alfred counties from the rest of the colony.¹¹ It was also noted, by amongst others John Robinson, that mission reserves for Africans accounted for nearly 60 000 acres of land along the coast between Amanzimtoti and Umzumbe.¹² As late as 1890 the

6 *Natal Mercury*, 15 September 1864. The African population in the County in 1862 was given as 12 000 (CSO 171, No. 689, 28 February 1863, Resident Magistrate's Report).

7 CSO 244, No. 544, 3 March 1866. By 1866 there were 381 Indians in Alexandra County. The white population was 364 (CSO 264, No. 43, 28 February 1867).

8 CSO 455, No. 2726, 15 November 1873.

9 *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, JJ19.

10 On the South Island of New Zealand, promises made to the Ngai Tahu tribe regarding the reservation of land for tribal agriculture and subsistence hunting and fishing were not honoured by the colonial state. In 1896, the New Zealand minister of Lands, J. McKenzie, justified the dispossession of Maori land saying "when Europeans got land it was immediately turned to good account" (McAloon 1999: 203-204).

11 In 1876, in a submission to the select committee on European immigration, David C. Aiken expressed criticism of the fractured territorial integrity of the South Coast. Resident Magistrate Gould A. Lucas also expressed similar sentiments in his Report for Alexandra County in 1883 (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 28, No. 1613, 17 October 1876; *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, GG45. Campbell (1885:20) also 'grumbles' about Mnini's uncultivated lands.

12 Robinson was highly critical of this in compiling a report following his tour of the South Coast in 1871 (*Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1871). A report in the *Mercury* on 24 January 1871 stated that "the greater part of the coast southwards of Durban is set aside for the use of the black man".

idea of permitting European occupation of the African locations on the South Coast was debated in the Legislative Council, but nothing came of the proposal despite pressure from settlers.¹³

The location system perpetuated customary law and indigenous systems. This frustrated many settlers who felt that it was limiting the extent to which Africans were exposed to European influence and to what Sir George Grey termed “acquiring habits of industry”.¹⁴ But as John Lambert has pointed out, Africans were drawn steadily into the cash economy that evolved based on their proximity to settler villages and estates. Until insolvency put paid to their enterprise, members of Mnini’s Thuli chiefdom in the Umgababa region engaged in sugar and coffee production between 1876 and 1880.¹⁵ In the 1870s and 1880s the food economy of Alexandra and Alfred counties was dominated by Africans. This was particularly apparent as regards the cultivation and production of maize.¹⁶ The ready market for their produce meant that few Africans were dependent on cash wages.

Before the coming of railways, Norman Etherington noted that African converts to Christianity competed locally with settlers in the transport business as wagon drivers. By 1880 they were also engaged in making wagons and shoes, in addition to producing agricultural surpluses. Evidence submitted at the Native Commission in 1882 recorded that members were bidding at sales of Crown lands alongside whites. But that practice was discontinued in 1903 after the Lands Department was instructed to refuse African bids.¹⁷ Settlers had long expressed concern about African land purchases. Robert M. Archibald, the senior Alexandra County representative, appears to have differed in this regard. In 1899 he expressed the view that individual purchases of land by Africans were preferable to community land holdings as they led to progress and development.¹⁸

The hearings of the Native Commission, of which Thomas Reynolds was a member,¹⁹ did produce one exceptional finding as far as colonisation was concerned, namely

13 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 14, 1890, 329-331. William Hartley of Durban County claimed less than one percent of the 270 000 acres of African reserve between Isipingo and the Mzimkulu was cultivated by Africans.

14 Despatch of Sir George Grey to Lord Russell, 3 December 1855 cited in Report of Select Committee on Tribal Titles to Lands for Natives, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 14, No. 720, 19 August 1862.

15 Lambert 1995:47.

16 In Alexandra County, Africans cultivated 4 300 acres of Indian corn in 1875 and realised a harvest of 16 500 muids. White farmers cultivated 483 acres and produced 2 477 muids. In Alfred County in 1875 Africans cultivated 10 400 acres of Indian corn producing 52 000 muids. Production by settlers was negligible – a mere 57 acres producing 456 muids (*Natal Blue Book*, 1875, X2-X7). Also refer to *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, AA4-AA7; *Natal Blue Book*, 1884, X2-X7.

17 Etherington 1985:274; 264; 272; 278.

18 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 28, 1899, 264.

19 Sir Henry Connor, the chief justice of Natal, was the chairman. Other members were bishop Colenso,

that Africans preferred to live under British administration rather than return to Zululand.²⁰ However, as regards the African presence in Natal and the land issue, four of the commissioners submitted a memorandum strongly objecting to paragraph 26 of the Report. Reynolds, Akerman, Stainbank and Cato, all members of the Legislative Council, opposed the view that Africans should be encouraged to purchase land in freehold while still under native law. "We consider that inasmuch under Native Law ... the freehold of land is utterly unknown, no native who elects to remain under that law should be permitted to become a freeholder in land"²¹ They were opposed to the view that Africans should enjoy a dual privilege of being able to own land outside of the designated African locations whilst simultaneously having claim to land within the locations. By 1890 Africans had purchased 147 918 acres of Crown land in Natal, 13 928 acres in Alfred County and 4 782 acres in Alexandra County.²² As Bundy has pointed out, settlers objected to land sales to Africans because those lands were often subleased to other Africans. This had the effect of exacerbating the shortage of African labour available to white farmers.²³ In 1903 the view of Reynolds and his colleagues prevailed when the Lands Department was instructed to refuse all African land bids.²⁴

Aside from the curb on land purchases, overpopulation of reserves and natural disasters such as rinderpest and locust plague reversed flourishing African agriculture by the late 1890s and contributed to the process of labour migration.²⁵ In pondering as to why no indigenous equivalent of mining magnate Cecil John Rhodes or sugar baron Sir James Liege Hulett emerged, Norman Etherington has suggested that a combination of legal, land and leadership issues stifled the emergence of an entrepreneurial African middle class.²⁶ The Royal Instructions of 1848, which provided for the continuance of Nguni law, constituted the premise of the dual legal system to which Africans were subjected, namely both African traditional practices and colonial laws.²⁷

Mission reserves occupied over 30 000 acres of coastal land in Alexandra County. The usefulness of these reserves was the subject of critical remarks down the years, as exemplified by the *Mercury* in 1871,²⁸ by James Aiken, the South Coast's first MLC,

J. Green, G.C. Cato, D. Stainbank and J.W. Akerman.

20 Natal Native Commission, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 34, No. 1971, 31 October 1882, 1009.

21 Report of the Natal Native Commission, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 34, No. 1971, 31 October 1882.

22 Lambert 1995:77, 79. The purchases were generally by chiefs (*Natal Blue Book*, 1883, GG21).

23 Bundy 1972:182.

24 Etherington 1985:278.

25 Lambert 1995:18, 159; Bundy 1972:184.

26 Etherington 1975:37-38.

27 Etherington 1985:279, 285.

28 Amahlongwa reserve (7 464 acres), Ifafa (7 500), Mtwalumi (13 407), College Reserve Equeefa (3 000 acres). See *Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1871.

in 1876,²⁹ and by Resident Magistrate Gould Lucas in 1883.³⁰ The common objection to the presence of reserves was not only to the physical barriers which they posed to the territorial homogeneity of the county, but also to their lack of agricultural development. As the *Mercury* enquired: “Have these reserves fulfilled the purposes for which they were created?”³¹

As noted in chapter two missionaries were, wittingly or unwittingly, part of the colonising process. Mission-based projects in manufacturing tended to be limited and short-lived in the success they enjoyed. In Alexandra County the only mission station which engaged in manufacturing was that at Mtwalume under reverend Wilder. Between 1862 and 1877 Africans on this mission station produced sugar using ox-powered mills.³² Norman Etherington advanced three reasons for the failure of these projects, namely their cooperative nature, which hobbled individual initiative, a lack of managerial expertise, and a lack of access to capital. He also cites the legal system, to which Africans were subject, as stifling the emergence of a nascent African bourgeoisie.³³ In these respects, therefore, the lands reserved for Africans on the South Coast did not measure up to settler views on progress.

The Anglo-Zulu war of 1879 exacerbated the scarcity of African labour. As Alexandra County’s resident magistrate, Lucas, noted in 1881 the result was that “most of the planters employ indentured Indians”. He also pointed out that “natives prefer employment as wagon-drivers and store assistants to engaging as field labourers

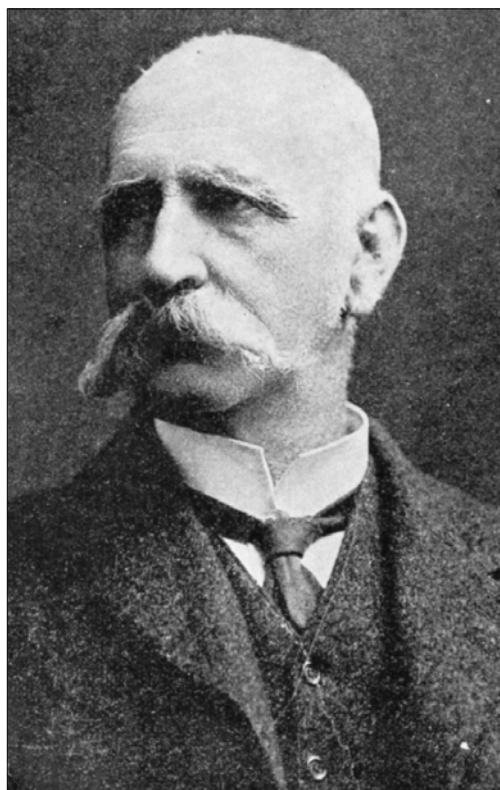


Figure 8.1 John Kirkman, *Natal Pictorials*, 1910

29 Report on European Immigration, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 28, No. 1613, 17 October 1876.

30 *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, GG45.

31 *Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1871.

32 Osborn 1964:135, 158.

33 Etherington 1985:270, 278.

or domestic servants”.³⁴ Public works such as railway construction and the Durban harbour works also attracted African labour, thereby integrating Africans into the colonial economy.³⁵ In 1889 John Kirkman of Beaverstowe estate in Alexandra County complained of the serious shortage of African labour. “We cannot get it. I am offering as high as seventeen shillings – but all the natives are out of the County,” he stated in a letter to the secretary for native affairs.³⁶ A.H. Bisset of Lower Umzimkulu claimed that the district was being “denuded of its African labour chiefly onto the railway extension and harbour works”. He asked the government to “devise some means” to stem the exodus of African labour, failing which “planters down South will be completely ruined”. By responding that it was not a “matter in which the government can interfere”,³⁷ the secretary for native affairs indicated that economic integration was an unavoidable consequence of colonisation. That trend continued as further evidence indicated.

The hut tax was one inducement for Africans to sell their labour to the settler farmer or entrepreneur. Whichever minor benefits some Africans derived from the settler presence in no way equalled the financial contribution that they made to the colonial state. From its inception in 1849 at seven shillings, hut tax, which increased to fourteen shillings per annum in 1875,³⁸ proved a major component of colonial revenue. In 1886 it was listed as the third largest source of Natal’s revenue, accounting for £72 299. Customs charges brought in £140 401, with Natal government railways contributing £178 287.³⁹ In Alfred County, for example, hut tax in 1880 amounted to £3 340 from an African population of 21 474.⁴⁰ Despite this sterling contribution to the colonial and county coffers, the indigenous African population received very little in return by way of social services, to say nothing of infrastructural development.⁴¹

34 *Natal Blue Book*, 1881, GG58.

35 The correspondent responsible for the “Notes from Alexandra County” column in the *Mercury* stated on 7 August 1888 that the procurement of labour was causing “much uneasiness”. Planters could not compete with the high wages of £2 per month being offered by the railways.

36 SNA 1/1/120, No. 1207, 7 and 11 November 1889. Kirkman was informed that 50 Africans had applied for Public Works jobs. Guy notes (1994: 239) that by 1894 Zululand was described as “one of the chief sources” of the supply of African labour to the Witwatersrand gold mines.

37 SNA 1/1/121, No. 1260, 18 and 22 November 1889.

38 Feinstein 2005:55.

39 *Natal Blue Book*, 1886, R2.

40 *Natal Blue Book*, 1880, Q9; V4. The figures refer to the entire county and not just the coastal strip.

41 The amount of £4 and four shillings was spent at Archibald’s store in Umzinto in 1882 on the purchase of medicines to treat African sufferers from enteric fever. The money was then claimed from the government (CSO 843, No. 517, 3 February 1882). Notwithstanding the African contribution to the treasury, there were instances when their payments fell into arrears. In 1889, for example, the secretary for native affairs advised the resident magistrate for Lower Umzimkulu that Africans squatting on Crown land owed the government £400 (Minute Paper of the Resident Magistrate, Lower Umzimkulu, 104/89 Vol. 3/2/1, 1PTS, Secretary of Native Affairs, 23 August 1889, Durban

Nonetheless, whilst praise was rightly lavished on William Bazley for his efforts in making the mouth of the Mzimkulu more accessible to shipping, his construction of the seawall would not have been possible without the involvement of African labour. By mid-1886 the wall was 600 feet long, fourteen feet high and twenty wide at its top structure. Built with stone quarried higher up the river, its construction was the achievement of 30 African labourers under the leadership of Bazley and four settlers.⁴² All heavy construction work, whether roads, the erection of mills and buildings was achieved thanks to local African labour. African labour was also extensively used on the construction of the Kinsey training wall which replaced Bazley's seawall in the years after 1897. In December 1903 up to 80 Africans and Indians were employed on the project.⁴³ Whereas indentured labour was critical to the sugar industry, the role of African labour tends to be overlooked in the construction of infrastructure such as the erection of telegraph poles, the clearing of bush for the laying of railway track, road work and maintenance and the construction of bridges.

Drunkennes

Whilst the existence of locations provided continuity for African customs and traditions, they did not prevent Africans from developing a liking for the white man's alcohol. Notwithstanding the fact that Law 18 of 1863 prohibited the sale or supply of alcohol in any form to Africans, by the mid-1870s drunkenness amongst Africans became a matter of concern. In reports filed in 1876 the resident magistrates for both Alfred and Alexandra counties expressed alarm at the extent of the sale and consumption of alcohol by Africans. Magistrate James Giles of Alfred County contended that Law 18 "defeats itself partly by its very severity". He endorsed the fact that farmers gave their labourers alcohol in cold, wet weather "when not to give it would be almost cruel". He claimed intoxication was greatest amongst wagon drivers.⁴⁴ As a measure to restrict the use of alcohol by Africans he suggested a drastic increase in the licence fees charged to purveyors of alcohol. Gould Lucas, the resident magistrate of Alexandra County, noted that there appeared to be no effective deterrent against the sale of alcohol to Africans and that licensed dealers sold liquor "to any kafir who asks for it". He proposed doubling the fine from £10 to £20 for those who flouted Law 18.⁴⁵

Archives Repository). In 1888 the resident magistrate for Alfred County, with reference to taxes owed by Africans, suggested that there was an "insufficiency of land to live on" and as a result questioned the legitimacy of "enforcing the payment of [hut] tax" (SNA, 1/1/108, No.736, 30 August 1888).

42 Letter to the editor from J.F. Rethman, *Natal Mercury*, 19 July 1886.

43 *Natal Mercury*, 20 July 1903.

44 Their mobility and the wages they earned facilitated their access to and affordability of liquor.

45 SNA 1/1/116, No. 375, 1885. Correspondence on the subject of increased drunkenness amongst the native population especially in the coastal districts (Reports from Resident Magistrates Giles, 16 September 1876 and Lucas 12 September 1876).

In his first debating foray in the Legislative Council in 1877, William Hawksworth, the South Coast's representative, noted that drunkenness amongst Africans was worsening in Alexandra County. A corollary of the growth of the sugar industry was the production of rum. In 1875, for instance, 12 579 gallons were produced in Alexandra County.⁴⁶ Hawksworth proposed the removal of liquor licences from stores and the sale of alcohol only at places of accommodation.⁴⁷ Law 22 of 1878 required licenced liquor suppliers to record details of their sales, together with the names of those to whom alcohol was supplied. But the problem of drunkenness persisted. Resident magistrates in the other sugar-producing counties noted that Indians who worked on estates and in distilleries "surreptitiously supply the natives with rum".⁴⁸ The inability of the colonial authorities to police the situation abetted and perpetuated matters. A correspondent of the noted in 1884 that there was "an enormous amount of drunkenness" amongst the African population in Alexandra County and that no attempts were being made to stop it.⁴⁹

The consumption of beer brewed from maize was, in any case, an African tradition. By 1888, however, that tradition came under colonial scrutiny when Cecil Yonge of Pietermaritzburg County proposed that controls be applied to "large scale festivities: at which much beer was consumed by Africans. Abundant crops of maize in that year meant, in his view, "no end to kafir beer drinkings".⁵⁰ His concerns were echoed by the Alexandra County correspondent in the who pointed out that near Dumisa alone there were 100 acres of maize belonging to three local kraals which would enable them to produce huge quantities of beer known as *utywala*.⁵¹

Yonge proposed that Africans be required to seek permission from the resident magistrate or justice of the peace to hold beer-drinking festivities.⁵² Although the Legislative Council passed Law 11 of 1888, which regulated the sale of liquor from taverns, canteens and taps by requiring an annual licence fee of £1, without adequate enforcement the "mischief and scandal" associated with beer-drinking, as Yonge described it, undoubtedly persisted.⁵³ While William Darby, the South

46 *Natal Blue Book*, 1875, X4-5.

47 *Natal Witness*, 13 July 1877.

48 A.E. Titren, acting magistrate for Umlazi, Durban County; Charles Barter, resident magistrate, Inanda Division, Victoria County (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 29, No. 1655, 3 July 1877). Peace (1883:69) noted that a bottle of rum in the early 1880s cost only one shilling and sixpence.

49 Letter to the editor from 'Umtwalume', *Natal Mercury*, 26 March 1884. The acting resident magistrate for Alexandra County, W.R. Gordon, remarked in his report for 1884 on the debilitating effects the consumption of what he called *tsithimigana*, an alcoholic brew, was having on Africans. No statistics on charges of drunkenness were stated.

50 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 12, 1888, 127.

51 *Natal Mercury*, 7 August 1888.

52 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 12, 1888, 127

53 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 40, No. 2319, 11 September 1888; *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 12, 1888, 127. At the 1889 annual general meeting of the Bluff and Wentworth Farmers

Coast's representative on the Legislative Council, endorsed the legislative regulation of *utywala*, he seemed sympathetic to African beer-drinking traditions when he asked: "Shall the poor man be robbed of his beer?"⁵⁴

Crime and security

Although the South Coast was a frontier area, it did not experience the unrest and confrontation which characterised the Cape's eastern frontier or the "long-standing Zulu difficulty", as the resident magistrate for Umvoti County stated in his report for 1878, or what his counterpart for Weenen County described in 1878 as an "unsettled state".⁵⁵ The small force with which General Bisset proclaimed British authority over Alfred County in 1866 and the apparently peaceful way in which Adam Kok and his clan seemed to accept their colonial status served as an indicator of the stability which came to characterise Natal's southern region.⁵⁶

A minuscule settler presence in Alfred County of only 29 adults by 1869⁵⁷ and a police detachment, which by 1875 still comprised of only one white policeman and eight African assistants,⁵⁸ coexisted peacefully with an indigenous African population in excess of 18 000.⁵⁹ Incidents of crime remained very low, averaging 72 cases per year for the period 1874 to 1878.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, concern at the "indiscriminate sale of firearms" to Africans, resulted in the submission of a petition to Governor Pine signed by 43 residents of Alexandra County in 1873. Trade in guns was brisk on the diamond fields in the Northern Cape, which attracted African labour. The thought that Africans may be returning home armed evidently alarmed some settlers, unnecessarily as it turned out.⁶¹

Association, an area then on the outskirts of Durban, the main topic of discussion was the illicit trade and traffic of liquor (*Natal Mercury*, 23 January 1889).

54 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 12, 1888, 127.

55 Magistrates' Reports, *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, JJ14; JJ16.

56 Bisset's military presence comprised one officer and seven men of the Royal Artillery responsible for one twelve pounder howitzer, one NCO and twelve men from the 99th Regiment, and two men and their NCO of the Colonial Mounted Rifles (Select document No. 25, 1866, Bisset to Cardwell, 16 January 1866, 89-90).

57 CSO 323 No. 242, 25 January 1869

58 CSO 505 No. 201, 14 January 1875.

59 *Natal Blue Book*, 1875, R10.

60 CSO 654, No. 111, 24 July 1878. Small police contingents were a feature of colonial administration. Umsinga magisterial district, with an African population of 32 000 in 1885, had only "a paltry few native police", as Resident Magistrate H.F. Fynn Jnr. stated in his annual report (*Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1885, B40). The actual security of districts was the responsibility of the Volunteers. Their importance was underlined by the colonial commandant, Major John George Dartnell, when he told the Alexandra Mounted Rifles that "every able-bodied man would have to bear arms" (*Natal Mercury*, 22 August 1881).

61 CSO 461, No. 152, 12 November 1873.

By the 1880s stock theft in Alfred County became problematic as a result of that county's proximity to Pondoland. Early in 1885 James Giles, the resident magistrate complained that stock losses were being incurred by both African and settler farmers with as many as 50 sheep at a time being plundered and taken across the border.⁶² By December 1885 the problem of stock theft had become so great that Giles called for extradition rights to be used to counter the perpetrators. "Offences of all sorts can be committed in this county and immunity from punishment secured by the offenders merely by crossing the border", he wrote. As a result, Colonial Secretary Mitchell asked the Cape government to effect "some arrangement" to deal with the matter.⁶³ But the problem persisted. For example, in 1891 and 1892 J.F. Rethman, MLC for Alfred County, complained about the "wholesale" theft of livestock by Pondos.⁶⁴

Faction fighting flared up in Pondoland from time to time. From 1890 what has been described as "continuous anarchy" commenced as a result of rivalry between Paramount Chief Sigcau and Mhlangaso, the Pondo chief who lived near the Alfred County border.⁶⁵ In response the number of Natal Mounted Police was increased from fifteen to twenty.⁶⁶ That number was increased to 50 by December 1890.⁶⁷ By March 1891 the situation was described as having gone from bad to worse.⁶⁸ Official concern at this state of affairs was reflected in the fact that the number of police barracked at Harding, the administrative control point of Alfred County, had increased to 80.⁶⁹ Addressing the newly-elected Legislative Assembly in October 1893, Governor Hely-Hutchinson expressed concern at the state of affairs on Natal's southern boundary arising from intertribal disturbances in Pondoland.⁷⁰ Essentially, as William Beinart points out, "the civil war in Pondoland was a struggle for power between a new paramount and the dominant councillor of the old, a struggle over policy towards the colonial powers". Hostilities between the two continued until early 1894 when the Cape annexed Pondoland.⁷¹

62 SNA 1/1/80, No. 78, 2 February 1885. Stock theft occurred mostly in the upcountry section of Alfred County.

63 SNA 1/1/88, No. 838, 22 December 1885.

64 SNA 1/1/162, No. 1165, 19 October 1892; SNA 1/1/147, No. 1166, 8 October 1891.

65 Camp 1960:22.

66 CSO 1268, No. 4613, 24 and 29 July 1890; *Natal Mercury*, 29 October 1890.

67 *Natal Mercury*, 12 December 1890.

68 *Natal Mercury*, 9 March 1891.

69 Bizley 1995:10. The Harding area falls outside the territorial scope of this study.

70 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 45, No. 2642, 19 October 1893. In a report on 10 August 1893, the *Natal Witness* referred to Natal's southern border as "the most unsettled in the whole of Natal".

71 Beinart 1982:34.

As the Lower Umzimkulu district attracted more settlers, incidents of theft and other criminal claims increased. But it would appear that the claims made about the state of lawlessness and disorder were exaggerated with a view to obtaining a separate magistracy in the district. Early in 1884 General Bisset claimed that his cattle were being killed by the local African population and requested measures to “suppress this crime”. In his response, the resident magistrate noted that Bisset employed 40 Africans and twelve indentured Indians and that he had in fact lost two animals.⁷²

In December 1883 William Brickhill of the Lower Umzimkulu District Association requested the stationing of a detachment of the Natal Mounted Police in the Lower Umzimkulu area because, he claimed, “serious crimes” were being constantly committed in the neighbourhood. Resident Magistrate Giles rejected Brickhill’s claim as “totally untrue”, arguing that the only crime which had taken place concerned Brickhill’s own bull. But Brickhill countered by pointing out that fifteen cases of petty theft had occurred involving poultry, sheep and garden tools. He also asserted that there had been nine cases of serious crimes, including attempted rape and robbery.⁷³ Instances of stock theft perpetrated by Africans continued to trouble the district as a Norwegian settler remarked in a letter published in the *Mercury*.⁷⁴

Fresh claims of “kafir outrages” were made at a public meeting in Port Shepstone attended by 60 residents on 10 December 1886. According to minutes of the meeting recorded by David Aiken there were “rapidly increasing cases of assault upon European females by natives”. The Norwegian contingent at the meeting was critical that a state of “terror” could exist under the British flag and went as far as stating they wished themselves “out of it and back home again”. A vigilance committee was formed and stated that it would visit local chiefs and headmen to inform them of the “consequences of attacks on white women”. What those consequences might have been was not stated. Nor were any details recorded of the number of alleged attacks. Again, it would seem, the purpose of the vocal outpourings may have been to apply pressure on the colonial administration to provide the Lower Umzimkulu district with its own magistracy. Apart from perfunctory acknowledgement of receipt of Aiken’s minutes of the meeting, nothing was forthcoming from the colonial secretary.⁷⁵ The 1886 report of Resident Magistrate Giles made no mention of the alleged “kafir outrages”.⁷⁶

72 CSO 953, No. 953, No. 1002, 7 and 21 March 1884.

73 CSO 964, No. 4840, 4 December 1883, 22 and 31 March 1883.

74 Letter to the editor from ‘GK’, *Natal Mercury*, 23 December 1884.

75 CSO 1109, No. 4924, 10 and 15 December 1886; *Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1886.

76 *Natal Blue Book*, 1886, B40.

Environment

One of the findings of the forest commission, which presented its report in 1878, was that Africans should be prevented from cutting timber. The commission stated that the “destruction of woods has been proceeding at a rapid pace” and that there was “little or no regulation”.⁷⁷ A subsequent commission appointed in 1880 to report on the extent and condition of forest lands in the colony estimated that each native hut represented the destruction of 400 trees and claimed that 255 tons of timber was sold each month on the Pietermaritzburg market.⁷⁸ In an attempt to reverse the situation and to encourage tree planting by Africans, magistrates were asked to suggest how this could be achieved. The resident magistrate for Alfred County suggested that Africans be supplied with fast-growing Australian trees, with incentives given to successful planters. His colleague in Alexandra County concurred on the need for inducements and suggested the planting of black wattle trees whose commercial value would assist Africans in the payment of their hut tax.⁷⁹

In complaining about the destruction of timber, settlers tended to discriminate and to rail primarily against Africans. In 1885, as the new representative of the South Coast, General Bisset wrote to Colonial Secretary Mitchell about what he termed the destruction of timber by Africans squatting on Crown land at North Shepstone. The problem was not new, however. The year before, Bru-de-Wold, a settler of Norwegian descent who commanded the Umzimkulu Mounted Rifles in 1884, had asked the acting resident magistrate, William Rose Gordon, for a policeman to assist him in keeping control over wood cutting, which he stated was “steadily increasing” despite his warnings. In 1885 de-Wold was appointed conservator of Alexandra County. But the district was too large for him to be effective, while the salary of just £12 per annum was quite inadequate for the degree of travel involved.⁸⁰

An exception to the bureaucratic approach regarding Africans cutting timber concerned the case of Ndongeni. His role as the African who had accompanied Dick King on part of the way of his historic ride from Port Natal to Grahamstown in 1842 proved crucial in his request to be allowed to cut wattles on crown land in Alfred County. The Department of Native Affairs overrode the objections of the director of agriculture and the conservator of forests on the grounds that Ndongeni’s services to the colony remained worthy of recognition. As a result, the cost of a licence to cut

77 CSO 747, Nos. 1273, 2194; *Government Notice*, No. 334, 1878. Increased domestic demand for firewood and an increase in manufacturing industries such as bricks, tiles and soap, particularly around Durban and Pietermaritzburg, resulted in a rapid reduction of wooded vegetation (Ellis 1985:82).

78 CSO 940, Encl., 13.

79 CSO 940, Encl. 4 January 1884.

80 CSO 1044, No. 4846, 7 October 1885; 14 September 1884; *Natal Blue Book*, 1888, C59; B4-6.

wattles and the provision of a large hut for Ndongeni was borne by the Department of Native Affairs.⁸¹

Education

Education opportunities for settler children were few and far between, as a report in the stated.⁸² The school for whites in Umzinto was closed in 1878 by the Council of Education on account of low attendance and unsatisfactory reports.⁸³ In 1880 the only other school for white pupils was in Umkomaas, which had an enrolment of 29.⁸⁴ The situation was no better in 1884 when the report of the acting resident magistrate for Alexandra County, William Rose Gordon, remarked that white children were growing up illiterate.⁸⁵

In contrast, not only did the number of mission schools for Africans exceed the number of government schools for white children, but they were also better staffed and maintained. The American Board mission schools were able to provide teachers and thus ensure continuity and a degree of permanence. Although limited in the numbers they could enrol, there were four mission schools in Alexandra County, namely Amahlongwa, Ifafa, Mtwalumi and Umzumbe. But it must also be borne in mind that no secondary level education was provided by the mission schools and that emphasis was laid on vocational skills development.⁸⁶

The Mtwalumi school was divided into two phases – intermediate and primary. There were nineteen pupils in the intermediate phase which was housed in a brick building. The native education reports for 1885 and 1886 noted the pupils' neat appearance, a "passable" ability to read in Zulu, and that their curriculum included arithmetic, needlework, sewing, geography and English. The primary phase had an enrolment of 58, of whom 29 were girls. The boys were made to perform "useful work" such as tree planting, building, and road work. According to the reports, the top eight pupils exhibited exceptional fluency in both English and Zulu and were taught by an African woman.

81 Durban Archives Repository, LU 99/1903; SNA 470/1903, Vol. 3/2/11, 26 January, 3 February, 3 March 1903.

82 *Natal Mercury*, 22 July 1882.

83 *Natal Blue Book*, 1879, W8.

84 *Natal Blue Book*, 1880, W9.

85 *Natal Blue Book*, 1884, B57. The report did note the existence of a few private schools for white children.

86 In 1882 the reverend J. Barker of Umzinto applied to the Secretary for Native Affairs for a grant-in-aid for a school for Africans. Subject to the numbers attending not being less than twenty, the government agreed to the provision of a grant of which the sum is not specified (SNA 1/1/53, No. 103, 5 March and 14 April 1882).

Similar positive remarks were made about the Umzumbe mission school where the roles played by two white female teachers, Miss Welch and Miss Gilson, were commended in the report. The Ifafa mission school, however, was considered unsatisfactory in terms of the small size of its classroom and the standard of tuition in 1885. But a year later, in 1886, the school was found to be making good progress.⁸⁷ Thanks to £500 from the United States, the American Board mission school for girls at Umzumbe was described as “one of the finest establishments” in the colony according to the 1886 Report for Native Education. Equipped with a kitchen, laundry, study rooms, ablutions and dormitories, its enrolment was limited to 45 pupils.⁸⁸ Overall, the inspector of native education, Fred Fynney observed “a growing desire” amongst Africans for education. “The benefits of education are becoming year by year more appreciated by the native races”, he wrote.⁸⁹



Figure 8.2 Bru-de-Wold, commander of the Umzimkulu Mounted Rifles

Fynney’s view of his portfolio was, however, a mere snapshot of reality. The report for 1887 recorded that at Ifafa only 20 of the 45 enrolled students were present by October. The others were away assisting their families with the mealie crop. A similar situation prevailed at Umzumbe Primary, where Fynney noted a very low level of achievement.

His most telling observation, however, was that the Umzumbe kindergarten had an enrolment of just eleven pupils despite being in the vicinity of a “dense native population”.⁹⁰ From this it is possible to infer that African parents had dissenting views about the white man’s education which clashed with, *inter alia*, the customs and traditions of chieftainship. In any event, the exposure of Africans to European education was extremely limited.

87 Native Education Report, *Natal Blue Books*, 1885, U56-58; 1886, U53-54.

88 Native Education Report, *Natal Blue Book*, 1886, U54-55.

89 Native Education Report, *Natal Blue Book*, 1885, U72.

90 Native Education Report, 1887, 31-32.

That limitation was exacerbated by the early twentieth century when the state grants to mission schools declined from £1, two shillings and eight pence to thirteen shillings and three pence per child between 1893 and 1903.⁹¹

Health

The frugal and extremely limited nature of government services was perhaps best exemplified by the office of the district surgeon. As noted previously, Thomas Reynolds had attempted to obtain the services of an additional doctor for Alexandra County so as to split the duties of the district surgeon from those of the Indian medical circle officer, but to no avail.⁹² The burden placed on a single doctor in a county as large as Alexandra was totally unrealistic in respect of both the territorial extent and the size of the different population groups.⁹³

Dr. Lancelot Booth, in his capacity as Alexandra County district surgeon,⁹⁴ was not daunted by these odds. On two occasions in 1882 he demonstrated remarkable dedication to duty. Informed of the deaths of fifteen Africans in a four week period in the area between the Mzombe and Mzimkulu rivers, Dr. Booth visited numerous kraals distributing medicine to treat what he diagnosed as acute dysentery.⁹⁵ Then, in what may be noted as good colonial governance, he was able to provide critical evidence in what appeared to be a murder case. He did so by travelling to the Mtwalume mission station, where he exhumed the body of an African. His post-mortem investigation revealed that the cause of death was from a skull fracture incurred in a fall and not as a result of violence.⁹⁶

Alexandra County was not spared the spread of syphilis amongst the African population. Following the report of a colony-wide investigation into the presence of syphilis amongst Africans, it was noted that the disease had first been recorded amongst some 300 prostitutes living in the Pietermaritzburg district in 1849. In later years its spread was facilitated by wagon drivers and migrant workers on the diamond fields.

91 Lambert & Morrell 1996:71.

92 CSO 959, No. 1631, 24, 28 April 1884.

93 In 1882 the white population was given as 514, with 1 836 Indians and 22 515 Africans (*Natal Blue Book*, 1882, T4).

94 Dr. Booth was appointed on 8 February 1877 (*Government Notice*, No. 51, 1877).

95 CSO 844, No. 628, 23 January 1882. The resident magistrate of Alfred County also reported deaths from what he called enteric fever amongst Africans. Medicines to treat affected cases were obtained from Archibald's store in Umzinto, fifty miles away (CSO 843, No. 517, 3 February 1882).

96 CSO 877, No. 3926, 16 October 1882.

UMZINTO STORE,
Umzinto, W. 20 1882.

To The Colonial Government.

Bought of **ARCHIBALD & Co.**

2 per cent. per annum charged on Overdue Accounts.

	1 st Bottle Carb. Spreng. Co. of	- 13 -	
"	1/2 nd Grey Powder	- 26	
"	1 st Hand Scales	- 36	units
"	12 2 nd Bottles Medicine <small>(Dysentery Mixture)</small>	3 12 -	
		£ 4 11 -	to be sent to

to be sent to Res. Magistrate. Alfred Lourey for the use of natives attacked by dysentery - (epidemic) Account annexed -

£ 4. 11 -

I certify that this Account is correct
Giles

Received from the Colonial Treasurer
the sum of Four Pounds Eleven Shillings

Figure 8.3 A note for dysentery medicine

Gould Lucas, the resident magistrate for Alexandra County, contended that the disease was being spread amongst kraals in the County by Africans who were returning from Durban. Dr. Booth's view was that only hospitalisation could cure sufferers. The acting secretary for native affairs, J. Shepstone, agreed with the proposal but nothing came of it.⁹⁷ Indifference towards the South Coast was also reflected in health matters when, in 1890, the Indian medical officer, Dr. S.W. Lennon, appealed for an enquiry to be made into an outbreak of what seemed to be smallpox amongst Africans in the Lower Umzimkulu area. Acting Colonial Secretary Hime flatly refused, saying that he saw no necessity.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, despite the challenges to their capacity, the colonial administration did attempt to provide the rudiments of health care. The resident magistrate for Alexandra County reported in October 1893 that 2 327 new vaccinations had been administered to Africans.⁹⁹

An outbreak of the highly contagious and endemic disease of smallpox in Alexandra County in 1903 saw the district surgeon, Dr. Booth-Clarkson, carrying out comprehensive measures to contain it. He set up three quarantine camps in the Dumisa district and ordered the burning of the huts and clothing of those infected. New clothing was supplied, as well as £63 for the building of new huts. Only one death occurred out of 37 cases that Booth-Clarkson treated. Vaccinations were carried out at ten assembly points in Alexandra County and a cottage hospital was set up near the gaol in Umzinto.¹⁰⁰

Unrest

Until 1906, when unrest flared up in parts of the colony, relations amongst Africans in Alexandra County were largely stable and peaceful. The disagreements that occurred from time to time were minor and usually the consequence of excess alcohol consumption.¹⁰¹ Discontent began to manifest itself in 1905 as a result of the imposition of a new £1 poll per adult male, irrespective of race. The tax was resented not only by the hitherto untaxed single Zulu men, but by their elders who felt it would encourage urban migration to jobs on the mines and in the towns, thereby weaken traditional authority and discipline. As a result there was widespread sullen opposition to colonial rule.¹⁰²

97 CSO 617, No. 4136, 15 and 30 March 1877; 23 May 1877.

98 CSO 1248, No. 755, 30 January and 4 February 1890.

99 SNA 1/1/175, No. 1199, 17 October 1893.

100 *Natal Blue Book on Native Affairs*, 1903, 22-23.

101 *Natal Blue Book on Native Affairs*, 1903, 21; *Natal Blue Book on Native Affairs*, 1904, 20; SNA 1/1/299/265, 1903.

102 Brookes & Webb 1965:221.

In response to reported defiance by African tribesmen, Colonel Duncan McKenzie of the Natal Royal Regiment came to Umzinto and confronted Charlie Fynn and his *indunas*. After disarming them he subjected them to a court-martial. A report in the *Mercury* subsequently noted that stability and peace had returned to the county and that “the influence of Col. McKenzie’s column has been for good”.¹⁰³



Figure 8.4 Colonel Duncan McKenzie, Natal Royal Regiment

Whereas unrest occurred in Richmond with the murder of two white police officers, in Camperdown where a white farmer was murdered and in Mahlabatini, Zululand, where the magistrate was murdered,¹⁰⁴ no such incidents occurred in Alexandra and Alfred counties. However, a wave of fear reverberated among settlers around the colony as a result of the Bhambatha rebellion, which influenced settler thinking on the Union issue in subsequent years.¹⁰⁵

In closing

The final years of colonial rule were characterised by peaceful co-existence between settlers and the indigenous Africans on the South Coast.¹⁰⁶ Whereas confrontation and hostility characterised relations between the colonial presence and indigenous Africans on the Cape colony’s eastern frontier, the South Coast, even though it was a frontier territory, was not subjected to such an experience.¹⁰⁷ As a result, relations between settlers and Africans were generally harmonious and devoid of the rancour which was so evident between settlers and the Xhosas on the eastern frontier, particularly after the Sixth Frontier War.¹⁰⁸

103 *Natal Mercury*, 10 April 1906.

104 Brookes & Webb 1965:222-223.

105 The unrest of 1906 is discussed more fully in chapter eleven.

106 Durban Archives Repository, LU 1777/06, September 1906.

107 David Aiken, in a diary entry of January 1868, recorded that settlers and local Africans frequently indulged in informal trade. He also frequently purchased sacks of mealies from Africans.

108 Lester 1998:7-9.

9

Indians on the South Coast Indentured, time-expired and passenger



They are too much protected and the protection system is overdone.

— Charles Partridge Reynolds, 1885, Wragg Commission Report

The South Coast as a region is significant in the history of Indians in Natal for two reasons: it was the only place where Indians were given grants of Crown land and where, apart from the Shire Commission in 1862, a special investigation, the Reynolds Inquiry, was conducted into the ill-treatment of indentured labourers on a specific sugar estate. The examination of white settler attitudes and actions towards settler Indians and their commercial enterprise reflected an ethnocentrism which was widespread not only in Natal, but throughout South Africa. With the exception of two protectors of Indian immigrants, Louis Mason and James Polkinghorne, colonial officials were not impartial towards Indians in the execution of their duties. Those observations are highlighted in this chapter, along with the conspiracy of silence which attended the ill-treatment of indentured labourers.

Introduction

As noted in the first chapter, the Indian presence on the South Coast was initially limited to the Isipingo area. However, indentured labour accompanied the spread of the sugar enterprise into Alexandra County so that by 1866 the Indian population stood at 381 as opposed to 364 white settlers.¹ Ten years later the Indian population had increased to 1 149, while the white population stood at 514.² The resumption of indentured immigration in 1874 after an eight year suspension accelerated the growth of the Indian population. But the passage of time also added a new dimension to the Indian presence – that of the free Indian settler of which there were two types: the labourer whose contract had expired, and those who immigrated to Natal of their own accord. They were known as “passenger” Indians, while those of the Muslim faith were also referred to as “Arabs”.³

A recurring refrain throughout the period under review was the shortage of African labour. Consequently, reliance on Indian indentured labour became an increasing reality. In 1878 the resident magistrate for Alexandra County, Gould Arthur Lucas, noted that the employment of Indian labour on sugar estates exceeded that of Africans.⁴ To what extent the number of Indians in Alexandra or Alfred counties were indentured is not discernible from the population figures supplied in the annual *Blue Books*.⁵ However, the increasing extent to which sugar planters employed indentured Indians was reflected in the approach of William Hawksworth of the Equeefa valley to the Indian Immigration Trust Board (IITB). In 1882 he submitted a petition signed by fourteen South Coast sugar planters requesting representation of a South Coast employer of indentured labour on the IITB. The petitioners emphasised the need for local representation to advise on the management and control of Indian labour. Although initially unsuccessful in their request, when a vacancy occurred on the IITB in 1884, the South Coast was rewarded by the appointment of local sugar planter St. George Arbuthnot.⁶ Frank Reynolds of Reynolds Bros. was appointed to the IITB on 19 December 1895.⁷ At the time he was also a member of the Natal Legislative Council. In December 1895 he was also appointed to the board of directors of Natal Estates.⁸

1 CSO 264, No. 43, Resident Magistrate’s Report for 1866, 28 February 1867.

2 *Natal Blue Book*, 1876, V4.

3 Du Bois 2011:62.

4 *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, JJ19.

5 Statistics extrapolated from the ships’ lists provide an overall picture of the extent to which the leading sugar planters utilised indenture labour.

6 CSO 954, No. 4409, 15 November 1882; 19 March 1884; 18 April 1884. Until the passage of Act 34 of 1895, which transformed the Indian Immigration Trust Board into an employers’ agency, it was dominated by government officials, as mandated by Law 28 of 1874 (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 47, No. 2751).

7 Indian Immigration Trust Board, 14th Annual Report, 9 December 1896, 1.

8 *Natal Mercury*, 1 December 1896.

By the early twentieth century there were five main employers of indentured labour in Alexandra County. They were: John Kirkman of Beeverstowe, E.W. Hawkworth of Beneva, the Bazleys of Ifafa, Reynolds Bros. with estates in Umzinto, Equeefa and Humberdale, and Crookes and Sons in the Mpambinyoni valley.⁹ Of those, Reynolds Bros. – with 700 men and 280 women in 1906 – was the largest employer.¹⁰ In Lower Umzimkulu, Barrow Green and Ruthville estates were the major employers of indentured labour.¹¹

Domestic conditions amongst the indentured: Pre-Wragg Commission (1885-1887)

Most official reports and commissions suggest that the housing provided by employers was appalling throughout the period of indenture. Generally that accommodation comprised of wattle and daub hovels partitioned into small rooms. Cooking, washing and sanitation facilities were non-existent. In 1911, the final year in which indentured labourers arrived, the protector of Indian immigrants was still urging employers to provide washhouses for women so they could at least enjoy some privacy.¹² In 1881 the *Mercury* highlighted the poor accommodation of indentured labourers on sugar estates in reporting the death of two Indian children when a hut caught fire on an Equeefa estate. “The wonder is that as there are so many coolie houses burnt down being made of such combustible material, there is not greater loss of life”, the paper stated in an editorial.¹³

Some improvement in accommodation occurred at Reynolds’ new Umhlanga estate in the Umzinto district in 1884 where 150 indentured Indians were employed. In filing his medical report for the area, Dr. W.P. Tritton noted that the new barracks were constructed of brick and iron. But he found that conditions at Equeefa, particularly as regards sanitation, were not satisfactory.¹⁴

Faecal discharge into coastal streams as a result of the absence of latrines at the barracks of Indian labourers on sugar estates was found to be a major cause of pollution by a commission of enquiry in 1881. Equeefa and Umzinto were among the estates visited by the commission which noted that labourers relieved themselves on the banks of streams. Consequently, it recommended that labourers’ huts should not be built closer than 300 feet to a stream and that latrines should be provided.

9 Osborn 1964:305-325.

10 CSO 2854, No. 7790, Polkinghorne’s statement to Inquiry, 1906.

11 See Appendix.

12 Desai & Vahed 2010:119-121.

13 *Natal Mercury*, 17 June 1881.

14 CSO 1017, No. 142, Umzinto medical circle Report, 1884.

The increase in cases of sickness and mortality was attributed to faecal pollution of streams.¹⁵ The Wragg Commission came across considerable evidence of faecal pollution during its inquiries, which are discussed shortly.

As regards health, the Umzinto medical circle for Indians was in existence from 1884, and by 1886 one had been established in Lower Umzimkulu.¹⁶ But in terms of efficacy they were hopelessly overburdened because the same doctor who was assigned as district surgeon was also expected to service the medical circle for Indians.¹⁷ In April 1884 Thomas Reynolds had remonstrated with the colonial secretary on that very issue only to be told that the Alexandra County was lucky to have at least one doctor, whereas the Ixopo district had not had one for years.¹⁸ The Indian community of Alexandra County was also fortunate to have a hospital, unlike other parts of the South Coast. The private Umzinto residence and property of the former magistrate, Dunbar Moodie, was purchased by the IITB for £1 200 in 1881 and converted into a hospital.¹⁹ There was no such facility for whites and despite the protector's observation in 1877 that schools attended by white pupils were also open to pupils of other races,²⁰ the Umzinto hospital was exclusively for Indians.

Generally, venereal disease was a major health issue amongst Indians, particularly those on indentured contracts.²¹ In 1884, Dr. Tritton commented that it was a primary concern on all the estates in Alexandra County that employed indentured labour and that he had treated 201 patients in that year.²² In May 1886 General Bisset (MLC) complained that many of the 42 indentured labourers on his estate in Lower Umzimkulu were suffering from syphilis and that the nearest medical doctor was 50 miles away in Umzinto.²³ Also widespread amongst Indians in Lower Umzimkulu was the use of dagga and opium.²⁴

15 *Government Notice*, No. 388, 9 September 1881. The commission was also critical of the discharge of "dunder" and bagasse from sugar mills into streams. Acting resident magistrate for Alexandra County, William Rose Gordon, complained about the pollution of streams in his report for 1884 (*Natal Blue Book*, 1884, B59).

16 *Government Notice*, No. 326, 29 July 1886. Dr. S.W. Lennon's appointment came after 65 residents of Lower Umzimkulu submitted a petition appealing for a district surgeon. The petitioners noted that their nearest medical help was 50 miles away and that the general poverty of the white settlers made it essential for the government appoint a district surgeon (CSO 1082, No. 2219, 8 June 1886).

17 The Indian population of Alexandra County in 1885 was 2 543; in Alfred County it was 59 (*Natal Blue Book*, 1885, T4).

18 CSO 959, No. 1631, 24, 28 April 1884.

19 *Natal Blue Book*, 1881, S25.

20 Report of the Protector of Indian Immigrants, 1877, 5.

21 Report of the Protector of Indian Immigrants, *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1886, A37.

22 CSO 1017, No. 142, Report of Alexandra medical circle, 1884.

23 CSO 1081 No. 2136, 12 May 1886.

24 *Natal Blue Book*, 1890/91, A58.

COLONY OF NATAL.
(W O M A N ' S .)
CONTRACT OF SERVICE WITH INDIAN IMMIGRANTS.
 Being New Indenture under Act No. 17, 1895.

We it Remembered,

That on this _____ day of _____
 in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and five
Wanginkulu Estates Ltd of St. Mary's
 and Valangy veery Indian Immigrant
 No. 77773 appeared before me,

 Resident Magistrate

and in my presence signed (or made their marks) to the following Contract of Service:—

The said Wanginkulu Estates Ltd agree to
 hire the services of the said Indian Immigrant, and the said Indian Immigrant agrees to render the
 said Wanginkulu Estates Ltd
 her services in the capacity of General Labourer for Two Years, commencing on the
 day of _____, in the year of our Lord
 One Thousand Nine Hundred and five

And it is further agreed between the said Parties that the said Indian Immigrant shall
 be employed as above for six days in each week, save as in Law 25, 1891, is mentioned, and that the hours of
 labour shall not be more than nine hours daily, between sunrise and sunset, with a break of at least an
 hour for rest.

And it is further agreed between the said parties, that the said
Wanginkulu Estates Ltd
 shall pay to the said Indian Immigrant, as such servant as aforesaid, wages at and after the rate of
 _____ for the first year, _____ for the second year,
 for the remuneration of the services of the said Indian Immigrant, and that such wages shall be paid
 on the first day of each month.

And lastly, the said Wanginkulu Estates Ltd
 doth hereby bind and oblige himself to give, grant, and provide, to and for the said Indian Immigrant, and for such
 family as may be allotted, good and comfortable lodging, wholesome and suitable food, and proper
 medical attendance and medicines, during the period for which this present Contract is made, and
 otherwise to observe and fulfil all the conditions and obligations of the Coolie Laws of the Colony so
 far as the same are applicable to this Contract and Agreement.

Valangy veery

Figure 9.1 Indentured labour contract

Human rights abuses and the Wragg Commission of 1885-1987

The return of criminal cases adjudicated by the acting resident magistrate for Alexandra County, William Rose Gordon, in July 1884 provided a snapshot view of the extent of brutality and disregard for basic rights that existed within the indentured system. Of 28 cases listed, nine involved assault by whites on Indians. Several of those cases concerned the non-payment of wages in which the employers were found guilty and paid small fines ranging from ten shillings to just under £2. Charges against Indian labourers ranged from misconduct and disobedience to absence without a pass.²⁵

What the return does not show is the number of instances where indentured labourers were denied access to the magistrate by their employers through intimidation and outright refusal. At the same time the mild punishments handed down to white employers by the magistrate indicated a degree of collusion with the leading elements of settler society. As Leonard Thompson put it, “magistrates dared not flout the interests of the prosperous sugar planters, the social lions of their districts”²⁶

The practice of flogging was disallowed by the Coolie Commission of 1872 yet that did not mean an end to human rights abuses inflicted on indentured labourers by sirdars²⁷ and employers. Indicative of the settler preference for harsh punishment was a series of petitions presented to the Legislative Council in 1883 calling for magistrates to be empowered to order whipping as a punishment for recalcitrant Africans. Two of the petitions came from residents of Weenen County. The third petition was submitted by Charles Reynolds and 52 others of Alexandra County.²⁸ At that time magistrates had to seek the governor’s assent for whipping as a punishment. In motivating the petitions, Thomas Reynolds said that to do away with flogging was to show ignorance in how white people needed to deal with “native races”.²⁹

Exploitation of labour in order to realise optimum financial returns was fundamental to the way the Reynolds ran their estates. Even before the Wragg Commission began its inquiry in 1885, Protector of Indian Immigrants Louis Mason, was aware of human rights abuses on Reynolds’ Umzinto estate. In 1884 and 1885, one of the overseers, C. Edgar, was twice convicted of assault, yet Reynolds declined to dismiss

25 CSO 1005, No. 3904, 1884.

26 Thompson 1938:100-101.

27 Indians employed as overseers.

28 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 34, 1883, 298, 311-312.

29 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 6, 1883, 31-36. John Robinson and James Hulett were among the prominent public representatives who favoured flogging; only Harry Escombe disagreed (Pete & Devenish 2005:5).

the man.³⁰ Mason was also aware that the Reynolds' sugar interests were the most extensive and affluent in Alexandra County.³¹

Thomas Reynolds himself was opposed to the establishment of the Wragg Commission into Indian immigration. In his view it would be “as rotten an egg as ever laid”, which would not produce any benefit. Instead, Indians should be compelled to indenture for two terms, “kept in a state of continued activity ... and then allowed to go back” to India.³² His disapproving and critical attitude was reflected in his son's submissions to the Wragg Commission. Charles described the visits to his estates by the protector as “obnoxious” because they led to insubordination. As a result, he had more labourers punished in one month than he had in the six months when the protector did not visit. He objected to being asked to remove himself from a meeting addressed by the protector, claiming that such a request was “impertinent”.

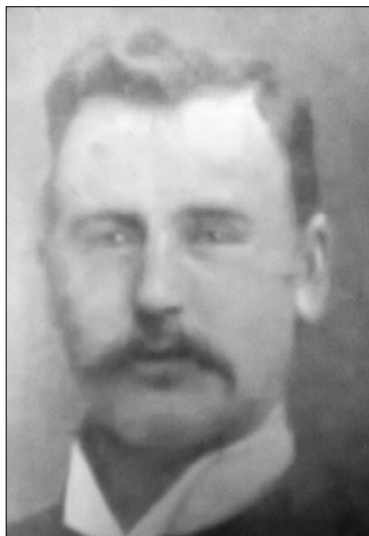


Figure 9.2 Charles Reynolds

In Charles Reynolds' view the law did not provide sufficient punishment for absentees who ought to be sentenced to terms of imprisonment with a spare diet.³³ Overall, he felt “coolies are too much protected now and that the protection system is overdone”. Like his father, he felt that all Indians should be kept in agricultural pursuits and not allowed to own stores.³⁴ Despite his hardline views the commission saw no ill in Reynolds' refusal to withdraw while the protector was addressing his labourers, and expressed pleasure at the “arrangements for their comfort and welfare”.³⁵ In so doing the Wragg Commission unwittingly drew a *cordon sanitaire* around the Reynolds' estates which facilitated their exploitation of indentured labour for the next twenty years.³⁶

30 Warhurst 1984:32.

31 In 1883 T. Reynolds and Sons had invested £17 000 on a new mill and estate between Equeefa and Umzinto (*Natal Blue Book*, 1883, GG44).

32 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 7, 1884, 280. Very few Indians reindentured after serving five years. In 1883, for example, not a single one out of the 4 548 who obtained discharge certificates reindentured (*Natal Blue Book*, 1883, FF47).

33 A spare diet comprised one bowl of unsalted rice a day.

34 Wragg Commission Report in Meer (1980:420-421). Frank Reynolds said he supported all his brother had stated.

35 Meer 1980:254-255.

36 The role of Protector Polkinghorne in exposing the exploitation of indentured labour by Reynolds Bros.

As a result of the absence of latrines, the commissioners found ample evidence of water pollution from human excrement on Reynolds' Umzinto Number One estate. Resident Magistrate Lucas described the stream pollution on Reynolds' estates as "perfectly pestiferous".³⁷ Similar conditions prevailed on Reynolds' Number Two estate, Equeefa estate, Maryville and Cowick estates.

On Cowick, the owner, Andrew Sinclair, was found to make up his own prescriptions to dispense to the sick. His wages book was in shambles. Huts on Maryville were unfit for human occupation, many of them made of grass. Only Bazley's Nil Desperandum estate was found to be satisfactory in all respects.³⁸ The Wragg Commission noted that attempts to curb the pollution of streams had been brought before the Legislative Council in 1882, 1883 and 1884, but had been abandoned after amendments removed mention of the coast lands. Even the commission's own recommendation for legislation to address the pollution of streams produced opposition from James R. Saunders, who appended a minority report as a commissioner. In it he argued that criticism of the water supply contradicted the commission's key finding that the health of the Indian population was generally good.³⁹

As the case study of Reynolds' estates at the end of this chapter shows, the findings of the Wragg Commission and its recommendations did not materially improve the conditions of the indentured or put an end to abuses on plantations.

Human rights abuses post-Wragg Commission

International economics also influenced labourers' circumstances. Falling prices, the result of an over-supply of sugar on world markets, saw planters like the Reynolds strive to maintain profit margins by exploiting their indentured labour to the maximum.⁴⁰ This was done by extending the length of the working day, particularly during the milling season. As Richardson has pointed out:

Such extensions were over and above those secured by penal provisions which permitted planters to extend the length of contracts beyond the stipulated period for non-fulfilment of conditions.

Overworking, manipulation of wages and employment conditions was a constant feature of the period of price depression and low yields.⁴¹ One of the results of such

is analysed as a case study at the end of this chapter.

37 Meer 1980:419, 538.

38 Meer 1980:540-543.

39 Meer 1980:279-280, 329-331.

40 Warhurst 1984:32.

41 Richardson 1986:155.

circumstances was that labourers resorted to suicide. A settler mindset of indifference towards indentured labourers as human beings persisted nonetheless.

This was well-illustrated by the writer of the “Notes from Umzinto”, published in the *Mercury* on 13 October 1892. Amongst the news snippets was the following: “Last week, as usual, another coolie hanged himself on the Umzinto Estate”. The writer subsequently sought to qualify what he had meant. He apologised for having used the term “as usual”. What he had not meant, so he explained, was to convey the impression that suicides took place only on Umzinto estate (which was owned by the Reynolds brothers).⁴² From those words it is clear that there was no concern shown as to why suicides were occurring. The wording of the correspondent’s November report on Umzinto demonstrated this emphatically. Under the heading “As usual”, he wrote: “Again I have to report that a coolie has hanged himself in this county”.⁴³

Between 1 July 1892 and 30 June 1893, the protector of Indian immigrants, Louis Mason noted that eight Indians had committed suicide on Reynolds Bros. estates. In each case the local magistrate had not found “reasonable grounds for the commitment of these acts”. In the case of the most recent suicide, Charles Reynolds, the managing director, claimed that the man “continually absented himself and took to hiding in the fields for weeks”. When Mason visited the Reynolds’ estates at Umzinto and Esperanza on 31 July 1893, he noted that the

field hands looked dirty in their persons and clothing. They had an unhappy look about them ... The women looked equally filthy and unhappy ... and to be thoroughly worn out.

He also noted that indentured men were continually deserting from Reynolds’ estates and concluded that Reynolds’ labourers “were not being given sufficient time to attend to domestic arrangements”.⁴⁴

Charles Reynolds’ callous attitude towards his indentured labourers was shared by his brother Frank. At a meeting of the IITB in June 1896, he advocated stricter punitive action against indentured labourers for absence from roll call and desertion. Citing section 31 of Law 25 of 1891, Reynolds claimed that placing a convicted labourer on a spare diet (a single bowl of unsalted rice a day) or solitary confinement was not enough.⁴⁵ It is significant that the members of the IITB concerned themselves only with measures to deter desertion and failed to enquire as to the reasons indentured labourers sought to escape from sugar estates. Ironically, in the wake of Reynolds’ call

42 *Natal Mercury*, 22 October 1892.

43 *Natal Mercury*, 25 November 1892. For a study on Indian suicides, see Bhana & Bhana 1991:137-189.

44 *Indian Immigration*, 1/70/1893, No. 1196, 11 September 1893.

45 *Natal Mercury*, 15 June 1896.

for draconian measures against deserters, several cases of desertion occurred from his estates in August 1896.⁴⁶ The reasons for desertion manifested themselves in October of that year when the Umzinto court heard seventeen cases of assault brought against two overseers and sirdars on a Reynolds' sugar estate. One of the overseers had nine indictments brought against him. But eight of them were dismissed and on the remaining charge he was fined a mere £3. Desertion also troubled the Hawksworth Beneva estate in the Equeefa valley, where 58 indentured labourers were brought to court in October 1896. Apart from the two ringleaders, who were each sentenced to two months of hard labour, the others were fined ten shillings each because in the magistrate's view, Beneva estate had a record of good management.⁴⁷



Figure 9.3 Umzinto sugar steam tram, *Natal Agricultural Journal* 1905

46 *Natal Mercury*, 21 August 1896. In 1895, Reynolds Bros., with 752 Indian employees, were the largest employers of indentured labour on the South Coast. The second and third largest employers were Bazley and Sons (113) and E.W. Hawksworth (72) respectively (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 48, No. 2736, 21 May 1895).

47 *Natal Mercury*, 16 October 1896. Louis Mason, protector of Indian immigrants, noted that in cases where sirdars and overseers were charged with assault, witnesses were reluctant to come forward. "It is almost an impossibility to obtain evidence in support of complaints", he wrote with reference to the Chellan case in which Charles Reynolds was accused of assaulting an Indian named Chellan (AGO 1/8/49, No. 3882, 2 August 1895).

One of the consequences of the long working hours of indentured labourers was an increase in the deaths of young children. Dr. W.P. Tritton of the Umzinto medical circle ascribed this to “the long hours of exposure in the open air while their mothers are at work”. During the year which ended in June 1894, Tritton recorded the deaths of 23 Indian children under the age of ten, of whom 22 had died of natural causes. He also noted that mechanisation of the cane fields through the use of tramlines had resulted in an increase in bone fractures incurred by indentured labourers. But he ascribed that to carelessness on their part.⁴⁸

However, there were occasions when a sense of compassion coloured the official mindset. With the onset of the locust plague, Louis Mason expressed grave concern for the welfare of Indian agriculturists. He noted that their mealie crops along the North and South coasts had been destroyed by locusts. In a letter to the colonial secretary he questioned the danger this posed to the livelihoods of those Indians while noting that a mealie shortage would cause a spike in the mealie price.⁴⁹

Land grants

In terms of section 51 of Law 2 of 1870, Indians who had completed ten years of indentured labour had two options: they could have a free return passage to India or, if they elected to remain in Natal, they could receive a piece of land equivalent in value to the cost of the return trip to India. In 1874 two such Indians, Goodoo and Cassim Saib, made inquiries about land in the Umzinto area. The reply they received avoided any mention of locality and confined itself to their eligibility in terms of land value. They were told they would qualify for land worth no more than £8 or £9, the cost of a return passage to India.⁵⁰ The Saibs were amongst the few fortunate ones to be granted 50 acres of land each.⁵¹ But for other applicants it was a case of bureaucratic procrastination and indecision. The degree of confusion that prevailed was illustrated by a query submitted by Alexandra County Resident Magistrate Gould Arthur Lucas, who stated that Indian applicants with whom he had consulted felt the land grant should apply to all who were eligible to claim a free return trip to India. By implication, that would have included wives and children. But Attorney-General Gallwey ruled that only men qualified.⁵²

48 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal, 1893-94, A12.*

49 CSO 1477, No. 427, 24 January 1896. There were 10 000 acres under maize in Alexandra County, of which Indians were the largest producers. Locusts caused widespread damage to crops in the county in 1895 (Resident Magistrate’s Report, *Natal Blue Book, 1894/95, B43*). The locust menace is discussed in chapter ten.

50 CSO 495, No. 3577, 23 October 1874; No. 3578, 5 November 1874. Crown land generally sold for four shillings per acre. A plot of about 50 acres could be purchased with £9.

51 CSO 854, No. 1665, 2 May 1882; CSO 904, No. 1546, 6 September 1882.

52 CSO 854, No. 1665, 25 April 1882.

There was also uncertainty as to where the land grants should be made. Acting protector of Indian immigrants, Louis Mason, asked the surveyor-general, Dr. P.C. Sutherland, to survey land between the Mtwalumi and Mzimkulu rivers as he thought that area would be suitable. Sutherland rightly pointed out that he doubted the Indians would accept grants there because of the great distance from the nearest market and the poor quality of the soil.⁵³ Yet, in July 1875, during the administration of Sir Garnet Wolseley, in anticipation of land grants for Indians, Colonial Secretary Napier Broome requested the surveyor-general “to furnish the Immigration Department ... with a rough sketch map showing the position of such lands and the available quantity”. Land to the east of the Mzinto river was identified.⁵⁴ In 1879, Sutherland himself had recommended lands to the south of Umzinto as being suitable. In what appeared to be a lottery of options, Colonial Secretary Mitchell proposed that the allotments be made in Alfred County.⁵⁵ The size of the grants was also in dispute. Magistrate Lucas indicated that the offer of fifteen acres per family had been rejected as inadequate by the nineteen contract-expired Indians who had consulted with him in Umzinto.⁵⁶ Still, Protector of Indian Immigrants Shaftow Graves endorsed the provision of fifteen acres per family.⁵⁷

This unseemly inability to apply the provisions of section 51 of Law 2 of 1870 resulted in acting Protector Louis Mason stating in 1882 that the lists of land grant recipients were four years out of date and that many of the applicants had moved on.⁵⁸ Already the assistant colonial secretary, F.S. Haden, had expressed disappointment over the delay in finalising the land grants. In typical bureaucratic fashion, the surveyor-general blamed lack of funds for the delay.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, the protector indicated in his report for 1882 that Crown land in the Braemar district, north-west of Umzinto in Alexandra County, was allocated to Indians who had indentured between 1860 and 1866, but that only 41 of the original applicants had taken possession of their grants. A total of 52 Indians eventually took up the land grants.⁶⁰

53 CSO 877, No. 3987 and 3369, 17 October 1882; 5 May 1880.

54 CSO 904, No. 3669, Minute 17/8/1875, 6 July 1875.

55 CSO 904, No. 3369, 9 December 1879. There were only eight Indians in Alfred County in 1880 (*Natal Blue Book*, 1880, V4).

56 CSO 904, No. 1546, 17 February 1880.

57 CSO 904, No. 3669, 20 February 1880.

58 CSO 904, No. 1546, 6 September 1882.

59 CSO 904, No. 3669, 1 and 5 April 1881.

60 *Natal Blue Book*, 1882, FF36; Brain 1989:251. The option to exchange a free return passage to India for land in Natal was scrapped in 1874 and did not apply to Indians indenturing after that time. The contractual conditions applied to Indians indenturing to Natal were very different from those applied to the importation of Melanesian labourers to Queensland, Australia, between 1864 and 1904. Whereas the Natal government subsidised indentured immigration to the extent of £2 and ten shillings per labourer, Queensland employers of Melanesian labour bore the entire cost themselves. Contracts were for three years only as opposed to five years in Natal; wages were only £6 per year (indentured Indians in Natal earned just over £12 per year). Melanesians were encouraged

The 53 lots of land were each fifteen acres in extent. Valued at ten shillings per acre, at £7 and ten shillings, each lot was equivalent to the cost of a return fare to India.⁶¹ Apart from these grants, in 1889 three grants of land, each of 50 acres in extent, were made to Indians in Alexandra County.⁶² No further grants are recorded. In any event, as noted, land grants were discontinued for those indenturing from 1874.

Education

The remoteness, isolation and scattered nature of Indian settlement posed great difficulties for the provision of schooling for them in a context where white settlers wanted separate facilities for Indians and would not allow them to attend schools established for whites.⁶³ The earliest reference to education for Indians in Alexandra County occurred in 1865 when the reverend Joseph Barker, an Anglican, opened a school in Umzinto for the children of “coloured labourers”. He noted that the Indians were not keen “to join natives in a place of instruction”, so he had to provide a separate facility.⁶⁴ In 1872 the reverend Ralph Scott took the initiative to attempt to train some Indians as teachers for the Indian school on Craigie Burn estate. But his prospective educators were lured away from the South Coast by the prospect of better paid jobs elsewhere.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, in 1874 that school for Indians was listed, for the first time, to receive a grant in aid.⁶⁶ This was a consequence of a commission for education which in 1874, recommended, *inter alia*, that the government should provide “liberal assistance” to large employers of Indian labour to build schools on their estates.⁶⁷

It is of note, however, that legally there was no requirement that schools had to be racially segregated. The protector commented in his report of 1877 that government schools were open to Indian children as they were to all others of Her Majesty’s subjects. Eight Indian pupils were enrolled at Durban Primary in 1877.⁶⁸ Although at the insistence of the secretary of state for colonies, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, legislation was passed to promote education amongst the children of the Indian immigrant population⁶⁹ – the effects of Law 20 of 1878 were never far-reaching.

to reindenture failing which they were sent home. This was in line with the ideology of a ‘white Queensland’ which, after the establishment of the Australian Commonwealth in 1901, became the ‘white Australia’ policy. By 1906 all Melanesians were expatriated (Megarrity 2006:2, 12).

61 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 34, 1883, 324.

62 *Natal Blue Book*, 1889, Z2.

63 *Natal Blue Book*, 1881, Education Report, U11.

64 Brain 1983:212.

65 *Natal Blue Book*, 1872, T20.

66 *Natal Blue Book*, 1874, C16.

67 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 26, No. 1491, 22 September 1874.

68 Report of the Protector of Indian Immigrants, 1877, 5.

69 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 30, No. 1739, 26 November 1878. *The Mercury* (9 August 1878)

In his report for 1879 the protector remarked that not only was there great difficulty in obtaining suitable teachers from India, but that estate owners were “indifferent and passive” in the face of government appeals to establish schools on their estates. Some even claimed that education would prove “hurtful” to Indian children. He found that only three estates were prepared to provide what he called “a rough schoolroom and master’s quarters”.⁷⁰

A state-aided school for Indians was only established in Umzinto in 1882. Ironically, education opportunities for white children were also few and far between, as a report in the *Mercury* stated.⁷¹ The school for whites in Umzinto was closed in 1878 by the Council of Education on account of low attendance and unsatisfactory performances.⁷² At that time the only other school for white pupils was in Umkomaas, which had an enrolment of 29.⁷³

By 1884 there was also a school for Indians at Equeefa, which the inspector of Indian schools, Frank Colepeper, reported as making good progress.⁷⁴ It was still in existence in 1893 with an enrolment of 45 pupils. It was reported as “one of the few schools originating in the desire of the Indians themselves for education. They are a little colony of freeholders who received grants of land in lieu of return passages to India.”⁷⁵

Both Indian schools, Umzinto and Equeefa, received annual grants of £40 each.⁷⁶ By 1897, however, the Equeefa school appears to have closed, for the annual report cited the only Indian school as being in Umzinto.⁷⁷ The grants for these schools were inadequate in that they did not allow for the employment of more than one teacher. As the report for Indian education in 1886 stated: “No man who respects himself will accept the post of teacher for less than £2 per month”.⁷⁸ As such the situation was not sustainable. By 1888 the Indian school at Umzinto was in trouble. “The teacher, Mr. P. Jemadian, has reached the limits of his powers”, lamented the official report, which noted that very little progress had been made.⁷⁹ But the following

welcomed the bill: “The want of such a provision, indeed, should have had attention before ... The rising generation of Indian settlers must be educated.”

70 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 32, No. 1839, 17 August 1880.

71 *Natal Mercury*, 22 July 1882.

72 *Natal Blue Book*, 1879, W8.

73 *Natal Blue Book*, 1880, W9.

74 *Natal Blue Book*, 1884, U52. In 1884 there were 1 371 Indian pupils at schools in Natal (*ibid.*:U50).

75 *Natal Blue Book*, 1892/93, U34, 37-38.

76 CSO 1072, Report on Indian Schools for 1885, 6-7.

77 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1897, G48.

78 *Natal Blue Book*, 1886, U92. The situation was no different for white teachers. Superintendent of Education Robert Russell stated in 1886: “It is difficult to see how ... struggling country schools ... can be efficiently maintained on the remuneration at present given to the teachers.” (*ibid.*:U4)

79 *Natal Blue Book*, 1888, U61, 66. Circumstances were no better at the Umzinto school for whites:

year, under a white female teacher, Mrs. Trenor, attendance and academic results had improved.⁸⁰

Nonetheless, for a population which had reached 10 000 on the South Coast by 1909,⁸¹ the provision of schooling for Indian children was abysmal. In 1905 there was only one state-aided school for Indians. It was in Umzinto and had an enrolment of just 75 pupils. The nearest alternative school was in Isipingo.⁸² However, as Joy Brain has noted, in 1902 there was a small private Anglican school for Indians in Umzinto run by the Paul and Perumal families.⁸³ Overall, the total expenditure of £5 453 in 1909 on Indian schooling in Natal⁸⁴ speaks for itself as an indicator of the low priority the colonial government placed on the issue.

Indian commercial presence⁸⁵

The oscillating availability of African labour compelled reliance by white settlers on indentured labour.⁸⁶ Moreover, from the 1880s, in terms of cash crops in Alexandra County, contract-expired or free Indians played a significant role in the cultivation of beans, rice, maize and tobacco.⁸⁷ This was also true of cultivation by Indians in Victoria and Durban counties.⁸⁸ During that time, the Indian presence also intruded commercially on what was hitherto an exclusive settler domain. Nine of the fifteen stores in Alexandra County in 1883 were Indian owned. That figure increased to twelve stores by 1885 and saw the resident magistrate remarking that Indians were underselling white traders and cornering the African and Indian market.⁸⁹

By 1894, 20 of the 32 stores in Alexandra County were Indian-owned.⁹⁰ Resentment at this “intrusion” also manifested concerning Sunday trade. The “Alexandra Letter” in the *Mercury* of 23 January 1884 complained that “Arab” and “Coolie” stores were

the failure rate was double that of 1887, and nine of the twenty-seven pupils had been absent for six months (*ibid.*:U25). There was a private school for white pupils at Umzinto which had an enrolment of seventeen (*Natal Blue Book*, 1885, U16).

80 *Natal Blue Book*, 1889, U83. Her salary of £39 was nearly double that paid to Mr. Jemadian.

81 *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal*, 1909, 13.

82 Report of the Superintendent of Education, year ended 30 June 1905, 31.

83 Brain 1983:218, 234.

84 *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal*, 1909, 298.

85 For a detailed discussion of issues around passenger migrants and trade competition, see Bhana & Brain 1990.

86 In 1880 the resident magistrate for Alexandra County noted in his report that African labour was scarce and that planters relied on Indian labour (*Natal Blue Book*, 1880, JJ120).

87 *Supplements to the Blue Books for the Colony of Natal*, 1886, B12; 1888, B9.

88 *Natal Blue Book*, 1882, FF35.

89 *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, GG45; *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1885, B62.

90 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1893-94, B53.

open all day on Sundays, despite the provisions of Law 24 of 1878 which permitted trade on certain items only between 9 am and 4 pm. The article also complained about the lack of enforcement which was proving detrimental to white storekeepers. The Indian commercial presence in Alfred County was slower, but by 1888 the resident magistrate reported that the “Arab invasion” had reached the area with the opening of three stores, and that Indians had secured the African trade.⁹¹

The narrow-mindedness and prejudice of some officials towards Indians was well-illustrated in a ten page exchange of correspondence between Lower Umzimkulu resident magistrate, P. Hugo, and the colonial government. Hugo claimed that an Indian storekeeper, Moosa Hoosen, was conducting a retail business in Marburg without a licence. In his defence, Hoosen stated that he had merely relocated his business to new premises 100 yards from where it was previously situated. In response, Hugo asserted that a licence could not be transferred and that there was not sufficient trade to “warrant the erection of any more stores”. But Hugo’s assertions were overruled by the Hime ministry which condemned the magistrate’s intention to withhold a licence as “an injustice” and sanctioned the renewal of Hoosen’s licence for a further year.⁹²

Hugo’s predecessor, R.H. Beachcroft, proved equally insistent on applying the letter of the law. Regina Abboo, a contract-free Indian, was fined £2 by Beachcroft for absenting himself from his employer’s premises. In correspondence with the attorney-general’s office, Beachcroft deprecated the fact that, in terms of section 109 of Law 25 of 1891, he was not permitted to impose imprisonment as an alternative to a fine. Beachcroft feared the emergence of a “vagrant class” as a result of inadequate punitive means to deal with offenders who absconded from their employers. But in his correspondence he betrayed his inner, ethnocentric feelings when he stated that increasingly estates were employing “a large number of free Indians”. He saw their influx into Lower Umzimkulu as giving cause for concern.⁹³ Essentially, however, Beachcroft’s motives were premised on a mindset which disdained the recognition of Indians as settlers.

Besides storekeeping, the Indian commercial presence manifested itself in the form of itinerant traders known as dukawallahs. These pedlars travelled on foot through districts in all parts of the colony, often going where no white person would try to do business, selling items of clothing and food.⁹⁴ A letter dated 18 March 1880, from William Hawkworth of Equeefa to the colonial secretary, appears to be earliest instance of settler concern at this form of trade in Alexandra County. Hawkworth

91 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1888, B18.

92 Durban Archives Repository, LU 825C, Vol. 3/2/10: LU 526, 16 August, 2 October, 9 October, 24 November 1902; 29 December 1902.

93 Durban Archives Repository, LU 179/99, Vol. 3/2/8, Minute 22/3/1899.

94 Padayachee & Morrell 1991:12, 20.

inquired whether the licences of two “Arab” hawkers were valid in Alexandra even though they had been issued by Durban Borough. Attorney-General Gallwey pointed out that such licences were valid only within the boundaries of the local authority which issued them. Colonial Secretary Mitchell felt that local authorities should be encouraged to issue such licences as they were a “good source from which to derive revenue”.⁹⁵

Whilst the likes of Hawksworth were wary of this mode of trade, the stance of the government appears to have been one of indifference. This may be gauged from the response provided to a resident of Mid Illovo who expressed concern at the number of hawkers trading without licences in 1883. The colonial secretary replied that the government “does not consider this matter of sufficient importance to justify legislation”.⁹⁶ At grassroots level, African trade passed into Indian hands, resulting in Indians being better placed in relation to Africans, although constrained in relation to white settlers.⁹⁷ Indians who made the colony their home aspired to higher forms of employment and occupations. This was particularly true of the children of indentured labourers who were born in Natal but were not content with forms of labour that were the lot of their parents.⁹⁸ Indicative of that trend was the fact that by 1880 two of the constables in Umzinto were Indians. Their annual remuneration of £24 each was twice that paid to African constables.⁹⁹

Public representatives and Indians

General Bisset, the South Coast’s representative in the Legislative Council, made it quite clear in his election manifesto of 1886, that he favoured the return of all Indian labourers to India upon completion of ten years of indenture.¹⁰⁰ In other words, he did not welcome their permanent settlement in the colony. A year later, in a lengthy letter announcing his resignation as the South Coast’s representative, Bisset was more emphatic: “No more coolies should be brought from India”, he stated.¹⁰¹ As an employer of indentured labour in the agricultural sector and having experience of the vagaries of the African labour market, Bisset’s opinion on indentured immigration is surprising. Robert M. Archibald, who became Alexandra County’s

95 CSO 746, No. 1191, 18-26 March 1880.

96 CSO 901, No. 1269, 23 March and 14 May 1883.

97 Vahed 2005:478.

98 Neame 1907:24.

99 *Natal Blue Book*, 1880, C76. The annual salary of the white constable, J.C. Whitwell, was £84. An Indian by name of Ramasammy was appointed ferryman on the Lovu river in Durban County in 1880 at a salary of £12 per annum (*Natal Blue Book*, 1887, C27).

100 *Natal Mercury*, 12 August 1886.

101 *Natal Mercury*, 14 May 1887.

representative in 1890, had a more realistic view on the issue of indentured labour. In a typical hand-wringing speech on “the much-vexed question of coolie immigration” he noted that the ending of that dispensation would “accentuate the difficulties” of both coastal and upcountry farmers in obtaining labour.¹⁰²

The 1890s saw the passage of more discriminatory legislation against Indians than in the entire colonial period. The Robinson ministry passed four major pieces of legislation¹⁰³ to which the Escombe ministry added a further four.¹⁰⁴ Despite the failure of that legislation to deter Indian immigration and settlement in Natal, as proven by the fact that by 1900 the Indian population had grown to 70 369 while the white population stood at only 64 951,¹⁰⁵ and the fact that Indian labour continued to be in demand from farmers, the railways, the harbour, the coal mines and municipalities like Durban, members of the Legislative Assembly continued to indulge in motions and rhetoric which qualified them as Rip van Winkles¹⁰⁶.

One such instance was initiated by Harry Sparks of Durban County. He had played a key role in mobilising anti-Indian sentiment in January 1897 which had culminated in the protest by 2 000 citizens against the arrival of Gandhi at Durban Point.¹⁰⁷ In July 1899 he introduced a motion in the Legislative Assembly which, *inter alia*, specified that indentured contracts should expire in India, thus ensuring that indentured Indians did not become settlers once their period of indenture had ended.¹⁰⁸

In his contribution to the debate, Archibald, the senior member for Alexandra County, laid the blame for the proliferation of Indian traders in the towns and villages on “the working men who daily live out of the baskets brought round by the Indians. They encourage them in every possible way,” he stated. Totally

102 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 21, 16.

103 Anti-Indian legislation passed by the Robinson ministry comprised: Act 22 of 1894, which extended the powers of municipalities in regulating sanitary conditions and was aimed at inhibiting the granting of trade licences to Indians on health grounds; Act 37 of 1894 ended state subsidisation of indentured immigration; Act 25 of 1894 denied Indians the franchise. The British government refused to accept this act, but assented to a refined version of it in the form of Act 8 of 1896. Act 17 of 1895 imposed an annual tax of £3 on Indians who failed to reindenture or did not return to India (Du Bois 2011:127-148).

104 Act 1 of 1897 attempted to place restrictions of Indian immigration; Act 2 of 1897 tightened requirements relating to quarantine; Act 18 of 1897 aimed at curbing the granting of trading licences to Indians; Act 28 of 1897 required contract-expired Indians and those who had immigrated to Natal of their own free will to carry a pass certifying their status and thereby avoiding arrest on the grounds of absconding from their employers (Du Bois 2011:171-179).

105 *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal*, 1900, 3.

106 Refers to someone who is very much behind the times; one of novelist Washington Irving’s characters.

107 Du Bois 2011:162-165.

108 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 28, 1899, 547. An editorial in the *Natal Mercury* on 27 July 1899 strongly reproved Sparks’ motion; “[we] alone are to blame for the difficulties of the position”, it stated.

ignoring the enterprise and initiative of contract-expired Indians in making a living from market gardening and the like, Archibald, who owned stores in Umzinto, Highflats and Ixopo and several farms, and who at that very time was employing ten indentured Indians,¹⁰⁹ also expressed opposition to the employment of Indians in “positions which ought to be filled by the sons of Europeans”. His solution to the issue was to discourage Indians from being educated. “Let us bring from home European servants”, he opined. Although Sparks’ motion was rejected,¹¹⁰ his view that indentured contracts should expire in India found expression in the manifesto of a new opposition parliamentary group launched in February 1902. Headed by John George Maydon, its adherents included Frank Reynolds and C.G. Smith. The main thrust of its manifesto concerned economic development, notably that of Durban harbour. For that reason the grouping was regarded as “progressive”, in contrast to the Hime ministry which was censured for having become “encrusted in office” and immune and indifferent to the need for forward-looking policies.¹¹¹

Nonetheless, the apparent contradiction in the stance of the so-called progressive group was exposed by a correspondent in the *Mercury*. Noting the sugar interests of Maydon and Smith in Umzimkulu Sugar and of Reynolds in Tongaat and Umzinto,¹¹² the writer castigated them for the “unsatisfactory” treatment of indentured labourers on sugar estates. “So long as his business is a success [the planter] shuts his eyes to or connives at the cruel treatment which these Indians receive”. The writer rejected as intolerable the Maydon group’s desire to see indentured contracts terminated in India on the grounds that Indians had contributed significantly to the development of Natal.¹¹³ There was no response from the Maydon group to these criticisms.

Notwithstanding the failure of legislative efforts to discourage settlement in Natal by Indians, the likes of Archibald continued to hold contradictory views on their presence and role. At a public meeting in Umzinto in 1908 he stated that he looked forward to the termination of trading by Indians. At the same time he expressed opposition to the proposal to end indentured immigration after 1911, citing the dependence of large vested interests on indentured labour. (In evidence to the Clayton Commission in 1909, Archibald stated that “stoppage of indenture would mean absolute ruin” and that the “success of the sugar industry is entirely due to the employment of Indians”.¹¹⁴) A view expressed by Archibald’s fellow Alexandra County representative, Equeefa sugar planter John Kirkman (MLA), at that same

109 Gordon 1978: 244, 254; *The South African Who’s Who* 1908:9. Indians owned 25 of the 35 stores in Alexandra County in 1899 (*Natal Blue Book*, 1899, Departmental Reports, B91).

110 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 28, 1899, 553-554.

111 *Times of Natal*, 22 February 1902.

112 These are discussed in chapter ten.

113 Letter to the editor from ‘Natalian’, *Natal Mercury*, 11 March 1902.

114 CSO 1878, No. 5276, 1909, 59-60.

meeting in Umzinto, illustrated the extent to which some colonists suffered from delusion. Despite the fact that the Indian population had increased from 79 857 in 1903 to 115 807 in 1907, and exceeded the white population of 92 485 by more than 23 000, Kirkman claimed that the £3 tax on Indians was compelling them to return to India.¹¹⁵ Kirkman's naïve, anti-Indian views were already a matter of record in the *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*. Speaking in July 1907 on a bill concerning Asiatic traders, he stated that “if we joined in a bond as Europeans not to buy a single thing from any Asian trader, it would have good results”¹¹⁶



Figure 9.4 Indians cutting cane

As noted earlier, the commercial role and presence of Indians provoked the most critical and emotional settler response. J.F. Rethman, one of Alfred County's representatives in the Legislative Assembly, enquired of the attorney-general in 1900 whether it was policy to issue trading licences “indiscriminately” to so-called Arab traders. “No effort appears to be made to lessen this evil, but on the other hand they have increased”, wrote Rethman. His claim, however, was greatly exaggerated.

115 *Natal Mercury*, 23 June 1908; *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal*, 1907, 3.

116 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 42, 1907, 407.

Only one fresh licence was issued in 1900 to an “Arab” trader who had complied with all the provisions of Act 18 of 1897, while the other licences issued were all renewals.¹¹⁷ Speaking on a trading licences bill in the Legislative Council in August 1908, Alexandra County’s representative, Thomas Kirkman complained that “Arab” traders “did not come to the Colony at our asking”. Referring to them as “uninvited visitants”, he stated that colonists were “heartily sick” of them. William Arthur Hutchinson, who represented Alfred County in the Legislative Council, referred to these traders as “profit-makers” and pointed out that they were “not men who make citizens; they do not take up duties as we do in the matter of defence or the discharge of civic or municipal responsibilities. Indeed, they are little but a burden to the country.”¹¹⁸

The only white settler view that was realistic on the status of Indians emanated from Edwin Camp, a Port Shepstone resident who was secretary in the Lower Umzimkulu Chamber of Commerce. He also had a regular column in the *Natal Mercury* titled “Ideas from Port Shepstone”. In his column published on 11 July 1900 he stated:

I confess I see no help for this but by accepting the coolie as a citizen and giving him the help of that position. One thing is certain, whether we like it or not, he is, and will become even more so an important factor in our population.

Some remarks

The mindset of white settlers towards Indians, whether free or indentured, was a product of their time. In observing that settlers remained staunch in their “sense of identification with the mother country” and maintained “Europe as a signifier of superiority”, Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis¹¹⁹ highlight one of the factors that made it virtually impossible for Indians to be recognised and accepted by whites as co-settlers. Earlier notions of trusteeship and paternalism¹²⁰ gave way to the embrace of white supremacy by the 1880s which found aggressive expression in the prosecution of the Anglo-Zulu War.

White minority rule was premised on strict adherence to rules and the intimidation of their Indian and African subjects. Exemplifying that approach to colonisation was an incident that occurred in 1904 in Lower Umzimkulu. The general manager of Umzimkulu sugar estates, a Mr. N. Harper, requested permission from the resident magistrate, J.J. Jackson, for Indian labourers on his estate to witness the execution

117 CSO 1666, No. 16, 29 December 1900; 9 January 1901.

118 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 18, 1908, 71, 75.

119 Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis 1995:20.

120 Marks 1970:5; Lambert 1995:12-13.

of two Indians who had been sentenced to death for the murder of a settler. In seeking permission from the sheriff of the colony, W. Gough, for Harper's request, Magistrate Jackson stated: "In view of the past crimes in this neighbourhood, I think the request might be granted". The sheriff concurred and on 25 January 1905 the two Indians were executed in front of a gathering of their fellow labourers.¹²¹

Despite their marginalised and controversial presence and status, there were occasions when Indians put colonial society to shame. In April 1902 "an enthusiastic and enjoyable function took place at the Plough Hotel, Umzinto", when Indians of Alexandra County made a presentation to Sergeant E.P. Blake of the Natal Police on the eve of his transfer from Umzinto to Harding. With the local Indian interpreter, Somasundram, presiding as chairman, the Indian schoolmaster, Paul, presented Blake with a dressing case. In his speech Paul expressed gratitude to Blake "for the several acts of kindness shown to us during your stay in Umzinto ... in which you have always blended justice with mercy".¹²²

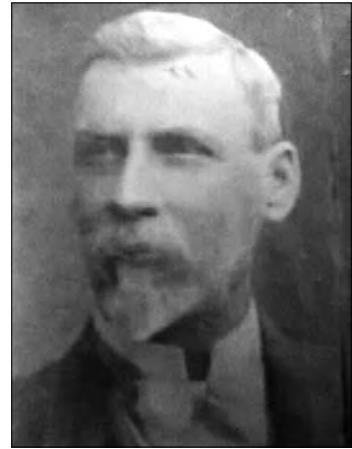


Figure 9.5 James Polkinghorne

Unfortunately, the wells of goodwill were all too often poisoned by officious and overtly racist officials in denying trading licences or in their failure to uphold the rights of those who were brought to Natal as labourers, and stayed on as settlers and as British subjects. Discrimination against Indians continued into the Union era and beyond where it became institutionalised, as Bhana and Brain have noted.¹²³ The worst of these excesses occurred on the sugar plantations. But, thanks to the diligence, determination and conscientiousness of protector Polkinghorne, those excesses were exposed on the estates of Reynolds Bros. in Alexandra County. After a protracted struggle, in 1908 the scales of justice tilted against the sugar interest. This case is examined below.

121 Durban Archives Repository, LU 1870/04, Vol. 3/2/ 13; 5, 7, 20 December 1904; Vol. 3/2/14, 7 January 1905.

122 *Natal Mercury*, 17 April 1902. In Durban in 1879, following the British defeat at Isandhlwana, fears of further Zulu attacks were rife, Indian merchants requested permission to form a reserve corps for the town guard (CSO 686, No. 846, 7 February 1879).

123 Bhana & Brain 1990:193.

Case study: Reynolds Bros. exploitation of indentured labour

The Reynolds Bros. case is relevant because of the number of investigations to which it was subject. Desertions, suicides and the death rate on Reynolds Bros.' estates exceeded those on other estates, while the general condition of Reynolds' indentured labour indicated overwork and poor health.¹²⁴ Yet, following an inquiry in 1900 conducted by Louis Mason, the protector of Indian immigrants, assisted by Durban magistrate Herbert Miller, when a record 74 of the 1 220 Indians employed on the Reynolds estates died during a ten month period – a death rate of 60 per 1 000, at a time when the death rate in the colony was fifteen per 1 000,¹²⁵ the inquiry concluded that there was no evidence of “systematic abuse”. Commenting on the findings of the inquiry, Attorney-General Henry Bale concurred that the numerous complaints of ill-treatment of indentured labour “were not justified”.¹²⁶

The appointment of a new protector of Indian immigrants, James Polkinghorne, in 1902, was to prove a turning point in Reynolds Bros. disregard for the wellbeing of those indentured to their estates. Polkinghorne visited Reynolds' estates in the company of county medical officer, Dr. W.P. Tritton and noted that indentured labourers were afflicted by overwork and poor quality of food. In compiling an account on 28 March 1905 of his efforts since 1902 to get Reynolds to rectify matters, Polkinghorne remarked that Reynolds routinely denied charges of overwork and poor food.¹²⁷

Following a visit in August 1904, when he had received many complaints from Indians about ill-treatment, Polkinghorne warned Charles Reynolds that he had had “every opportunity ... to rectify matters”.¹²⁸ Reynolds ignored the warning. In December 1904 Polkinghorne drew Reynolds' attention to the death rate on his estates of 36 per 1 000 – double the colonial average – and specifically noted the poor hygiene, diet and domestic conditions of Reynolds' labourers.¹²⁹ In his evidence to the Reynolds' inquiry, Polkinghorne stated that the labourers' barracks were poorly sited and improperly built. Their corrugated iron construction had no inner lining

124 Desai & Vahed 2010:132-135.

125 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 1906. J.T. Polkinghorne's address to Committee of Inquiry in Umzinto, 2.

126 Desai & Vahed 2010:135; Mason and Miller based their findings on the examination of 608 men and 212 women (Protector of Indian Immigrants Report, 1900, *Natal Blue Book*, Departmental Reports, A15).

127 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 28 March 1905. On a visit in August 1904, Polkinghorne found that workers had not received dholl and ghee rations for two months. These items were critical in the nutritional diet of the workers. Reynolds denied this and claimed the rations were only ten days overdue (*ibid*).

128 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 30 August 1904.

129 CSO 2854, No. 7790, Polkinghorne's evidence to the 1906 Inquiry.

thereby affording no protection against heat and cold. Latrine facilities were crude and inadequate.¹³⁰

Acting county medical officer Dr. Gilroy confirmed in February 1905 that uncooked or partially cooked food (as a result of a lack of firewood and time to prepare meals) was causing diarrhoea, which was a major cause of disease and death among Indians. Polkinghorne's visit on 21 and 22 February confirmed that excessive working hours were a major contributory factor to the poor condition of Reynolds' workers. Whereas the contract for indentured labourers specified nine hours of labour six days a week, Polkinghorne established that Reynolds was getting an extra two days labour a week from his workers by compelling them to be on duty before sunrise and beyond sunset, particularly where those working in the mill were concerned.¹³¹ On 28 March 1905 Polkinghorne reported that the rice ration Reynolds provided to his labourers was inferior in quality and was purchased at up to two shillings less per bag. Polkinghorne requested the colonial secretary to suspend assignments of indentured labour to Reynolds until conditions on Reynolds' estates were improved.¹³²

Polkinghorne's unrelenting determination to end the exploitation of indentured labour on Reynolds' estates generated countermeasures from Reynolds. On 8 May 1905, Dr. Rouillard, the county medical officer, wrote to Polkinghorne declining to put in writing the opinions he had expressed to Polkinghorne verbally in August 1904, November 1904 and in January 1905 that indentured labourers on Reynolds' estates were dying as a result of the food and treatment they received. Rouillard claimed that one of Reynolds' submanagers, W.T. Pemberton, had asked him not to submit written testimony to Polkinghorne.¹³³ As Rouillard stated at the Reynolds Inquiry:¹³⁴

I have two masters. I have got the Immigration Board and the Protector of Indian immigrants and I also have on the other side the employers of labour. And it is my duty to keep on good terms with them for my own benefit.

130 Bhana & Bhana 1991:146.

131 CSO 2854, No. 7790, Polkinghorne's evidence to the 1906 Inquiry.

132 CSO 2854, No. 7790, Polkinghorne's evidence to the 1906 Inquiry. Polkinghorne stated that he had contempt for the supplier of the rice, a Mr. Thomson, who despite twenty years of experience in the product declined to comment on its quality. From that it may be concluded that Reynolds' influence and power was such that Thomson did not wish to risk remarks that might compromise his business relationship with Reynolds.

133 Indian Immigration 1/156, 8 May 1905; CSO 2854, No. 7790, Polkinghorne to Colonial Secretary 25 May 1905.

134 Bhana & Bhana 1991:145.

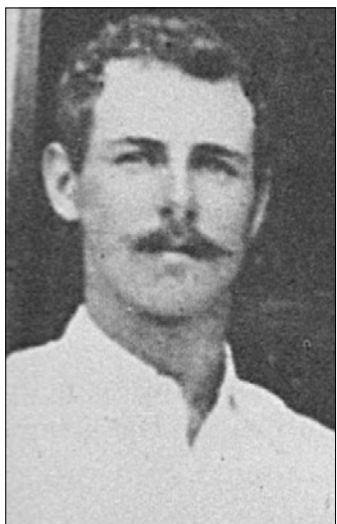


Figure 9.6 W.T. Pemberton

Moreover, as Polkinghorne also noted,¹³⁵ Rouillard was related to Reynolds in that Rouillard's brother was married to Reynolds' sister. Besides having influence over the county medical officer, Reynolds also had influence over the resident magistrate, James McLaurin. In a letter to Charles Reynolds dated 14 September 1904 concerning Reynolds failure to issue dhol to his labourers, McLaurin wrote: "We quite understand one another and it will indeed be a great joy to me should there never be any further occasion for me to trouble you". Although McLaurin was transferred from Alexandra County to Camperdown in June 1905,¹³⁶ Reynolds obtained the following statement from McLaurin, dated 3 November 1905, which Reynolds used in his defence during the 1906 inquiry:

During the more than sixteen years I presided as Magistrate of Umzinto, I was comparatively little troubled by your estates and consider that, on the whole, your Indians were very well treated.

In his report of 5 December 1905, Polkinghorne stated that McLaurin was "ill-advised to report" on the workings of the Reynolds' estates because he "knew nothing" about the actual circumstances that prevailed. "Is this not another case of Mr. Reynolds' influence?" Polkinghorne asked.¹³⁷

Between 18 and 21 September 1905, Polkinghorne again visited Reynolds' estates and commented that inferior rice was still being given to the labourers. He secured twelve depositions regarding overwork and a further twelve complaints of assault. Fear of victimisation prevented other labourers from coming forward.¹³⁸ As a result of Polkinghorne's September report, the top tier of government appeared to be rallying to his side. A communiqué from the Smythe ministry in October 1905 stated that ministers were of the opinion that unless "there was decided improvement in the treatment of Indians, no further allotment of Indians would be made to Reynolds Bros."¹³⁹

135 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 5 December 1905.

136 *Natal Mercury*, 26 June 1905.

137 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 5 December 1905.

138 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 26 September 1905.

139 Indian Immigration, 1/156, 25 October 1905. The cosy relationship the Reynolds enjoyed with the colonial government was illustrated by the fact that when Governor Henry McCallum visited Alexandra County in September 1905, he stayed with Charles at the Reynolds' Lynton Hall mansion (*Natal Mercury*, 25 September 1905).

This news caused Charles Reynolds to go on the offensive. He rejected the charges against him and requested “an impartial investigation” for which he indicated he was willing to pay in order to vindicate himself.¹⁴⁰

The Reynolds Inquiry

The colonial secretary ignored Reynolds’ offer to finance an inquiry and invited three individuals to form a committee. They were James Schofield (MLA for Ixopo), Dr. James Hyslop of the Natal Government Asylum, and Mr. C.B. Lloyd, who was commissioner of agriculture in the 1890s and served as chairman.¹⁴¹ The committee sat from January to April 1906. Initially Schofield attempted to restrict the scope of the inquiry to the period since 1902 when Polkinghorne became protector. But Hyslop and Lloyd disagreed and as a result Polkinghorne was able to call on witnesses whose service on the Reynolds’ estates went back to 1884.¹⁴²

This proved critical in Polkinghorne’s case, as he was able to show that ill-treatment of Indian labour was institutionalised on Reynolds’ estates.¹⁴³ F. Mellon who had served on three occasions as overseer – 1884-1890, 1896-1897 and 1899-1900 – testified that working days started before sunrise and ended after sunset, that very little time was allowed for food consumption and that no extra pay was given. E.B. Gautier, who had been an overseer in the late 1890s, corroborated evidence regarding the labourers’ long working days, adding that he had seen Charles Reynolds striking workers when the boilers were not properly fired up and that Reynolds “would get into a temper” if asked to allow sick workers time off.¹⁴⁴

Before studying law and practising as an advocate, Leon Renaud was a supervisor in Reynolds’ mill from 1886 to 1894. He also confirmed that overwork was routine. He testified that labourers had no time to cook their food, which led to dysentery; that those who refused to work at night were thrashed; and that only when a worker collapsed was he taken to the medical officer. Renaud also contrasted the condition of Reynolds’ Indians with those on the neighbouring estates of Hawkesworth and Kirkman. “You would have no doubt as to how the Indians are treated. You could see the difference,” he stated.¹⁴⁵ The former medical officer, Dr. W.P. Tritton, also

140 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 1 November 1905. The inescapable implication of Reynolds’ willingness to pay for an inquiry on charges of ill-treatment of indentured labour is that he was prepared to buy a suitable outcome.

141 CSO 2854, No. 7990, 6 December 1905.

142 CSO 2854, No. 7790, Minutes of Committee of Inquiry 31 January, 8 February 1906.

143 Indian Immigration, 1/70/1893, No. 1196, 11 September 1893. Protector Louis Mason noted the high desertion rate on Reynolds’ estates and the fact that labourers appeared “worn out” and fatigued.

144 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 8 February 1906.

145 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 1906

testified that working hours of labourers were excessive compared to other estates and that he had seen men working in the fields during downpours.¹⁴⁶

In his testimony, Charles Reynolds proved evasive and disingenuous. He rejected the evidence of Gautier, Renaud and Mellon as having no bearing on the case because, he claimed, they had been dismissed for incompetence and unreliability. Instead he accused Polkinghorne of trying to ruin him through lies and misrepresentation and of acting in a “secret, underhand way” because Polkinghorne always spoke directly to the Indian labourers without being accompanied by managers. As to the high death rate on his estates, Reynolds claimed the calibre of labourers allotted to him were inferior to that of other estates and denied that his working hours were any different from those on other estates.¹⁴⁷

In support of Reynolds’ testimony was that of the speaker of the Legislative Assembly and local MLA, Robert M. Archibald, who stated that in his experience of 30 years in Alexandra County, dysentery and diarrhoea were promoted by droughts and bad water. He declined to say whether Reynolds’ labourers were consuming “bad water”. Also in support was the current medical officer, Dr. Abel Jean Antonie Rouillard. Having performed a *volte-face* by his letter of 8 May 1905, Rouillard informed the Reynolds Inquiry that he had never seen or had reason to suspect ill-treatment on Reynolds’ estates. Under cross-questioning he proved evasive and forgetful.¹⁴⁸ Mr. Drew, proprietor of the Alexandra Hotel in Umzinto, made it clear that concern for his livelihood was such that he was wary about giving evidence against Reynolds.¹⁴⁹

In his address to the inquiry, Polkinghorne pointed out that it had been “common talk for many years that Mr. Reynolds was a hard task master”. Accusing Dr. Rouillard of deceit, he noted that since Reynolds had been informed in October 1905 of the possibility of the government halting his procurement of further supplies of labour, there had been a dramatic improvement in the death rate on Reynolds’ estates; that the rate which was five and a half times lower than in the previous nine years had coincided with the inquiry into conditions on Reynolds’ estates.

146 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 12 January 1906.

147 CSO 2854, No. 7790, February 1906. Reynolds’ claim that he was allotted inferior labourers was spurious since his brother Frank had been on the Indian Immigration Trust Board since December 1895 and was replaced by Charles himself in December 1904. Since this board was responsible for assigning indentured labourers, it was highly unlikely that the Reynolds would have allotted themselves physically poor specimens.

148 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 30 January 1906; 11 January 1906.

149 CSO 2854, No. 7790, 31 January 1906.

I am perfectly aware that I am fighting a very strong and influential Company backed up in many quarters ... The Medical Officer has been against me, the whole neighbourhood has been against me.

As if anticipating the outcome of the inquiry, he stated:

The question will not finish with this Committee. I shall carry it on further ... It is a question of the lives of these people and as Protector ... I found it my duty to take up this subject.¹⁵⁰

In their report, Hyslop and Lloyd endorsed Polkinghorne's case, stating that if the death rate "again assumes its previous abnormal proportions, the allotments of Indians will be discontinued". But James Schofield presented a minority report in which he exonerated Reynolds of the charges brought¹⁵¹.

Nonetheless, the political establishment declined to act on the compelling evidence which Polkinghorne had amassed. Three reasons may be adduced for this. First, the findings against Reynolds were eclipsed by the Bhambatha rebellion which caused widespread alarm and insecurity amongst settlers across the colony.¹⁵²

As a result there was reluctance to risk any further possible disruption of the labour supply as had occurred in 1871, when reports reached the India government of ill-treatment of indentured labourers in Natal and resulted in the suspension of indentured supplies until 1874. Second, the economic situation within Natal was precarious as a result of the ongoing depression.¹⁵³ Disrupting production on the estates of the second largest producer of sugar in the colony by stopping its supply of indentured labour could not be financially contemplated.¹⁵⁴ Third, political collusion at the



Figure 9.7 Frank Umhlali Reynolds, *Natal Pictorials* 1910

150 CSO 2854, No. 7790, February 1906; 10 May 1906.

151 Indian Immigration, 1/156, 16 and 5 July 1908.

152 *Natal Mercury*, 1 March 1906; Lambert 1989:389-394.

153 A deficit of £351 866 was noted in 1904-1905, which increased to £554 773 by 1907 (Auditor-General's Report 1906-1906, 6).

154 Huletts was the largest producer in 1908 followed by Reynolds Bros. (*Natal Mercury*, 28 November

highest levels ensured that the findings against Reynolds were hushed up and went unpublished.

Politically it had long been a reality that the flow of indentured labour was essential to the sugar industry. As such anything which risked disruption of that flow was to be avoided as far as possible. Robert Archibald himself stated in evidence to the Clayton Commission in 1909 that “stoppage of indenture would mean absolute ruin” to the sugar industry.¹⁵⁵ In 1896 Frank Reynolds, as a member of the Indian Immigration Trust Board, had called for draconian measures to be institutionalised against deserters from estates.¹⁵⁶

Nobody, either on the IITB or in other roles in colonial society, questioned that call. The press also played a key role in the news blackout. Whereas in the 1890s the “Notes from Umzinto” column in the *Mercury* had made mention of indentured Indians committing suicide on Reynolds’ estates,¹⁵⁷ after 1892 such reports or critical remarks appeared very rarely in the print media. An exception to that came in the form of a letter published in the *Mercury* in 1902 which stated, *inter alia*: “The planter, so long as his business is a success, shuts his eyes to, or connives at the cruel treatment which Indians receive”.¹⁵⁸ The press was also silent on the work of the Reynolds Inquiry in 1906.¹⁵⁹

The regular reports in the *Mercury* under the heading “Country Notes”, were devoid of any news concerning the plight of indentured Indians in any of the country districts, although incidents of crime involving Indians were published. Up until 1910 the annual reports of the IITB were also silent regarding the treatment of indentured labourers. Although the reports noted changes of representation on the IITB, when Frank Reynolds replaced his brother Charles, the report for 1908/1909 gave no reason for this. Thus, it may be contended that a conspiracy of silence prevailed concerning the exposure of labour exploitation.

The authors Desai and Vahed have pointed out that while the “Protector was an important cog in the indentured enterprise”, his role was “less to protect the indentured than project the impartiality of the state”.¹⁶⁰ As protector of Indian immigrants,

1908).

155 CSO 1878, No. 5276, 1909, 59-60.

156 *Natal Mercury*, 21 August 1896.

157 *Natal Mercury*, 13 October 25 November 1892.

158 Letter to the editor from ‘Natalian’, *Natal Mercury*, 11 March 1902. In 1907 the protector suggested that an inspector be appointed on the North Coast following many complaints about the ill-treatment of indentured labourers (*Indian Immigration*, 1/155, 1907).

159 That silence extended to the issues of the *Natal Agricultural Journal* during the period 1900 to 1909 and to Gandhi’s paper, the *Indian Opinion*.

160 Desai & Vahed 2010:95.

James Polkinghorne proved the exception. He simply refused to be obstructed and to neglect what he regarded as his primary function – the custodianship of the welfare of indentured Indians.¹⁶¹ In September 1906 he protested to the colonial secretary about having to continue assigning indentured labour to Reynolds when reports of ill-treatment persisted.¹⁶² In subsequent correspondence with the colonial secretary he urged that Governor McCallum “should be acquainted with the facts so the Indian government may be advised”.¹⁶³ The evidence Polkinghorne provided to the Reynolds Inquiry did reach the governor of Madras, Sir Arthur Lawley, who then inquired confidentially about conditions for indentured labourers in Natal. In response McCallum claimed that the Reynolds case was “very exceptional”.¹⁶⁴

Between 24 and 26 September 1907, Polkinghorne again visited the Reynolds’ estates and noted that “matters had lapsed into their former bad state as regards overwork”. He observed 200 Indians queuing for rations after 7 pm, while others were still loading cane trucks at that time.¹⁶⁵ In a letter to Frank Reynolds he expressed outrage that indentured labourers were working twelve hour shifts and often not getting any food until 9 pm. He slated the situation as one of “absolute cruelty”.¹⁶⁶

Still matters did not improve. Between November 1907 and the end of February 1908, there were 124 cases of diarrhoea and eight deaths on Reynolds estates. According to Dr. Ernest Hill, the health officer for Natal, “inferior mealie meal” caused the diarrhoea.¹⁶⁷ On 1 June 1908 Polkinghorne wrote in exasperation to the colonial secretary, urging that Reynolds be charged with culpable homicide for the ongoing sickness and deaths of his indentured labourers as a result of diseased and fermented rations. “It is simply scandalous that such things should take place after the experience of the past”, he exclaimed.¹⁶⁸

While the Colonial Patriotic Union was busy whipping up settler emotions against continued Indian immigration to Natal through a series of meetings,¹⁶⁹ the Natal government finally acted against Reynolds. Unobtrusively, in two separate letters,

161 Governor Henry McCallum described Polkinghorne as “most zealous” (Warhurst 1984:38).

162 Desai & Vahed 2010:143.

163 Desai & Vahed 2010:144.

164 Warhurst 1984:38.

165 Indian Immigration, 1/156, 28 September 1907.

166 Indian Immigration, 1/156, 27 September 1907.

167 Indian Immigration, 1/157, 21 February 1908.

168 Indian Immigration, 1/156, 1 June 1908. Charles Reynolds left Natal in October 1906 for a six month vacation in Europe (CSO 1820, No. 7265, 5 and 12 October 1906).

169 Well-attended meetings took place in the Durban town hall during the period from March 1907 to April 1908 (*Natal Mercury*, 8 March 1907; 2 April 1908). The issue also featured at the Natal Farmers’ Conference in April 1908 (*Natal Mercury*, 17 April 1908). The issue was also topical in the correspondence columns of the *Mercury* throughout 1907 and 1908.

one dated 24 June and the other 2 July 1908, the colonial secretary informed Reynolds Bros. that no further supplies of indentured labour would be assigned to their estates “so long as Mr. C.P. Reynolds continues to be connected with its management”.¹⁷⁰

This request was not well received by the Reynolds Bros. board. In two letters, dated 15 July and 28 July 1908, the board demanded to know on what grounds Charles Reynolds was being targeted by the government so that he could rebut those charges.¹⁷¹ C.G. Smith, whose business interests included Reynolds Bros., was outraged by the demand for Charles Reynolds’ removal and stated that in view of Polkinghorne’s “animosity against Mr. C.P. Reynolds”, it would be better if the government dismissed Polkinghorne.¹⁷²

But the government stood firm and in a memorandum dated 4 November 1908 the colonial secretary noted that Charles Reynolds had left the Reynolds’ estates. In October Frank Reynolds, who had assumed overall control of the business, assigned George Crookes of Renishaw to Charles’s post. On 20 December 1908 Reynolds Bros. received a new allotment of indentured labour.¹⁷³ Again the press was silent about the whole matter. Diligent and detailed news roundups appeared in the *Mercury’s* “Country Notes” columns and the *Witness’s* “News of Country Districts”. But news from Umzinto was conspicuous in its absence. Instead, the *Witness* found a financial scandal in the Cape Town city council, called the Mile End scandal, more newsworthy.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, the focus of the press in the last months of 1908 was taken up with the first National Convention meeting which began in Durban in October, and the trial of Dinizulu in which he was charged, *inter alia*, with inciting the Bhambatha rebellion.

An archival search of the records of the colonial secretary’s office, attorney-general’s office, Indian immigration files and prime minister’s records does not yield any specific details concerning the Natal government’s eventual action against Charles Reynolds. However, a question posed on 30 July 1908 by a Durban Borough MLA, Charles Henry Hagggar of the Labour Party, to the colonial secretary – and the response it elicited – is fairly enlightening. Hagggar enquired how many employers of Indians during the past year had had their labourers taken away as a result of cruelty. He also asked how many employers had been threatened in consequence of their cruelty. The colonial secretary’s terse response was: “Three in each case”.¹⁷⁵

170 Indian Immigration, 1/156.

171 Indian Immigration, 1/156.

172 Indian Immigration, 1/156, 19 June 1908.

173 Indian Immigration, 1/156, 4 and 7 November 1908; Desai & Vahed 2010:144.

174 *Natal Witness*, 10 and 11 August 1908. The twenty-day trial resulted in the mayor receiving a two year gaol sentence.

175 *Votes and Proceedings*, 1908, Vol. 67, 262.

Haggar did not ask who those employers were and therefore no names were disclosed. Nonetheless, the information provided does indicate that there was not only official awareness of the ill-treatment of indentured labour, but that officialdom acted against it. In the case of Charles Reynolds, it was not that indentured Indians were taken from him. Instead he was removed from the management of them. Haggar's question was also ideologically significant. As a socialist his interest was in the welfare of labour, while at the same time being critical of capitalists like the sugar barons.

Polkinghorne's perseverance had paid off. Charles Reynolds went into exile,¹⁷⁶ but life in the Umzinto district carried on as if nothing had ever happened. Socially and politically the entire episode was a non-event. None of the six South Coast public representatives¹⁷⁷ spoke out against Reynolds or raised motions of censure in the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly. By their silence they effectively condoned Reynolds' exploitation of indentured labour. Yet it was a major scandal which eclipsed the complaints made by repatriated Indians in 1871, which led to the Coolie Commission of 1872. Although the complaints had centred around ill-treatment, which included floggings and the inability of labourers to get their complaints heard by magistrates, desertions and suicides did not feature.¹⁷⁸ As Polkinghorne wrote on 28 September 1907: "In my opinion, it is nothing short of absolute cruelty to treat Indians like this, and for what? Simply to be able to declare a larger dividend at the expense of human flesh."¹⁷⁹

In closing

The financial and economic domination of the Reynolds Bros. on the South Coast undoubtedly permeated all sections of settler society. As already noted, the firm's influence was such that it held sway over both the district medical officer and Resident Magistrate McLaurin. In that the prevailing ethnocentric settler mindset excluded Indians as settlers, it follows that settler attitudes to indentured Indian labourers were hardly likely to register much concern in terms of social conscience. From that perspective, the role of indentured labour

176 MSCE 1912, Vol. 45/94. C.P. Reynolds died in Mexico City on 12 February 1912. His estate was valued at £60 000. The 1911 edition of the *Natal Directory* (p. 888) continued to list him as a resident of Umzinto.

177 Four sat in the Legislative Assembly; Archibald and John Kirkman represented Alexandra County, and Hitchens and Silburn were Alfred County's representatives. Thomas Kirkman and William Hutchinson, respectively from Alexandra and Alfred counties, sat in the Legislative Council.

178 The complaints emanated from the 228 Indians aboard the *Red Riding Hood*. Similar complaints were not made by the 185 returning Indians aboard the *Umvoti* (Thompson 1938:118-119).

179 Indian Immigration, 1/156, 28 September 1907. In this regard Desai and Vahed (2010:145) have commented that the Reynolds' "hands were soaked in the blood of indentured labourers".

in sugar production, the mainstay of the South Coast's economy, was simply taken for granted. Alexandra County's MLC, Thomas Kirkman, illustrated this narrow settler purview when, in objecting to the intrusion of Indian traders in the local economy, he said that colonists were "warranted in interfering in favour of our own people".¹⁸⁰

180 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 18, 1908, 71.

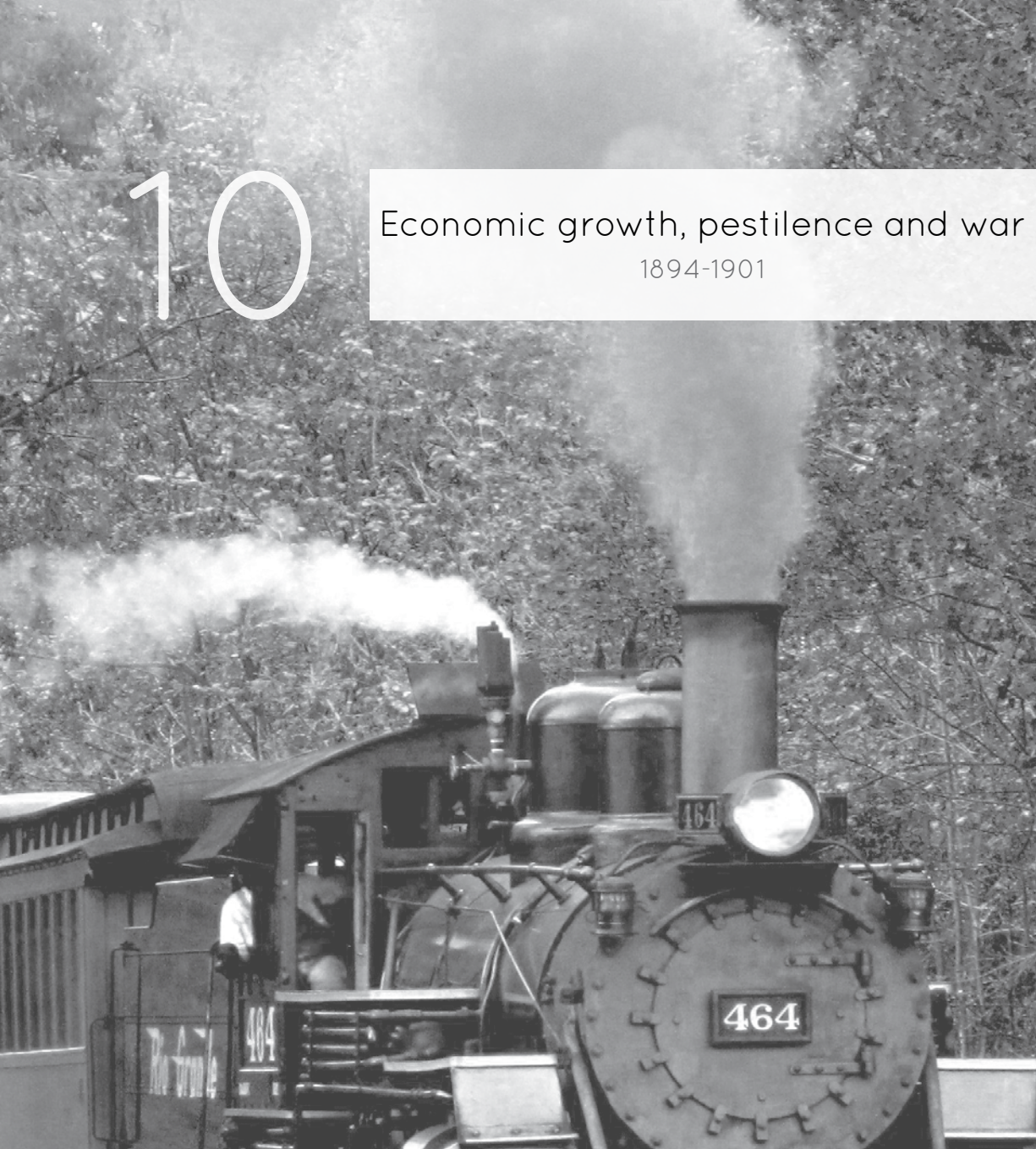
Part 3

A black and white landscape photograph. In the foreground, there is a dense thicket of trees and bushes. A wide river or estuary flows through the middle ground, with a bridge crossing it on the right side. The bridge has several vertical supports. In the background, a large, rounded hill or mountain rises against a hazy sky. On the left side of the hill, there are some small buildings and a utility pole. The overall scene is a wide, open landscape.

10

Economic growth, pestilence and war

1894-1901



There is nothing that will conduce more to the prosperity of the Colony than the opening up agricultural districts by means of railways.

— Robert Montgomery Archibald (MLA), June 1894,
Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Vol. 22, 492

Chapter seven addressed the neglect which the South Coast suffered during the last years of the representative government dispensation. Despite that handicap, private enterprise and initiative did ensure a degree of progress. Part three of this study concerns the period of responsible government, 1894 to 1910, which was witness to important political, economic and social changes. As such this chapter focuses on three aspects: the integration of the South Coast with the rest of the colony as a result of the extension of the railway line; economic growth in the fields of property development, tourism and commercial agriculture, notwithstanding the ravages of pestilence; and the onset of the South African War. The final part of the chapter examines aspects of settler society which include the role of women and the emergence of a patrician elite.

Introduction

Reporting on the Alexandra Agricultural Show held in March 1893, the *Natal Farmers' Magazine* observed:

We were conscious of a certain depression over the whole district. There is a great soreness of feeling arising from a sense of being neglected. Certainly we felt the isolation of the place, the difficulty in getting there over unbridged and flooded rivers ... It is a matter of surprise that so much progress has been made under the adverse circumstances, but there is a point beyond which this cannot go, and that point has been reached. The district has outgrown the ox wagons. It is not a bridge that is wanted, or many bridges, but a railroad.¹

From the Lower Umzimkulu district, Resident Magistrate R.H. Beachcroft reported in 1895 that business prospects were gloomy and that local German and Norwegian settlers “are leaving one by one for pastures new, namely, Johannesburg”.² Nonetheless, thanks to the readiness of the Robinson ministry to promote infrastructural development, at a public meeting in Umzinto in April 1895 Alexandra County’s senior representative, Robert M. Archibald, happily declared that the “benefits of the past twelve months exceeded the benefits of the past twenty years”.³ Economic prospects fluctuated to a great degree and were influenced by such things as regional government policies, economic enterprise such as that of the coalfields and goldfields and, in the later 1890s, by pestilence and war. The effects of these changes were felt not only on the Natal South Coast but across the wider Southern African region.

Shipping on the Mzimkulu

Since 1880 the economy of the lower South Coast area was heavily dependent on the shipment of goods to and from the Mzimkulu river. A typical cargo conveyed by the *Somtseu* was as follows: three tons of tea and four tons of jams from Barrow Green estate, fifteen tons of sugar from Ruthville estate, fifteen tons of Umzimkulu lime, an assortment of hides and wool from Kokstad, and butter, eggs and general packages from the Lower Umzimkulu district.⁴ Despite William Bazley’s efforts to improve access to the river mouth, the forces of nature frequently conspired to negate his achievements. For example, from late May until 14 September 1894 the *Somtseu* was absent from Port Shepstone,⁵ as continuous easterly winds built up a sandbar

1 *Natal Farmers' Magazine*, Vol. 1, No.3, 15 March 1893, 62.

2 *Natal Blue Book*, Departmental Reports, year ending 30 June 1895, B65.

3 *Natal Mercury*, 20 April 1895.

4 *Natal Mercury*, 27 February 1894.

5 Although she sailed to Port Shepstone on 6 June, she was unable to enter the river and returned to Durban the next day (*Natal Mercury*, 6 and 7 June 1894). In the interim the *Somtseu* was deployed

which made the river mouth inaccessible. “We cannot get on without supplies from Durban”, was the frustrated cry of the *Mercury*’s Port Shepstone correspondent.⁶ But the opposite was also true. As the *Natal Farmers’ Magazine* noted: “The lack of the district is decidedly want of a market”⁷

Despite the annual expenditure of £3 000 on maintenance of the river mouth,⁸ as a port it remained primitive and dangerous. “At the best of times, the crooked channel and shallow water on the bar make it very risky work”, noted a report.⁹ In 1894 there was no flagstaff, no lamp, no signals and no port captain.¹⁰ In order to avoid the uncertainty of accessing the river, a warp was laid in October 1894. Secured to a buoy beyond the surf line, goods could be unloaded onto lighters which were then winched ashore. This development was hailed as a “new era of prosperity and convenience” for Port Shepstone.¹¹

However, public opinion soon found a new complaint, namely the *Somtseu*’s quayside preference. Residents on the south bank, which was in Alfred County, naturally preferred the quay just inside the river mouth, which was in close proximity to the township. But occasionally the *Somtseu* sailed two miles upstream and discharged its cargo alongside the Mills and Rethman store, which was on the Alexandra side of the river. In a letter to Minister of Lands and Works, T.K. Murray, Marburg settlers protested the delay in getting their goods across the river.¹² Prospects improved when the 49-ton ketch, the *Pioneer*, owned by C.G. Smith, made its maiden voyage from Port Shepstone in March 1895. This extended the seagoing service which, in the absence of a rail link, was vital to the economy of Lower Umzimkulu.¹³

On 9 May an event took place on the Mzimkulu which the *Mercury* labelled as a harbinger of “big sea-borne trade”.¹⁴ The *Norman*, an eighteen ton schooner-rigged vessel, locally built by Hans Harjem and his son, was launched in front of a crowd of 200 Lower Umzimkulu residents.¹⁵

to East London and Port St. Johns.

6 *Natal Mercury*, 20 August and 20 July 1894.

7 *Natal Farmers’ Magazine*, 15 September 1894, 181.

8 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1891/92, Colonial Engineer’s Report, C49.

9 *Natal Mercury*, 15 March 1894.

10 *Natal Mercury*, 25 May 1894.

11 *Natal Mercury*, 15 October 1894.

12 *Times of Natal*, 12 January 1895. Mills and Rethman had a large store and depended on the *Somtseu* for all their imports. There was further local consternation at the news that the government was to build a wharf outside the store, a move the *Times* deprecated as giving the store “a monopoly of the shipping agency business” (*ibid*).

13 *Natal Mercury*, 20 March 1895.

14 *Natal Mercury*, 15 May 1895.

15 *Natal Mercury*, 14 May 1895. C.G. Smith was listed as the *Norman*’s agent. *Natal Mercury*, 10 August 1895.



Figure 10.1 The Robinson cabinet

But after only some ten voyages to and from Port Shepstone, the *Norman* was wrecked near the Mvoti river mouth after being driven up the coast in a gale.¹⁶ The arrival of the dredger, the *Sandpiper*, and the completion of the signal station at the entrance to the river mouth in April 1895 was seen as “the commencement of a great future to the port”.¹⁷ However, by October it was reported that the dredger was not making any impact on the encroaching sandbar.¹⁸

16 *Natal Mercury*, 7 October 1895.

17 *Times of Natal*, 26 April 1895.

18 *Times of Natal*, 23 October 1895. The colonial engineer’s report noted that the *Sandpiper* was of

When nature obliged, shipping on the river was reliable and consistent. This was the case in 1896 which led Minister Murray, to remark that “trade with Port Shepstone has exceeded even the most sanguine expectations”.¹⁹ Determination to develop the river port was not lacking.²⁰ In 1897 construction commenced on a new training wall at the river mouth. Following the retirement of William Bazley as the resident engineer in 1895, W.B. Kinsey was appointed in his place. In order to take advantage of the deeper water in the river mouth to the north of Bazley’s wall, construction of a new, straighter wall commenced.²¹



Figure 10.2 Barnes Kinsey, Port Shepstone’s harbour engineer

Opinions as to the reliability and usefulness of the port continued to oscillate. On 7 January 1897 the writer of the “Doings at Port Shepstone” column in the *Mercury* expressed pleasure at the frequent sailings of the *Pioneer* and claimed that its regular service had stimulated trade with Harding. But in March the *Somtseu*’s seventeen years of service came to an end when her new agents, Dickinson and Fisher, had her plying from Delagoa Bay.²² A new vessel, the 90-ton *Umzimvubu*, owned by C.G. Smith, made its maiden voyage to Port Shepstone in April.²³ To assist shipping, a small tug, the *Premier*, began service on the river, but the vagaries of nature continued to disrupt shipping. For two weeks in July the *Umzimvubu* was shut in and unable to leave.²⁴ With ox-wagon transport not procurable because of the rinderpest plague, Lower Umzimkulu became entirely dependent on seagoing transport.²⁵

very limited power and that conditions on the Mzimkulu were unfavourable for the working of a suction dredger (*Natal Blue Book*, 1894/95, C53).

- 19 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 24, 14 May 1896, 249. The *Mercury* reported on 17 August 1896 that 3 000 tons of freight had been handled in and out of the river during the previous twelve months.
- 20 Mr. Manning, a government official, told a delegation of MLAs who had come to acquaint themselves with the port that although the railway was a priority, “in due time the port would of necessity be developed” (*Natal Mercury*, 22 July 1897).
- 21 Bazley, 2000:133, 135. The *Times of Natal* (12 February 1896) accused Bazley of “amateur tinkering” and that his so-called improvements were located “just where they are best calculated to block the natural channel”. Alfred County’s MLA, John F. Rethman, was also critical of Bazley’s wall, describing it as “absolutely useless” (*Natal Mercury*, 23 August 1897).
- 22 *Natal Mercury*, 8 March 1897.
- 23 *Natal Mercury*, 17 April 1897.
- 24 *Natal Mercury*, 12 July 1897. See also *Natal Mercury*, 1 July and 14 July 1897.
- 25 Report of the supervisor of mining in Alexandra County, Frank B. Preston (*Natal Blue Book*, 1897, H107).

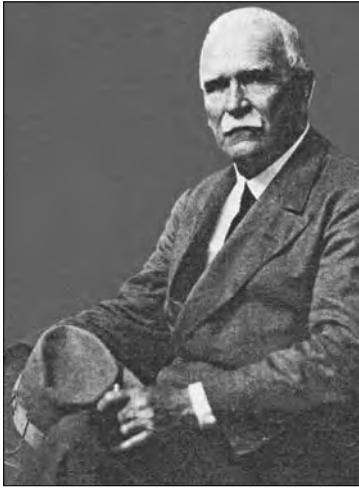


Figure 10.3 C.G. Smith

J. Weighton, the secretary of the Delta Lime Company, was scathing in his condemnation of the unreliability of shipping from the Mzimkulu. His frustration was based on the fact that lime could be stored in sacks only for a limited period before it became unusable. “Our stores, both at Port Shepstone and at the lime works are in a constant state of overflow. Very frequently the work of lime burning has to be suspended in consequence of having no place to store it and our inability to ship what we have in hand,” Weighton stated. To emphasise his contempt, he placed question marks after references to Port Shepstone in his report which he concluded by saying: “Our only salvation is railway communication with the markets of the Colony. Without this a young and important industry will be paralysed.”²⁶

Although three new vessels were introduced on the Port Shepstone run in 1898 – the locally built 24-ton ketch *Sobantu*,²⁷ the 32-ton ketch *Somtseu*²⁸ and the 97-ton ketch *Penguin*²⁹ – C.G. Smith gave notice of his intention to withdraw the *Umzimvubu* from service because access to the river had once again become irregular and uncertain.³⁰ In March the *Sobantu* was reported “shut in” for sixteen days whilst fully loaded with produce.³¹ With the withdrawal of the *Umzimvubu*, Port Shepstone was no longer serviced by steamers. Throughout 1899 and 1900 the *Pioneer* and *Penguin* provided regular service, making more than 100 voyages.³² In November 1900 the ketch *Harry Mundahl* began to make occasional voyages to the Mzimkulu,³³ but its services were short-lived. It was wrecked near Port Shepstone

26 Report of the supervisor of mining in Alexandra County, Frank B. Preston (*Natal Blue Book*, 1897, H107, Appendix B2). The Aikens, who had a marble mine on their Ruthville estate, concurred with Weighton’s remarks. They indicated that they had been promised “abundant working capital” by a British investor once the railway was through to Port Shepstone (*ibid.*, H108, Appendix B3).

27 *Natal Mercury*, 4 January 1898.

28 The first trip of the *Somtseu* to Port Shepstone was reported in the *Natal Mercury* of 18 February 1898.

29 The *Penguin*’s first trip to Port Shepstone was reported in the *Natal Mercury* on 1 August 1898. It was specified as being of 97 tons by the inquiry into its sinking in September 1904 (*Government Notice No. 646*, 1904).

30 *Natal Mercury*, 12 March 1898. The *Umzimvubu* did make five subsequent trips to Port Shepstone which were reported in the *Mercury* on 23 March, 9 May, 27 May, 7 July and 1 September 1898.

31 *Natal Mercury*, 12 March 1898.

32 See the appendix. On three occasions the *Umzimvubu* called at Port Shepstone in 1900 (*Natal Mercury*, 26 January, 26 March and 12 December 1900).

33 *Natal Mercury*, 23 November 1900.

in February 1901.³⁴ As 1900 came to a close, the entrance to the Mzimkulu was again blocked.³⁵ The Lower Umzimkulu Chamber of Commerce expressed despair at the news that seagoing transport was to be further reduced by the withdrawal of the *Penguin*.³⁶

Salvation came in the form of the railway. With the approach of the railway – daily traffic commenced from Umzumbe in January 1901 – commercial shipping interest in the Mzimkulu, with its risky and uncertain entrance, evaporated. The bulk of the fewer than twelve calls made in 1901 were by the locally owned Mills and Rethman ketch, the *Somtseu*.³⁷ From 23 September 1901 to the end of that year no further visits to the Mzimkulu were reflected in the *Mercury's* shipping columns.

Yet, officially, the Public Works Department planned to continue work in extending Kinsey's wall, while the chief engineer recommended the purchase of a suitable dredger.³⁸ Politicians like J.G. Maydon, who as noted later in the chapter, had a substantial investment in the Umzimkulu Sugar Company, continued to regard dredging as the solution to shipping woes on the Mzimkulu, describing the river as a "valuable colonial asset".³⁹ Although the era of commercial shipping on the Mzimkulu was over, the debate on that issue was set to linger for the rest of the colonial era and beyond.

Railways

Prior to the 1894 opening of the Natal Parliament, Frank Reynolds, a member of the Natal Legislative Council, published a notice in the *Government Gazette*⁴⁰ announcing his intention to introduce a bill to enable him, "on behalf of a Company to be formed", to extend the railway line from Isipingo to Umzinto.⁴¹ To underline his seriousness Reynolds provided details of a private survey which he had funded. At a dinner party at the Royal Hotel in Umzinto in July 1894, Reynolds stated that he had the survey done because the government appeared to be tardy in coming

34 *Natal Mercury*, 16 February 1901.

35 *Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1900.

36 *Natal Mercury*, 22 October 1900. The extent of reliance on seagoing transport was evident by the fact that 7 695 tons of goods were moved in 1900 (*Natal Blue Book*, Departmental Reports, 1900, C74).

37 See the appendix.

38 *Natal Blue Book*, Departmental Reports, 1900, C74.

39 *Natal Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 5, 10 May 1901, 144-145.

40 *Government Gazette*, Vol. 46, No. 2668, 3 April 1894. It also appeared in the *Natal Mercury* on 2 April 1894.

41 A similar notice was published by James Liege Hulett (Victoria County MLA) in the *Natal Mercury* on 4 April 1894 in which he proposed a privately funded and maintained rail link from Verulam to the Tugela border.

up with the £200 to £300 needed for the task.⁴² Following the rejection of the Welborne scheme in 1874 it was official policy that railway construction was the sole responsibility of the Natal government. Thus Reynolds' announcement was probably a demonstration of the wealth and power that he and his brother Charles had come to command. Moreover, given John Robinson's long espoused "trinity of aspirations", namely railway extension, responsible government and South African union,⁴³ it was a foregone conclusion that railway extension would be a priority of his ministry.

Adding impetus to that direction was the fact that Albert Hime, who had been the colonial engineer, no longer had influence over such projects. With the advent of responsible government, infrastructural projects became the responsibility of Minister of Lands and Works Thomas Keir Murray. Thus Reynolds' offer, at a public meeting in Umzinto on 14 April, to withdraw his proposed bill in the event that the government was willing to proceed with the extension of the South Coast line, amounted to political grandstanding. Nonetheless, Reynolds was widely perceived as the catalyst of the whole development.⁴⁴ The *Mercury's* "Man in the Moon" column referred to him as the Alexandra representative who "notably had worked hard" to secure the extension of the South Coast line,⁴⁵ while an editorial in the *Mercury* on 20 July 1894 referred to him as a "resident of sterling [sic] worth". Even Governor Hely-Hutchinson, who was Reynolds' guest when he visited Umzinto in July 1894, publicly lauded Reynolds for his railway initiative at a county dinner attended by 40 specially invited guests.⁴⁶

Despite Prime Minister Robinson's urging that his ministry's bill (No. 37) to extend the railway from Isipingo to Umzinto "ought to receive the unanimous support of every member of this House",⁴⁷ ten members opposed it on the grounds of cost and that the railway would "not be the slightest benefit to the colony".⁴⁸ In mitigation of the projected cost of £3 700 per mile, with the overall cost set at £110 000, Charles Hitchens of Alfred County pointed out that the railway would promote the sale of 200 000 acres of unsold Crown land in Alexandra County, as well as enhance the value of existing properties, thus offsetting the cost to the treasury.⁴⁹

42 The survey included a list of over 100 properties and plots between Isipingo and Umzinto which would be affected by the proposed rail route. Although the proposed rail route ran through the Mnini reserve, Reynolds' list made no reference to affected properties there (*Natal Mercury*, 18 July 1894).

43 Robinson 1900:xxxv-xxxvi.

44 *Natal Mercury*, 19 April 1894.

45 *Natal Mercury*, 14 July 1894.

46 *Natal Mercury*, 16 and 18 July 1894

47 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 22, 489.

48 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 22, 196.

49 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 22, 204, 490. In the Legislative Council, William Arbuckle of Pietermaritzburg proposed that the bill "be read this day six months", arguing, *inter alia*, uncertainty

Those opposed to the line on account of its cost and the uncertainty of the bridging of the Mkomanzi appeared to have short memories. Just six years earlier, at a time of economic difficulty, approval was given to the construction of the railway from Ladysmith to Newcastle at a cost of £8 513 per mile, amounting to an overall cost of £672 527, over territory which posed great engineering challenges because of its steep gradients.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, their motives were clear: the South Coast lacked investment appeal compared to the lucrative coal mines of northern Natal.

With 23 members in support, the Umzinto Railway Bill became Act 28 of 1894.⁵¹ Jubilation prevailed in Alexandra County, as the *Mercury* noted in editorial:

For years the South Coast colonists have been agitating for improvements. Under the old regime their representations were but coldly received and little or no encouragement given to the district. The advent of the present Government was speedily felt in many ways.

In addition to the railway, the punt on the Mkomanzi was taken over by the government and its charges reduced by a third.⁵² The *Mercury's* parliamentary correspondent noted in his review of members of the Legislative Assembly that “Mr. Archibald has certainly beamed with gratitude to the Government throughout the session in respect of the Umzinto Railway”.⁵³ The *Times of Natal* was pessimistic and critical in its appraisal. It noted that “until the construction of the Umzinto railway is actually begun, we are afraid the voice of Alexandra County will not be strong on affairs of colonial interest. Messrs. Archibald and Kirkman are resolute ministerialists.”⁵⁴

This comment was made in the wake of the praise Archibald heaped on the Robinson ministry at a public meeting in April 1895 in Umzinto when he expressed gratitude to the government for such things as improved roads, building a new school house at Umzinto, providing a cheaper and improved ferry service on the Mkomanzi and the railway survey in the county.⁵⁵

over the bridging of the Mkomanzi (*Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 2, 41). The *Natal Farmers' Magazine* remarked on page 9 of its first issue (14 January 1893) that the poor transport situation prevented the South Coast from being “thickly populated with thriving farmers”.

50 LC No. 12, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 40, No. 2318, 4 September 1888.

51 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 22, 491; *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 46, No. 2690, 31 July 1894. Act 34, the extension of the line to the Tugela, was promulgated at the same time.

52 *Natal Mercury*, 20 July 1894.

53 *Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1894.

54 *Times of Natal*, 22 April 1895.

55 *Natal Mercury*, 20 April 1895.



Figure 10.4 Punt over the Mkomanzi, 1895

The Isipingo–Umzinto railway

Survey work on the Isipingo to Umzinto line commenced on 1 July 1894 and was completed by March 1895. Tenders were called for and on 18 June 1895 the government announced that it had accepted a tender for £93 000 from Messrs. Middleton Bros., a firm which had Canadian railway experience.⁵⁶ After curving inland south of Isipingo, the line joined the coast at Amanzimtoti and would continue along there as it extended southwards. Before the survey was undertaken, Thomas Murray, the Minister of Lands and Works, presciently stated in the Legislative Assembly on 16 May 1894 that the line would run along the coast. The hilly nature of the topography immediately inland rendered the coastal route far more preferable in terms of the challenge of construction. Murray also predicted, very accurately as things turned out, that “the beautiful spots along the seaside in a few years’ time will develop into favourite seaside resorts”.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal, 1894/95, C31-32; Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Vol. 23, 418.*

⁵⁷ *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal, 1894/95, C32; Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Vol. 22, 193.*

Although the legislation specified Umzinto as the initial terminus of the line, the survey was made as far as Park Rynie. This section of line involved the construction of twelve bridges, the largest spanning the Mkomanzi which required fifteen spans of 55 feet in length each. Stations and stopping places were designated at Amanzimtoti, Illovo River, Illovo Beach, Umgababa, Lower Umkomaas, Crookes Siding (later renamed Renishaw Halt), Scottburgh and Park Rynie. A branch line was to connect Umzinto.⁵⁸ This caused consternation in Umzinto, where residents felt that as the seat of the magistracy and as the hub of county commerce Umzinto could not be treated as a mere extension of the coastal railway. A public meeting on 12 March 1896 resolved that any southward extension of the line had to pass through the village.⁵⁹

Charles Reynolds, however, took a different view and in a letter to the *Mercury* stated that it was “absurd that a third-rate village should dictate as to what route a state railway should take”. The value of Umzinto, he claimed, “would not equal the cost of building one mile of railway”.⁶⁰ Although R.A. Knox of Umzinto objected to Reynolds’ remarks,⁶¹ nothing further was said, possibly indicating the extent of influence the Reynolds exercised in Alexandra County. Also silent was Frank Reynolds. After the blaze of publicity and kudos he received in 1894 over his perceived role as the catalyst of the South Coast’s rail extension, the records of the debates in the Legislative Council for 1895, 1896 and 1897 reflect that he failed to make any further remarks on the subject.⁶²

Nonetheless, excitement as to the coming of the railway was rife throughout the South Coast community. One set of predictions calculated that the line would reach Park Rynie by mid-1896 and would be completed to Port Shepstone some time in 1897.⁶³ But such hopes were dashed. Labour shortages and the scourge of rinderpest, which decimated livestock herds and as a result impacted negatively on ox wagon transport, affected the pace of rail extension on both the North and

58 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1897, C40. In 1899 Thomas Kirkman, who represented Alexandra County in the Legislative Council, complained that stoppages accounted for an hour and twenty minutes of the journey from Park Rynie to Durban (*Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 28, 15 June 1899).

59 CSO 1495, No. 1497, 14 March 1896. Prior to the March meeting, the idea of Park Rynie as the terminus had already been deprecated (*Natal Mercury*, 24 February 1896). Two further meetings were held but proved futile (*Natal Mercury*, 7 April and 14 November 1896).

60 Letter to the Editor, *Natal Mercury*, 21 March 1896.

61 Letter to the Editor, *Natal Mercury*, 25 March 1896

62 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 3, 4-5.

63 *Natal Mercury*, 5 December 1895. In a letter to the *Mercury*, published on 12 December 1895, a correspondent who signed himself ‘Old Colonist’ expressed the view that the name Park Rynie should be Rennie after the late John Rennie of Aberdeen, a pioneer of steam navigation to Natal.

South Coast.⁶⁴ However, by the beginning of 1897 the earthworks, masonry and eight of the twelve bridges on the line from Isipingo to Umkomaas were complete.⁶⁵ At 7.55 am on Monday 22 February 1897, 60 dignitaries filled the two passenger coaches that made up the first train to steam from Durban to the north bank of the Mkomanzi river.⁶⁶ Work on the bridge over the Mkomanzi had only just begun, so it was not until 22 September 1897 that the first train passed over what had been a watery barrier to colonial transport for over 40 years.

With the remaining bridges over the Amahlongwana, Amhlongwa and Mpambinyoni rivers completed, the first train reached Park Rynie on 1 December 1897. A journey to or from Durban, which had previously taken up to six days by wagon, was reduced to four hours.⁶⁷ The need for the railway was well-illustrated by statistics published in 1898. Passenger usage (referring to all classes) from Isipingo to Park Rynie between January and April 1898 averaged 5 598 per month.⁶⁸ But for wagon and motorised vehicles that would presently make an appearance on the roads, the Mkomanzi would continue to pose a barrier. Only on 5 May 1923 was the bridge for road traffic opened, thus ending over 60 years of reliance on a punt to cross the river.⁶⁹

Despite its importance on the South Coast, Umzinto remained isolated from the rail system. An ox bus service, as it was called, provided transport from Park Rynie to Umzinto on a daily basis at a charge of three shillings per passenger⁷⁰ Earlier protestations demanding the routing of the line through Umzinto to Port Shepstone proved futile, as engineering surveys



64 *Natal Mercury*, 10 November 1897. Van Onselen (1972:488) has noted that rinderpest greatly impoverished Africans and contributed to a labour migration.

65 Public Works Report, *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1897, C39. Pilings for the bridges were driven 25 feet into the ground (*Natal Mercury*, 23 February 1897).

66 *Natal Mercury*, 23 February 1897.

67 *Natal Mercury*, 3 December 1897. A typical timetable trip from Durban to Park Rynie commenced at 9.15 am arriving at Park Rynie at 1.40 pm. After an hour's stopover, the train returned to Durban arriving at 5.53 pm. The North Coast extension from Verulam to Tongaat was opened on 3 December 1897.

68 LA No. 4, 1898, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 50, No. 2955, 24 May 1898.

69 *SA Sugar Journal*, Vol. 7, 1923, 463. The bridge cost £38,000.

70 *Natal Mercury*, 8 April 1898.

confirmed that from Park Rynie to Port Shepstone the coastal route was the only option and that a branch extension would have to suffice for Umzinto.⁷¹ To that end the Umzinto Branch Railway Act (No. 22 of 1897) was passed by the Legislative Assembly, but not without considerable opposition because of its projected cost. The construction of the six and a half mile extension through hilly terrain, including rolling stock, was put at £40 000. Yet the line's gross annual traffic was estimated to amount to only £1 780.⁷² Thomas Kirkman of Alexandra County attempted to defend Umzinto's status, claiming that in respect of postal deliveries (50 000 items per annum) it ranked fourth amongst the smaller towns and villages. Although the colony's finances showed a surplus of £262 889 for the year ended 30 June 1896, which as Colonial Treasurer George Sutton pointed out "enabled the Colony to proceed with many public works without the necessity of borrowing money", members of the Legislative Assembly were less than enthusiastic about the cost of the Umzinto branch railway, as indicated by the narrow vote of sixteen in favour to thirteen opposed.⁷³



Figure 10.5 The first train arrives at Park Rynie, December 1897

Construction of the branch line to Umzinto was dependent on the extension of the railway southwards of Park Rynie (see next section), because the branch line turned off three and a half miles south of Park Rynie at the mouth of the Mzinto river, and

71 Legislative Assembly, Sessional Paper No. 17, 29 April 1897.

72 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 25, 1897, 385-386.

73 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 25, 1897, 437, 147, 151, 457. During the 1898 railway debates in the Legislative Assembly, Joseph Baynes of Ixopo continued to criticise the decision on the Umzinto branch line, claiming that the main line to Natal's southern border should rather run through Umzinto and on to Ixopo so as to benefit from the East Criquealand trade. Baynes argued that a railway to Port Shepstone would be a 'white elephant', as the area already enjoyed development as a port (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 27, 43-44).

headed up the valley for a distance of six miles.⁷⁴ Only in 1899 was an appropriation of £35 000 promulgated for the branch line.⁷⁵ On 8 August 1900, 60 special guests were aboard the first train to travel from Durban to Umzinto, a distance of 51 miles.⁷⁶

The Park Rynie–Port Shepstone railway

Although Act 21 of 1897 committed the government to the railway from Park Rynie to Port Shepstone, the decision was controversial because of the ongoing expenditure on development of the Mzimkulu harbour. The acting under-secretary in the Colonial Office had suggested that if such a project was undertaken, “any large expenditure on the Port Shepstone harbour works will be arrested”.⁷⁷ In opposing the extension of the line, Henry Binns of Victoria County cited the lack of cultivation between Park Rynie and the Mzimkulu and argued that it was “wild expenditure” to construct a line through this “poor land”. Referring to the £33 000 already spent on developing a harbour on the Mzimkulu, Binns contended that it made more sense to fully develop that facility and to forego the railway extension.⁷⁸ The *Times of Natal* also felt that the money should be spent on improving Port Shepstone harbour and saw the proposed railway “as of the political type, a railway to keep the votes of the district in favour of the Ministry”.⁷⁹

In support of the single, 3½-foot gauge rail link, John Wallace, the Minister of Lands and Works, argued that it would spur development. Citing the erection of the Umzimkulu sugar mill, the expected crop of 3 000 tons of fruit, as well as orders for 4 000 tons of lime from Johannesburg, he argued that although the projected cost of £209 505 for the 37-mile line was high,⁸⁰ revenue from the high tonnages transported would redeem the initial outlay. Charles Hitchens of Alfred County noted that shipping on the Mzimkulu was erratic with delays of up to ten days. In July 1897 Port Shepstone was the destination of a fact-finding mission led by Wallace. For certain of the MLAs, like T.P. O’Meara of Pietermaritzburg, it was their first visit to the lower South Coast. O’Meara was reportedly astonished by the size of

74 Legislative Assembly, Sessional Paper No. 17, 29 April 1897; *Natal Mercury*, 9 August 1900.

75 Hitchens & Sweeney 1901:54.

76 *Natal Mercury*, 9 August 1900.

77 CSO 1495, No. 125, 28 January 1896.

78 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 25, 1897, 373-375. F.A.R. Johnstone of Newcastle argued that Port Shepstone should be satisfied with the money already spent on its harbour and wanted the railway bill withdrawn for at least a year (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 25, 1897, 395).

79 *Times of Natal*, 12 February 1896.

80 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 25, 1897, 369-370. The need to erect bridges over some twelve rivers added considerably to the expense of construction. It was still £3 000 per mile cheaper than what the Ladysmith–Newcastle line had cost nine years earlier.

the Mzimkulu and the extent of the local agriculture and forestry. A memorandum signed by 56 local residents was handed to Wallace. It expressed thanks to the Robinson and Escombe ministries for expediting the needs of the region, particularly the railway.⁸¹ A sequel to these sentiments occurred a month later at a meeting in Harding when Charles Hitchens (local MLA) strongly endorsed the efforts of the ministers of Lands and Works in the Robinson and Escombe ministries, Thomas Murray and John Wallace, in promoting public works on the South Coast, while criticising Albert Hime, the colonial engineer, prior to 1894, for his negative remarks about the construction of a railway down the South Coast and the lack of infrastructural development on the South Coast during his long term in office.⁸²

With an election due in September 1897, interest in the South Coast and its needs was replaced by the burning issue of that time – the entrance works of Durban harbour. Terms like “North Pier extension” and “dredging” became synonymous with “opposition” and “government”.⁸³ But if Port Shepstone was remote from Durban, the plagues of locusts, rinderpest and drought were not. As an editorial in the *Times of Natal* lamented: “Never in the history of the Colony has a general election been held under more distressing circumstances”.⁸⁴ Drought, locusts and rinderpest cast a pall over economic prospects. A report from Port Shepstone noted that fruit crops were non-existent and that cane fields and mealie fields were bare. One warehouse allegedly held 40 000 hides as a result of the scourge of rinderpest.⁸⁵ Also disheartening for the South Coast was the defeat of the Escombe ministry, which had been supportive of railway extension, and the fact that the new government was headed by an opponent of the Park Rynie–Port Shepstone line, Henry Binns of Victoria County. However, on 30 November 1897, Binns reassured the South Coast that their promised rail link would be expedited.⁸⁶

Beyond sympathetic rhetoric, there was little sign of progress. In March 1898 another party of dignitaries visited Port Shepstone and expressed support for the line extension.⁸⁷ Only in May, when the Supply Bill came before the Legislative

81 *Natal Mercury*, 22 July 1897. T.P. O’Meara was a critic of the Port Shepstone harbour works. In speeches in 1895 and 1896 in the Legislative Assembly he expressed strong disapproval of the fact that after £30 000 had been spent on the works, access to the river by coasters remained risky and unpredictable (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 23, 1895, 283; *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 24, 1896, 249).

82 *Natal Mercury*, 23 August 1897. Harry Escombe formed a new ministry following the resignation of Sir John Robinson as prime minister on 12 February 1897.

83 Heydenrych 1985:39.

84 *Times of Natal*, 21 September 1897.

85 *Natal Mercury*, 26 January 1898. The locust and rinderpest plagues are discussed in detail later in the chapter.

86 *Natal Mercury*, 26 January 1898.

87 *Natal Mercury*, 9 April 1898. The delegation included Hulett, Hime, Escombe and F. Johnstone, the

Assembly, was there an indication that with £75 000 earmarked towards the cost of the line, work would soon begin.⁸⁸ Although surveys of the coast between Park Rynie and Port Shepstone were completed by March 1897,⁸⁹ it was not until April 1899 that the final pegging out of the line from Umtwalumi to the north bank of the Mzimkulu commenced.⁹⁰ Albert Hime visited Port Shepstone in May. By then he was Minister of Lands and Works in the Binns ministry, but following Binns' death in June, he became prime minister. Asked when he thought the railway would reach Port Shepstone, he stated November 1901 – to the disappointment of the local residents.⁹¹ But Hime did appear to be sympathetic to the plight of the residents of Lower Umzimkulu. On 15 June 1899, in motivation of a vote for £3 000 for the maintenance of works at the mouth of the Mzimkulu, he emphasised that he did not want “to place any disabilities upon so distant a portion of the Colony which is as yet not supplied with a railway”.⁹²

With almost as many bridges required as was the case for the line from Isipingo to Umkomaas (twelve in total), and with the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War retarding the availability of engineers and materials, it was inevitable that construction would be delayed. The earthworks and culverts to North Shepstone were completed in June 1900 and on 8 August 1900 the line to Umtwalumi was opened for daily traffic.⁹³ Frustration with the slow pace of progress manifested itself at a well-attended public meeting called by the Lower Umzimkulu Chamber of Commerce in October 1900. There was urgency because seagoing transport from the river had become erratic and food stocks were in short supply.⁹⁴ But it was not until 20 January 1901 that daily rail traffic to Umzumbe commenced. By then £176 782 had been spent on construction of the line.⁹⁵

An unprecedented number of visitors descended on Port Shepstone in anticipation of the historic arrival of the first train from Durban. A week before the gala event it was reported that not only were the hotels filled with people from Durban and Pietermaritzburg, but that “the beach is dotted with tents and wagons for miles

new Minister of Agriculture.

88 Legislative Assembly, Sessional Paper No. 1, 17 May 1898.

89 Legislative Assembly, Sessional Paper No. 17, 29 April 1897.

90 *Natal Blue Book*, 1899, Departmental Reports, C8.

91 *Natal Mercury*, 8 May 1899. Hime's estimate was only four months out. The first train to reach Port Shepstone did so on 26 July 1901.

92 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 28, 228.

93 Departmental Reports, *Natal Blue Book*, 1900, C21. The infrastructure at the Umtwalumi station included a passenger platform, a goods platform, a ladies waiting room, a European urinal, a lamp room, a goods shed, clerks' quarters, two Indian barracks and refreshment rooms (*ibid.*, C23).

94 *Natal Mercury*, 22 October 1900.

95 Departmental Reports, *Natal Blue Book*, C22, 24.

down the coast”.⁹⁶ The first train to Port Shepstone left Durban station at 8.50 am on Friday morning, 26 July 1901, conveying the governor, Sir Henry McCallum, and several distinguished guests. Travelling at a maximum speed of twenty miles per hour, the train completed the 77 mile journey by 2 pm.

To mark the occasion, a public luncheon attended by 150 people was held in the goods shed. But the celebrations did not end there. A week after the event it was reported that visitors continued to throng Port Shepstone.⁹⁷ The coming of the railway not only put an end to the isolated circumstances which had been synonymous with the South Coast for decades, but also ended the frontier character of the region and integrated it fully with the rest of the colony. With its formal incorporation into Natal in 1897, Zululand became the new frontier, particularly in respect of its mining prospects.⁹⁸



Figure 10.6 The Port Shepstone railway station in 1902

Other developments

One of the consequences of the responsible government dispensation was an accelerated approach to the development of infrastructure. Besides railway construction, the South Coast also benefited in other ways. Alexandra County Resident Magistrate McLaurin expressed delight at the new road to Lower Umzimkulu, describing it as “so superior in every way to the old route”. In August 1894 a new public school was opened in Umzinto which McLaurin praised as being

96 *Natal Mercury*, 22 July 1901.

97 *Natal Mercury*, 27, 29 July 1901; 9 August 1901.

98 *Natal Witness*, 24 September 1898.

“quite an ornament to the little village”.⁹⁹ After having relocated the post office to the telegraph building in 1888, the increase in postal business necessitated the erection of a separate post office in Umzinto. The increase in the number of mail items handled by the Umzinto post office from 93 834 items in 1894/95 to 129 443 in 1898 not only justified the need for new premises, but also indicated the increased economic activity and settlement in the area.¹⁰⁰

In a letter to the colonial secretary, James Aiken of Ruthville noted that in 1877 he received mail once a week; from 1880, with visits of steamers to the Mzimkulu, he received post twice a week on occasions. By 1896 the service had become a daily one, so that copies of the *Natal Witness* and *Natal Mercury* arrived by 8 am on the day following their publication. Aiken rejoiced in the fact that he could then respond by return mail which departed at 4 pm each day.¹⁰¹ In 1897 telephone offices opened in Umkomaas and Port Shepstone.¹⁰²



Figure 10.7 The old Port Shepstone post office

99 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1894/95, B43-44. The Umzinto school was one of three schools supplied with new furniture (*ibid.*, C99).

100 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1894/95., H18; *Natal Blue Book*, 1898, H34.

101 CSO 1458, No. 1353A, 6 March 1896.

102 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1897, H130.

However, years of infrastructure neglect on the South Coast could not be erased in a hurry. Despite the educational needs of 50 children, in 1896 Port Shepstone still did not have a government school. Upon inquiring why this was the case when there were government schools in towns such as Ixopo and Umzinto, which had fewer children than Port Shepstone, John Rethman, the Alfred County MLA, was informed simply that Port Shepstone would have to wait its turn.¹⁰³ Only in 1900 did work commence on the erection of a government school building.¹⁰⁴ Port Shepstone also lacked a proper hospital. Although a building with rooms was completed in 1898, no provision for a kitchen or a latrine was made and the windows and water tank still needed attention in the opinion of district surgeon Charles Bowker.¹⁰⁵ In Umzinto there was a hospital for Indian patients only. When Robert Archibald, Alexandra County MLA, inquired as to why no provision was made for European and African patients, the response of Prime Minister Hime was that the government could not establish cottage hospitals in every village.¹⁰⁶



Figure 10.8 Robert Montgomery Archibald, *Natal Pictorials*

103 CSO 1475, No. 4714, 25 July and 13 August 1896.

104 Departmental Reports, *Natal Blue Book*, 1900, B100.

105 Durban Archives Repository, Minute Paper, PWD 1622/98, LU 381/98, Vol. 3/2/7.

106 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 29, 1900, 95.

Property investment

“The South Coast extension therefore opens with every prospect of being of material value to all concerned”, declared the *Mercury* in an editorial.¹⁰⁷ Within months the accuracy of that statement was proven. On 19 October 1901 the *Mercury* reported that hundreds of tons of goods were being moved to and from East Griqualand and Pondoland via Port Shepstone.

It appeared that old predictions regarding the importance of the railway were coming true. J.D. Ballance, a property agent and publisher of the *Natal Farmers' Magazine* predicted in 1894 that “as soon as railway communication is established, land [on the South Coast] will enhance in value by leaps and bounds”.¹⁰⁸ The prospect of a rail connection did indeed provide impetus to economic growth. In 1898 applications were registered for 50 erven in Port Shepstone. One of the conditions of sale was that a substantial building had to be erected. The Imperial Bank was amongst the applicants. South of the Mzumbe river a number of residential sites were reported to have been acquired by wealthy folk living on the Witwatersrand at prices that were up to 100% above market value.¹⁰⁹ The north bank of the Mzimkulu, or North Shepstone as it was called, also experienced a property boom. Called the “Berea of our district” in anticipation of it being the terminus of the railway, it became a sought-after residential and mercantile area. Charles Hitchens, one of Alfred County’s MLAs, was among those who acquired property there. South Shepstone also experienced a boom in land sales, where the price of plots a mere quarter of an acre in size rose from £5 to £20.¹¹⁰ Lower Umzimkulu Resident Magistrate R.H. Beachcroft stated in his annual report for 1898 that plots in the township of Port Shepstone were “being rapidly bought up and buildings here and there are beginning to show through the bush wastes”.¹¹¹

July 1898 saw the establishment of the Lower Umzimkulu Chamber of Commerce.¹¹² Indicators of investor confidence in the area were also borne out by the erection of a cold storage and refrigeration factory, and the news that the Delta Lime Co. Ltd., which had capital of £12 500, was expanding its number of kilns.¹¹³ On 1 May 1901 the Standard Bank opened its one hundredth branch in Southern Africa at Port Shepstone.¹¹⁴

107 *Natal Mercury*, 9 August 1901.

108 *Natal Farmers' Magazine*, 15 August 1894, 141.

109 *Natal Mercury*, 5 September 1898 and 12 January 1899.

110 *Natal Mercury*, 12 January 1899. It is of note that there were no reports of similar developments along the North Coast at that time.

111 *Natal Blue Book*, 1898, B45.

112 *Natal Mercury*, 12 January 1899.

113 *Natal Mercury*, 5 September 1898.

114 Henry 1963:329.

Tourism

Early indications of the South Coast's future as a tourist and holiday resort region began to feature at this time. Under the hotel section of the business directory published in the *Natal Mercury*, apart from Durban and upcountry establishments, the only other hotels advertised were those on the South Coast.¹¹⁵ The *Mercury's* "Man in the Moon" column on 16 April 1898 was lavish in its praise of Amanzimtoti and Umkomaas as attractive holiday resorts.¹¹⁶ In an election speech in 1901, Frank Reynolds remarked that before the coming of the railway Umkomaas had been "a wilderness". Since 1897 it had blossomed into a community comprising between 30 and 40 houses.¹¹⁷ Scottburgh Hotel was advertised as a health resort which was placed within one minute of the beach.¹¹⁸

Natal Government Railways also promoted the South Coast as a destination of choice. In 1899 it published a 36-page souvenir booklet which featured a number of "photo-process illustrations" of what it called the sites and scenery of the South Coast railway to Park Rynie.¹¹⁹ No such booklet was published concerning the North Coast. Indeed, a report on the coastlands of Victoria County described them as "a wilderness of everything but sugar cane".¹²⁰

Commercial agriculture

In 1897 Charles Hitchens, Alfred County's MLA, observed that transport difficulties resulted in less than one percent of the fruit produced on the South Coast actually finding its way onto the Durban market.¹²¹ By 1900 that situation had changed. As *The Agricultural Journal* observed, the arrival of the railway proved a great boon for fruit cultivation in Alexandra County, "as the market can be speedily accessed".¹²² The prospect of the rail connection also spurred capital investment. In 1899, Barrow Green estates of Lower Umzimkulu became a registered company with 1 000 acres divided equally between tea and sugar, a large number of fruit trees, and cotton

115 Hotels in Umzinto and Umkomaas were featured (*Natal Mercury*, 30 January 1899, 27 July 1899, 5 August 1899, 13 and 18 September 1899).

116 The only North Coast hotel to feature was the Railway Hotel in Verulam. It advertised itself as being within easy reach of the beach, where an abundance of fishing and oysters was to be had (*Natal Mercury*, 9 October 1896).

117 *Natal Mercury*, 6 September 1901.

118 *Natal Mercury*, 19 October 1900.

119 Amanzimtoti, Illovo, Umkomaas, Greenpoint, Scottburgh and Park Rynie were featured (*Natal Mercury*, 11 July 1899).

120 *Natal Farmers' Magazine*, 15 May 1893, 121.

121 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 25, 1897, 371.

122 *The Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 21, 21 December 1900, 670.

cultivation.¹²³ The estate, founded by General Bisset, was cited with acclaim in the resident magistrate's report for 1895 for its record tea production of 10 000 pounds.¹²⁴

Despite the initiative of Barrow Green estates, there was, in the view of the *Natal Farmers' Magazine*, an indifference amongst farmers of Lower Umzimkulu towards farming as a commercial enterprise because of "the almost complete lack of market" as a result of transport difficulties from Port Shepstone to Durban.¹²⁵ Nonetheless, thanks to the efforts of Percy Arthur Silburn, who represented Alfred County in the final years of the colonial era, a small fibre industry was started in Lower Umzimkulu. The fibre was extracted from aloë leaves and, according to Silburn, fetched £22 per ton in England.¹²⁶ In August 1900 the Natal Fibre Company, based in Port Shepstone, exported its first consignment of five bales to England.¹²⁷

Sugar production in Lower Umzimkulu was always small compared with that of Alexandra County.¹²⁸ Initiated by Archibald Sinclair in the early 1870s on his farm Ambleside on the Mzimkulu river,¹²⁹ his modest efforts were overtaken by the Aikens' Ruthville estate which had 300 acres under cane and in the crushing season of 1882 was producing one and a half tons per day.¹³⁰ The potential of the district for sugar production attracted the attention of a group of prominent politicians and as a result the Umzimkulu Sugar Company was formed in August 1896. With an initial capital investment of £25 000, the company planned to lease 880 acres and erect a mill capable of producing fifteen tons per day.¹³¹ Beyond a report of bush clearance taking place,¹³² very little progress followed. At the first annual general meeting of the company on 28 April 1898 it was noted that only 48 acres were available for crushing and that the cost of the mill, the lease of the land and administrative costs had exhausted the

123 *Natal Mercury*, 12 January 1899.

124 Departmental Reports, *Natal Blue Book*, year ended 30 June 1895, B65.

125 *Natal Farmers' Magazine*, 15 March 1895. The indifference of farmers was cited as the reason that attempts to form an Agricultural Society in Lower Umzimkulu had failed.

126 *Natal Mercury*, 23 August 1895; 19 October 1896

127 *Natal Mercury*, 11 March 1897; 27 August 1900. The Fibre Company had 23 employees in 1901 – three whites and twenty Africans (Durban Archives Repository, LU/755A/1901/Vol. 3/2/9). However, the venture did not last long. An advertisement in the *Natal Mercury* on 17 April 1902 announced that the Natal Fibre Company was in liquidation and that its equipment and property was to be auctioned.

128 In 1902, for example, Alexandra County produced 5 627 tons to 1 044 in Alfred County (*Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal*, 1902, 226-227).

129 Letter to the editor from Archibald Sinclair, *Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1888.

130 Interview with David C. Aiken, *Times of Natal*, 15 March 1895.

131 Its board comprised of J.G. Maydon (MLA) as chairman, Marshall Campbell (MLC), Benjamin Greenacre (MLA), J.W. Leuchars (MLA) and George Payne, the mayor of Durban (*Natal Mercury*, 28 August 1896; 29 April 1898).

132 *Times of Natal*, 6 February 1897.

working capital (the company was actually overdrawn by £300) and that a further £12 000 was required. The composition of the board of directors had also changed.¹³³

However, sugar production for the entire Lower Umzimkulu district was modest for many years, with just over 1 000 tons recorded in 1902.¹³⁴ Paul Dickinson cites mismanagement of the Umzimkulu Sugar Company's mill as the chief reason for the company's faltering performance (until 1904), along with high working costs¹³⁵ and insufficient capital. In March 1904 the company was renamed and registered as Umzimkulu estates.¹³⁶ Robert Osborn's statement that in 1904 Umzimkulu estates "passed to the control of C.G. Smith" is inaccurate. This change occurred only late in 1919.¹³⁷ Although sugar production showed a significant increase from 788 tons in 1905 to 1 958 by 1907/08,¹³⁸ the increase was due to the fact that the company had by then incorporated Barrow Green estates, the Aikens' Ruthville estate, and Esperanza estate.¹³⁹ According to Dickinson, for most of its history Umzimkulu estates was a 'Cinderella' company that turned solid profits only in the late 1930s. But Dickinson concedes that its survival can be ascribed to its association with C.G. Smith and Company Ltd., which allowed it access to financial resources it may not otherwise have secured.¹⁴⁰

Locusts and rinderpest

The first swarms of locusts on the South Coast were noted in 1894 by Alexandra County's resident magistrate, James McLaurin.¹⁴¹ Speaking in the Legislative Assembly on 13 June 1895, Robert Archibald remarked that the Umzinto district had been experiencing locust swarms for six to seven months. He claimed that one swarm, fifteen miles in length and several miles wide, had menaced the area

133 G.A. de Labistour was chairman. Other board members were Charles Hitchens (MLA), C.B. de Gersigny, John Fraser, George Payne and Marshall Campbell (MLC). The company's first cane was crushed in September 1898 (*Natal Mercury*, 16 September 1898).

134 *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal*, 1902, 226-227.

135 In 1901 the mill employed 200 Indian labourers, five Africans and six whites (Durban Archives Repository, LU/755A/1901, Vol. 3/2/9).

136 The major shareholders were J.G. Maydon (11 769 shares), J.W. Leuchars (5 714 shares), Frank Reynolds (3 200 shares) and C.G. Smith (2 500 shares) (Dickinson 1989:21-23).

137 Osborn, 1964:326; Dickinson 1989:25.

138 Dickinson 1989:23.

139 *Natal Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 22 March 1907, 219.

140 Dickinson 1989:32-33. Between 1904 and 1907 the company incurred losses of £19 613. Although returning modest profits by 1912, a Standard Bank report of that year noted that the company "cannot be regarded as occupying a strong position". Frank Reynolds owned the company briefly in 1919, but sold it to C.G. Smith because he saw it as a burden best disposed of (*ibid.*, 23-26).

141 CSO 1415, No. 6485, 8 December 1894.

during Christmas 1894.¹⁴² While the government was slow to apply its mind to measures to confront the locust plague, James Aiken of Ruthville estate claimed to have “stopped locusts in their millions eating young cane” by dusting his cane fields with “fine unslaked lime”. As a result, the colonial secretary instructed resident magistrates in coastal areas to apply Aiken’s remedy.¹⁴³ But the menace did not abate. By August 1895 swarms were reported from the Lower Umzinkulu district.¹⁴⁴ In October, Magistrate McLaurin conveyed his thanks to the African residents of Alexandra County for their role in confronting the insect plague which had resulted in 1 700 sacks being filled with exterminated locusts.¹⁴⁵

By this time the Robinson ministry had a coordinated locust extermination programme in place with Joseph Forsyth-Ingram as the chief locust officer. Although extensive locust extermination was carried out in the Umzinto, Equeefa, Ifafa, Umzumbe and Mpambinyoni districts, maize and sugar crops were seriously ravaged. Forsyth-Ingram claimed that the sugar crop had lost 40% of its value.¹⁴⁶ However, his claim appears to be exaggerated. Statistics subsequently published by the Durban Chamber of Commerce showed that the sugar output for the South Coast for 1895 showed only a 10% decline – from 6 375 tons in 1894 to 5 671 tons in 1895, with consistent tonnages for 1896 and 1897.¹⁴⁷

Widespread locust damage was reported across the colony. So intense were the locust swarms that a goods train was stopped for 70 minutes at Umlaas road because locusts had clogged the wheels of the locomotive and the trucks. Similar delays occurred at Howick, Richmond Road and Manderston. The mealie crop at Camperdown was totally destroyed, the cobs picked clean as if they had been through a shelling machine.¹⁴⁸ In an editorial headed “The Coming Famine” the *Times of Natal* raised the issue of food security with particular reference to the plight of Africans.¹⁴⁹ It subsequently called on the government to scrap duties charged on mealies and for the railways to reduce carriage costs on mealies.¹⁵⁰

142 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 23, 1895, 382.

143 CSO 1419, No. 400, 21 January 1895.

144 CSO 1439, No. 4386, 2 September 1895.

145 CSO 1442, No. 4918, 1 October 1895. On 9 January 1896 the *Natal Mercury* reported that 15 000 pounds of locust eggs had been destroyed in the Umzinto area.

146 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 47, No. 2759, 15 October 1895.

147 Report of the annual general meeting of the Durban Chamber of Commerce (*Natal Mercury*, 22 February 1898). The North Coast’s sugar production was severely affected by the locust plague, declining from 14 097 tons in 1894 to 9 545 tons in 1897, a 32% reduction (*ibid*).

148 *Times of Natal*, 10 March 1896.

149 *Times of Natal*, 11 March 1896. The locust plague was given great prominence in the columns of the *Times* throughout 1895 and 1896.

150 *Times of Natal*, 28 April 1896.

As Alexandra County Magistrate McLaurin noted, cooperation with Africans living in the locations was essential if the plague was to be tackled effectively.¹⁵¹ S.O. Samuelson, the under-secretary for native affairs, expressed his thanks to the magistrate of Lower Umzimkulu, R.H. Beachcroft, for the job done by chiefs and headmen in marshalling resources against the locust threat. As a token of thanks Beachcroft recommended a payment of £5 for each chief and £2.10 shillings for each headman.¹⁵² At the same time Beachcroft criticised the settler community of Lower Umzimkulu for being apathetic in assisting in the campaign to cull locusts.¹⁵³ Although the government locust eradication scheme officially ended on 20 April 1896,¹⁵⁴ the locust threat did not abate entirely. While Archibald claimed in the Legislative Assembly in 1898 that the South Coast was free of locusts,¹⁵⁵ the reports of the resident magistrates for Alexandra and Lower Umzimkulu cited considerable destruction by locusts in 1897 and 1898.¹⁵⁶ Reference to occasional swarms of locusts continued to appear in the Alexandra County magistrate's reports until 1904.

More widespread and devastating was the scourge of rinderpest. A German word meaning 'cattle plague', it first appeared in Somaliland in 1889 and spread rapidly southwards, reaching Southern Rhodesia by 1896. By November 1897 it was killing antelope on Rhodes' Groote Schuur estate near Cape Town.¹⁵⁷ Between 1896 and 1898 rinderpest killed 250 000 head of cattle.¹⁵⁸ Besides threatening food security and impoverishing Africans, the disease paralysed ox wagon transport. Following news that rinderpest had been diagnosed in Harrismith near Natal's northern border,¹⁵⁹ the disease spread like a veldfire through Natal. By 1897, Commissioner for Agriculture C.B. Lloyd estimated the stock losses for colonists at 40% and those for Africans at 90%. He attributed higher African losses to their refusal to have their cattle inoculated despite government assistance.¹⁶⁰

In 1897 Magistrate McLaurin reported heavy losses of cattle as a result of rinderpest on the South Coast, which was even killing buck and small deer in Alexandra County.¹⁶¹ He ascribed the ability of white farmers to stave off herd losses to their purchase

151 CSO 1442, No. 4918, 1 October 1895.

152 Durban Archives Repository, LU/99/96, Minute 2135/1896; SNA 21/4/96; LU/108/96 13/4/96

153 Durban Archives Repository, LU/99/96, 10/4/96

154 Durban Archives Repository, LU/99/96, 15/4/96.

155 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 27, 1898, 392.

156 *Natal Blue Book*, 1898, B34; B44.

157 Van Onselen 1972:473.

158 Henry 1963:133.

159 *Times of Natal*, 8 May 1896.

160 *Natal Blue Book*, 1897, H162.

161 *Natal Blue Book*, 1897, B81.

of cattle at cheap prices whilst ensuring that they were inoculated.¹⁶² In Lower Umzimkulu the border with Pondoland was closed following reports of the outbreak of rinderpest there.¹⁶³ Politically the disease and its treatment provided another insight into the state of relations between Charles Reynolds and the senior representative of Alexandra County, Robert Archibald, as well as John Kirkman, the civic-minded owner of Beeverstowe estate in the Equeefa valley who represented Alexandra County in the Legislative Assembly from 1906 to 1910.

Following an address by Minister of Agriculture F.A.R. Johnstone at a public meeting in Umzinto in March 1898, Charles Reynolds claimed that Archibald had stated that lungsickness was being spread from the station where inoculations were being carried out. Archibald's response was scathing:

If Mr C.P. Reynolds had the ordinary courtesy to attend a meeting called for the purpose of discussing matters of local importance with a member of the Government, or the sense to make a few simple inquiries before making personal attacks, he might have saved himself from the discredit of writing a letter which anyone less blinded by egotism would be ashamed of.¹⁶⁴

John Kirkman also showed courage in confronting the influential Charles Reynolds. Kirkman claimed that the real reason for Reynolds' remarks was that he needed ox wagons to move 1 000 tons of sugar to the market.¹⁶⁵ Reynolds made no reply. By the end of 1898 the rinderpest scourge was on the wane. The report on the Alexandra Agricultural Show held on 30 June 1898 noted that despite the ravages of rinderpest there were only 35 fewer entries than in 1897.¹⁶⁶ By 1899 Magistrate McLaurin remarked on the healthy condition of livestock in his annual report.¹⁶⁷ Despite the ravages of locusts and rinderpest, McLaurin noted in 1900 that food was plentiful, thus indicating that the region had survived those threats to its welfare.¹⁶⁸ Instead, an old problem recurred – the shortage of African labour. By 1901 the labour question had become “extremely serious” with the *Natal Agricultural Journal* remarking that “there really exists no necessity for natives to work for money”.¹⁶⁹

162 *Natal Blue Book*, 1898, B32.

163 GSO 1524, No. 5083, 24 July 1897.

164 Letter to the editor from R.M. Archibald, *Natal Mercury*, 21 March 1898. In January Archibald had accompanied J.F. Rethman, one of the MLAs for Alfred County, to the Orange Free State on official parliamentary business to report on the state of rinderpest in that country (*Government Notice*, No. 60, 1898).

165 Letter to the editor from John Kirkman, *Natal Mercury*, 21 March 1898.

166 *The Natal Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 16, 14 October 1898, 505.

167 Departmental Reports, *Natal Blue Book*, 1899, B91.

168 Departmental Reports, *Natal Blue Book*, 1900, B93.

169 *The Natal Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 20, 6 December 1901, 629.

Settler society

Settler social and political life on the South Coast continued to revolve around the villages of Port Shepstone in Alfred County and Umzinto in Alexandra County.¹⁷⁰ With the passage of time some of those who had been pillars of their communities passed on. Joseph Landers of Mpambinyoni, an 1850 settler, died on 31 December 1893, aged 90. His sons, Thomas and Joshua, ran farms in the district as part of a large Landers progeny which included 32 grandchildren.¹⁷¹ General John Bisset, who gave Port Shepstone its name, was one of the earliest settler landowners in Alfred County and a former MLC, died in England in 1894.¹⁷²

The first to plant sugar cane on the Umkomaas flats, Alexander Brander (the “father of the County” as he was called for his role in the civic affairs of Alexandra County), passed on in November 1894.¹⁷³ In December 1859 he had acquired the title deeds to Rosamunds Bower, some 610 acres in extent situated in the Equeefa valley. In 1865 he sold part of the estate to Jane Arbuthnot. From 1865 to 1882 he was field cornet of Alexandra County. He also served as a justice of the peace and as quartermaster of the Alexandra Mounted Rifles, whilst acting as an estate agent in Umzinto in his private capacity.¹⁷⁴ James Burnett Aiken, the South Coast’s first representative in the Legislative Council, initiator of shipping on the Mzimkulu, co-owner of the successful Ruthville sugar estate and the man after whom Port Shepstone reportedly should have been named, died in May 1900.¹⁷⁵ The unpretentious, pioneering ways of these men were supplanted to a large extent by a new moneyed elite headed by Frank and Charles Reynolds.¹⁷⁶

Even before their sugar estate holdings made them the largest employers of labour on the South Coast by 1889,¹⁷⁷ the preeminence of the Reynolds family was already evident. They made the single largest investment on the South Coast since that of the Umzinto Sugar Company in the 1860s when they invested £17 000 in a mill on

170 To a lesser extent Umkomaas, or South Barrow as it was called until 1924, also featured. Thanks to the rail link it progressed as a tourist and holiday venue.

171 *Natal Mercury*, 5 January 1894.

172 *Natal Mercury*, 8 June 1894.

173 *Natal Mercury*, 21 November 1894. The Rev. Joseph Barker first referred to Brander as the “father of the district” in 1873 (*Natal Mercury*, 2 September 1873).

174 Spencer 1985:29.

175 *Natal Mercury*, 2 May 1900. In the *Mercury* of 28 March 1883 a correspondent expressed the view that Port Shepstone should have been named Port Aiken on account of the initiative of the Aiken brothers in opening the Mzimkulu to shipping.

176 Frank Reynolds’ investments were not confined to sugar. He was part of a syndicate which floated the Elandslaagte colliery in northern Natal (Guest 1989:314).

177 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1889, B87.

their newly acquired Umhlanga estate near the Equeefa valley in 1883.¹⁷⁸ At around the same time they donated the land on which the Umzinto Memorial Hall and its tennis courts and cricket ground were developed.¹⁷⁹ In 1895 David Don and Marshall Campbell of Victoria County incorporated Natal Central Sugar, which was founded in 1878, along with pioneer estates such as Milkwood Kraal, Umtata and Effingham into Natal Estates.¹⁸⁰ On 6 December 1895, at the founding meeting of the board of Natal Estates held in London, Frank Reynolds was elected as a director.¹⁸¹ In that way the major sugar interests on the North and South Coasts became allied and constituted what might be called a ‘sugarocracy’.

Wealth in the small settler community of the South Coast came to be synonymous with status and power. As already noted, when the Wragg Commissioners visited the Reynolds’ estates in 1885 they found Charles Reynolds uncooperative and reported that conditions for his indentured labourers were poor.¹⁸² Yet the Reynolds were not censured. In 1888 their arrogance was well demonstrated in the relocation of the Umzinto post office. Previously located within Archibald’s store, with the establishment of the telegraph link in 1887, Alexandra County Magistrate Lucas recommended that the post office be moved to the telegraph office so that the services would be closer to the hub of the little village and hotels and therefore more conveniently situated. But because the relocation placed the post office two miles further from the Reynolds’ residence, they vehemently disagreed and wrote to the colonial secretary in that vein. Their objection was ignored.¹⁸³

They also did not get their way when in 1898 they protested having to pay duty on a cask of rum which was leaking. Their request to the controller of excise for the return of £3, three shillings and two pence was firmly declined on the grounds that it was the Reynolds’ responsibility to attend to faulty casks.¹⁸⁴ A further manifestation of their arrogance was featured earlier in this chapter when Charles Reynolds referred to Umzinto as a “third rate village” whose value was less than the cost of a single mile of rail track.¹⁸⁵

178 *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, G44.

179 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 8, 1885, 266.

180 Osborn 1964:252; Richardson 1986:156

181 *Natal Mercury*, 1 December 1896.

182 Meer 1980:419-421, 538.

183 CSO 1188, No. 2326, 26 April, 19 May, 21 May, 15 June 1888. Copies of this exchange of correspondence were subsequently published in the *Natal Mercury* of 23 August 1888.

184 CSO 1758, No. 6569, 3 September 1898; 4 October 1898.

185 *Natal Mercury*, 21 March 1896.

Patrician lifestyles

Whereas emigration of so-called labouring classes to Australia had been encouraged by British authorities in the 1830s,¹⁸⁶ the Byrne emigration scheme to Natal attempted to attract a “better class” of settlers, namely tradesmen, small farmers and mechanics.¹⁸⁷ One of the key inducements to settling in Natal was the prospect of becoming a landowner, a prospect which few, if any, of the emigrants could look forward to in Britain because of the entrenched hierarchically organised establishment.¹⁸⁸ Yet within a generation of settling in Natal a small class of landowners emerged whose lifestyles were as patrician as the grandees and gentry of the country of their birth, thereby lending credence to New Zealand historian James Belich’s theory that a settler remade his own social order.¹⁸⁹



Figure 10.9 Reynolds’ mansion, Lynton Hall

Premised on their success in sugar production, this small, patrician ‘sugarocracy’ emulated the lifestyle and material grandeur of British landed aristocracy, in which as David Cannadine points out, wealth, status and power were closely entwined.¹⁹⁰ Large manor houses were the most prominent feature of the elite’s status.

In the style of a Scottish baronial mansion, Lynton Hall at Umdoni (near Park Rynie) epitomised this trend. Owned by Charles Reynolds,

built in 1895, it featured a battlemented or crenelated tower, complete with a gunroom.¹⁹¹ Finningley, The Cedars, and Ellingham were the Crookes family’s stately mansions, located inland of Scottburgh.¹⁹² Robert Archibald, although not financially in the same league as the Reynolds and Crookes families, owned five farms totalling 5 000 acres in extent. One of them, Hazelhurst in the Umzinto

186 Hattersley 1950:94.

187 Hattersley 1950:106-107.

188 Cannadine 1999:14. Cannadine points out that in 1876, 4 736 owners controlled 56% of the land in England while in Scotland 1 758 owners controlled 92% of the land (*ibid.*, 9).

189 Belich 2005:53.

190 Cannadine 1999:16.

191 Picton-Seymour 1989:132.

192 Hocking 1992:188-189.

district, had a large sprawling mansion.¹⁹³ In Victoria County, James Liege Hulett's Kearsney mansion was among similar, lavishly appointed manor houses in that county. The tendency to replicate aristocratic edifices was not confined to the sugar belt. Grandiose mansions were also constructed in the Midlands. Here one thinks of Theophilus Shepstone's Parkside Villa built in 1885 in Pietermaritzburg, and Joseph Jardine's Calderwood completed in 1902 in the Boston district.¹⁹⁴

Politics

At the inception of the responsible government dispensation in 1893, Frank Reynolds was appointed by the governor as a member of the Natal upper house (a legislative council consisting of ten members) because of his standing on the South Coast. But his participation in the business of this council was disappointing at best. His two brief speeches in the 1894 session¹⁹⁵ marked his only contribution to the Council during his four-year membership. Yet, at the time of his election in 1897 to represent Alexandra County in the Legislative Assembly, the *Mercury* claimed "Mr Reynolds will find more scope for his energies in the Assembly than in the Council which he has just left".¹⁹⁶

But that remained to be seen, at least until after the election of 1901. For when Thomas Keir Murray, who was minister of Lands and Works in Robinson's ministry (1893-1897), failed to be reelected in Pietermaritzburg on the advice of Harry Escombe, Reynolds gave up his Alexandra County seat for Murray. Following a fresh nomination process, Murray was declared duly elected and went on to represent Alexandra until September 1901.¹⁹⁷ Whilst the *Times of Natal* had reservations about seat exchanging exercises, it had no quibble over Murray's potential for Alexandra County, declaring "the County will be the better for possessing in the House an able and experienced politician".¹⁹⁸

Robert Montgomery Archibald represented Alexandra County from 1890 until the end of the Natal parliament in 1910. Elected in 1893, Charles Hitchens enjoyed a similar span of representation for Alfred County. However, their respective co-county

193 Gordon 1978:254.

194 Picton-Seymour 1989:136-143; www.calderwood.co.za

195 *Debates of the Natal Legislative Council*, Vol. 2, 1894, 39, 62.

196 *Natal Mercury*, 27 September 1897.

197 CSO 1536, No. 7641, 22 October, 10 November 1897. In the *Natal Mercury* of 6 September 1901, Reynolds claimed that his decision to step down in favour of Murray was made "in the interests of the Colony".

198 *Times of Natal*, 15 October 1897. The record of Murray's attendance during the 1898 session of the Legislative Assembly does not flatter him. He was shown to have attended only 23 of the 49 sittings (*Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 55, xxv).

members varied as the case with Murray demonstrated. The fact that Escombe regarded Alexandra County as being prepared to swop a local representative for one who hailed from Pietermaritzburg suggests that the political representation of the county was seen as lightweight.

As early as August 1894 the *Mercury's* parliamentary reviewer remarked that Archibald had “lost the ear of the House” as a consequence of the “ineffable content” of his speeches.¹⁹⁹ In that the reviewer did not offer any remarks about the other Alexandra County representative, Thomas Kirkman, by implication suggested that his participation in the business of the Legislative Assembly was inconsequential.²⁰⁰ While Charles Hitchens showed initiative and was expansive in his contributions in the assembly, Durban port issues being one such subject,²⁰¹ he was not a permanent resident of the South Coast. Although he owned property in Port Shepstone, he resided in Bellair, Durban County. He founded the African Boating Company and served as a Durban town councillor from 1882 to 1884.²⁰² As a result he was sometimes regarded as the fifth member for Durban County.²⁰³ John F. Rethman, who represented Alfred County alongside Hitchens until his defeat in 1906, was labelled by the *Times of Natal* as having a “parish-pump mentality forever”.²⁰⁴ Despite those factors, the Alfred County electorate spurned newcomers to the polls. The challenges mounted by a certain Mr. Langston in the election of 1897 and by W.B. Kinsey in 1901 both failed.²⁰⁵

Recreation

The sense of community in Alexandra County was always more developed than in Alfred County. This stemmed from the fact that Alexandra County had a head start of more than twenty years in terms of social development. Settler society in Alexandra

199 *Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1894. Perusal of the Legislative Assembly's 1896 debates show Archibald as failing to ignite any serious attention with his rambling speeches. His key contribution appeared to be as the mover of adjournments and as the seconder of motions (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 24, 38-40, 349).

200 Whatever political shortcomings Thomas Kirkman may have had, he certainly was well-informed on matters pertaining to agricultural science, as his regular contributions to the *Natal Farmers' Magazine* indicated. Kirkman was defeated in the 1897 election gaining only 35 votes to 97 for Archibald and 71 for Reynolds (*Natal Mercury*, 27 September 1897). Kirkman was a member of the Legislative Council from 1899 until 1910.

201 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 22, 398-399; Vol. 24, 30.

202 *The South African Who's Who* 1908:188.

203 Major Silburn, a future MLA of Alfred County, made the remark at a meeting in Marburg in 1906 (*Natal Mercury*, 7 May 1906).

204 *Times of Natal*, 1 February 1895.

205 *Times of Natal*, 25 September 1897; *Natal Mercury*, 30 September 1901.

was also more homogenous in that the roots of settlers were predominantly British, whereas in Alfred County more than a third of the settler population were of Norwegian and German origin. In 1895, for example, the *Natal Farmers' Magazine* lamented the reluctance of farmers in the Lower Umzimkulu district to form an agricultural society.²⁰⁶ Although beset by the same transport woes and isolation, the Alexandra County community evinced a positive outlook that was lacking in Lower Umzimkulu. This optimism manifested itself in exhibitions of recreation such as the Alexandra Agricultural Association's show. The third one staged by the association took place on 17 May 1894. In his report, the president of the association, E.W. Hawksworth, proudly declared that the show had been "a success far beyond any of our previous shows" by attracting a record of 580 entries compared with 395 in 1893.²⁰⁷

Despite the ravages of rinderpest and the locust plague, successful shows were held in subsequent years,²⁰⁸ the one in July 1899, which featured 720 exhibits, surpassing all of them.²⁰⁹ Besides the well-established cricket and tennis clubs at Umzinto,²¹⁰ the ladies of Alexandra County were the first in the colony to form a revolver and rifle club in 1895. A total number of 40 ladies signed up for shooting practice in Umzinto.²¹¹ The Amateur Athletic Club of Umzinto also provided opportunities for social interaction and recreation. Its programme of 5 February 1898 was a case in point, when many members of the community turned out to watch track and field events. The social nature of the occasion was appropriately captured by a remark of the *Mercury's* correspondent: "Many tasteful colours were displayed by the ladies of the County".²¹²

The remoteness the South Coast from the Anglo-Boer war zone enabled social routines to continue without interruption, despite the absence of so many men on war service. In February 1900 the Alexandra Rifle Association held its half-yearly shooting competition in Umzinto. In June the ladies rifle shooting competition took place, followed by a major tennis tournament in September.²¹³ "Umzinto Week", as the first week of June 1900 was called, was a week of rejoicing and recreation following the ending of the siege of Mafeking. It featured tennis and cricket matches, including a grand finale cricket match on the Saturday in which the men played left-handed against the ladies.²¹⁴

206 *Natal Farmers' Magazine*, 15 March 1895.

207 CSO 1421, No. 674, 25 September 1894.

208 *The Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 16, 14 October 1898, 505.

209 *Natal Mercury*, 8 July 1899.

210 Reference to this is made in chapter six. See also the *Natal Mercury* of 5 August 1884 and 28 January 1886.

211 *Natal Mercury*, 18 May 1895.

212 *Natal Mercury*, 11 February 1898.

213 *Natal Mercury*, 22 February; 23 June; 24 September 1900.

214 *Natal Mercury*, 1 June 1900.

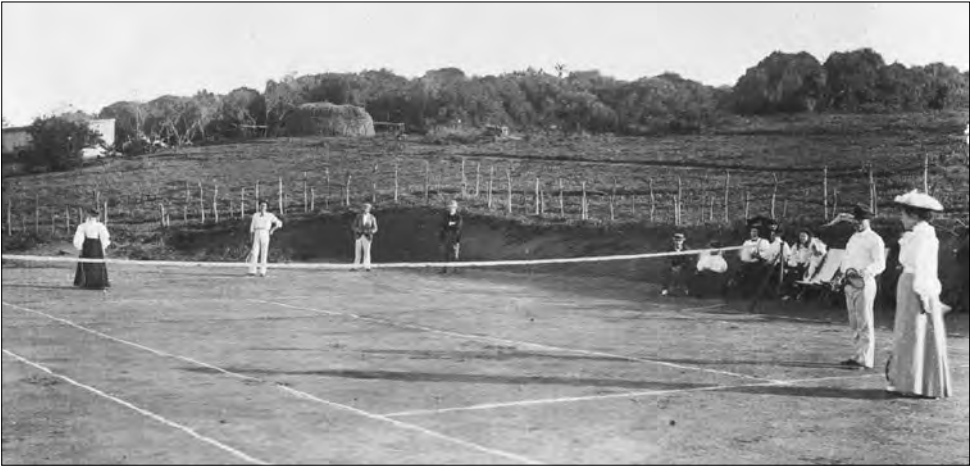


Figure 10.10 Mixed doubles tennis at Umkomaas, 1898

The Anglo-Boer War

The outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War on 11 October 1899 affected all parts of Natal in terms of manpower and resources. The Border Mounted Rifles (BMR), which was an amalgamation of the Alexandra Mounted Rifles and the Umzimkulu Mounted Rifles, contributed 286 men to the colony's war effort.²¹⁵ As Alexandra County Magistrate McLaurin remarked, the war meant that "a good many of the leading residents had to desert their farms for the front". Their absence, he noted with relief, did not engender unrest amongst Africans, whom he praised for their "thorough loyalty to the Crown".²¹⁶

On 29 September 1899 a special proclamation was issued by the governor, ordering all members of the Volunteer Force to report for military service.²¹⁷ After attending a divine service at the Drill Hall in Umzinto on Sunday, 1 October 1899, the volunteers of the BMR made their way to Park Rynie to board the train. Archibald had two sons in the BMR.²¹⁸ Of the 134 casualties the colony incurred during the war, 27 were from the BMR.²¹⁹ In September 1904 a monument in their honour was unveiled on the grounds of the Drill Hall in Umzinto.²²⁰

215 Brookes & Webb 1965:202. A total of 2 410 white colonists served in the war.

216 Departmental Report, *Natal Blue Book*, 1899, B91.

217 *Government Notice*, No. 526, 1899.

218 *Natal Mercury*, 6 October 1899.

219 Brookes & Webb 1965:204. Bru de-Wold, who held the rank of major in the BMR, was wounded in the head by shrapnel in Ladysmith in January 1900 (*Natal Mercury*, 23 January 1900).

220 Gordon 1978:309.

The absence of so many men on war service caused the Alexandra Agricultural Association to cancel its show for 1900.²²¹ In Port Shepstone, Resident Magistrate P. Hugo expressed frustration over the halting of work on additional rooms to his courthouse because of the war. “At present the second clerk and the Indian interpreter have to use the Court room, and, needless to say, it causes great inconvenience”, he wrote to the colonial secretary.²²² However, construction of the branch railway to Umzinto proceeded and was completed by August 1900.²²³

With the capitals of the Boer republics occupied by mid-1900 and the nature of the war having changed, the task of the colonial militia was over.²²⁴ By the end of October 1900, BMR volunteers had returned to their South Coast homes. The occasion was marked by a special dinner and dance hosted in their honour in Umzinto.²²⁵ In contrast to the guerrilla war and the destruction of farms in the former Boer republics, a peaceful atmosphere prevailed on the South Coast and food was plentiful as 1900 came to an end.²²⁶ But the new year commenced on a sad note for settlers with the death of Queen Victoria. On 2 February 1901 a large number of mourners attended the special memorial service held at St. Patrick’s church in Umzinto.²²⁷

In closing

The onset of the responsible government dispensation from late 1893 saw the fulfilment of expectations as regards rail transport and economic development on the South Coast. As a result the region’s previously prominent political profile subsided and a new profile emerged, namely that of a tourist and holiday resort mecca. As chapter nine of this study indicates, historically the image of the South Coast was clouded by an issue on which much of its affluence was premised. In December 1901 Archibald was appointed to a commission of inquiry into the working of the civil service.²²⁸ However, the inquiry he should have been making lay within his home district of Umzinto. It concerned the human rights abuse of indentured labourers on the sugar estates owned by Reynolds Bros. The successful

221 *The Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 21, 21 December 1900, 669.

222 Durban Archives Repository, LU 534/1900, 31/7/1900.

223 *Natal Mercury*, 9 August 1900.

224 The nearest concentration camp was at Merebank, near Isipingo. It was established in September 1901 (Martin 1957:66). In September 1901, General Botha’s attempt to invade Northern Natal at Fort Itala failed (Pakenham 1992:531-532).

225 *Natal Mercury*, 31 October; 12 November 1900.

226 *Natal Blue Book*, Alexandra County Resident Magistrate’s Report, 1900, B93.

227 *Natal Mercury*, 5 February 1901.

228 KCM 24930, 6 December 1901.

prosecution of that state of affairs by the protector of Indian Immigrants, James Polkinghorne, during the last years of the colonial dispensation in Natal should have made headline news. But that was not the case, as demonstrated in chapter nine.

Wrangling over branch railway extension, fears of an African uprising and the debate on closer ties with the other colonies in the post-war period preoccupied the South Coast's outlook during the final years of responsible government.

11

Coast of dreams and stagnation

1902-1910

Alexandra County was almost solid for Union and everything passed off very quietly, as everything usually does in this place.

— Umzinto correspondent, *Natal Mercury*, 19 June 1909

Whereas the 22-year period which ended in 1902 produced a profile for the South Coast which was characterised by agitation for infrastructural development, followed by service delivery in terms of the erection of telegraph lines, the recognition of Lower Umzimkulu as a separate magistracy, fiscal port status for Port Shepstone and the construction of bridges and railways, the final eight years of colonial rule proved something of an anticlimax.

Having realised all the items on their wish list, stagnation once again manifested itself in the lives of South Coast settlers. Although there was progress in that Umkomaas achieved town board status in 1905, and a bridge across the Mzimkulu was eventually completed in 1907, the harbour works on the river stagnated and were eventually abandoned. Port Shepstone was doomed to be a port in name only. Agitation for railway extension in Alfred County failed to generate political support and went unfulfilled by the colonial government.

In the wake of the post-Anglo-Boer War economic downturn, the increasing preoccupation with closer union among the four South African colonies, the long-awaited opening of Zululand to white settlement, and the impetus given to sugar production with the erection of a very successful mill at Amatikulu in 1908, the South Coast faded in terms of economic and political significance, a sentiment reflected aptly in the quotation cited above.

However, the sentiment of quiet insignificance also had a darker side. The ongoing efforts of the protector of Indian immigrants to end the exploitation of indentured Indian labour on the sugar estates of Reynolds Bros. and his eventual success in bringing about the removal of Charles Reynolds as general manager, went unremarked and virtually unnoticed at that time. What was in fact a huge scandal was contained by a conspiracy of silence and allowed to pass unobtrusively, as discussed in chapter nine.

Introduction

A general property boom manifested itself along the Natal coast – particularly in the south – as the Anglo-Boer War limped to a desultory end in other parts of South Africa. From Scottburgh to Port Shepstone, an advertising frenzy saw building sites on offer along the railway line route. Park Rynie was marketed as the ‘South Coast Hastings’ because it combined “all the advantages of a seaside resort with the exquisite scenery of an English park”.¹ North Shepstone, described as the “Berea” of the district, lay on the north bank of the Mzimkulu. February 1902 saw 80 freehold sites put up for auction at £40 per acre.² New buildings were reportedly popping up all round Port Shepstone.³ The records of property valuator Frederick W. Sangmeister corroborate this trend with references to newly constructed dwelling houses and stores in Bazley, Bisset and Aiken streets, some of them valued in excess of £500.⁴

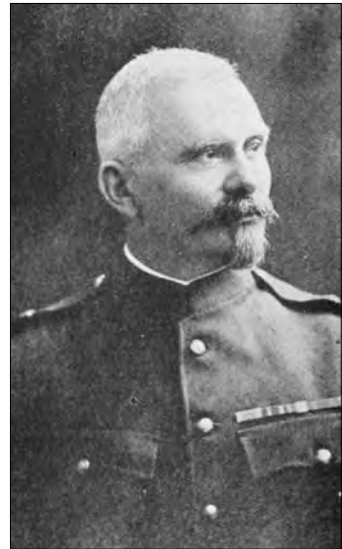


Figure 11.1 F.W. Sangmeister, *Natal Pictorials 1910*

Property development

With the growth in population came renewed appeals for the establishment of local government structures. In October 1902 a petition from 25 residents appealed for sanitation measures to be put in place in Port Shepstone.⁵ A year later a similar appeal was made, yet on the day appointed to hold the meeting of local residents, nobody turned up.⁶ Efforts were renewed early in 1905 to convene a meeting to establish a town board, again without success.⁷ The issue seemed to lapse in terms of public interest, which was more fixated on matters such as harbour development and railway extension. Only in February 1913 was a resolution passed by local residents for Port Shepstone to become a township. On 20 January 1914 the first meeting of its newly elected town board was convened.⁸

1 *Natal Mercury*, 4 January 1902.

2 *Natal Mercury*, 10 February 1902. Apart from two occasions when plots were offered at Tongaat beach and Umhloti (*Natal Mercury*, 16 January, 3 April 1902), promotion of sites on the North Coast did not feature.

3 *Natal Mercury*, 21 April 1903.

4 Durban Archives Repository, LU 1477A, 1773B, 1773C, Vol. 3/2/13, 1904

5 Durban Archives Repository, LU 692, 1902, Vol. 3/2/11, 6 October 1902.

6 Durban Archives Repository, LU 1464, 1904, Vol. 3/2/13, 13 September, 10 October 1904.

7 Durban Archives Repository, LU 1987, 1904, Vol. 3/2/13, 24 December 1904, 21 January 1905.

8 Alfred County centenary souvenir brochure, KC 20385, 35.

**PARK RYNIE
TOWNSHIP.**
THE SOUTH COAST HASTINGS!

**Natal's Most Picturesque
WATERING PLACE.**

**Combines all the advantages of a Seaside
Resort with the exquisite scenery
of an English Park.**

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE LOCALITY ON VIEW AT THE
OFFICES OF THE AUCTIONEERS.
Call and inspect these beautiful views of a
charming spot.

SHELTERED BAYS! BREEZY BOWNS! WOODED BELLS!

Messrs. GREEN & TURNER will sell at the Wool Mart,
Smith Street,
AT 11.30 A.M.
ON SATURDAY,
1st February, 1902,
**100 Seaside
Building Sites,**
Each in extent about 1 acre, in this beautifully situated
TOWNSHIP.

Although Umzinto was the oldest settlement on the South Coast, harking back to 1858 when land grants made in its vicinity coincided with the establishment of the Umzinto Sugar Company, its progress towards the establishment of a town board was the slowest. Despite its status as the seat of magisterial governance and constituting the hub of commercial, social and political life in Alexandra County, local residents appeared content with having nothing more than a licensing board.⁹ In the postcolonial period, the village was administered by a health committee until 1950 when Umzinto was finally proclaimed a township administered by a seven member town board.¹⁰

Umkomaas, or South Barrow as it was known until 1924,¹¹ proved the most progressive of the three South Coast village settlements in that it achieved town board status in 1905.¹² The first of the three main South Coast settlements to be connected by rail with Durban,¹³ tourism incentivised its quest for local governing autonomy. As a report in the *Mercury* in 1903 stated, "Umkomaas for some years has been steadily becoming a

favourite watering place of Natal and this Easter the town secured a record number of visitors". It was estimated that 500 people attended the sports entertainment held on the grounds near the railway bridge on the Easter Monday holiday.¹⁴ But the popularity of Umkomaas as a destination for holidaymakers and day-trippers

9 *Government Notice*, No. 223, 1881

10 *Natal Government Gazette*, Proclamation No. 9, 22 February 1950.

11 Provincial Ordinance No. 6 of 1924.

12 CSO 1781, No. 715, 24 January 1905.

13 The rail link reached Umkomaas in 1897, Umzinto in 1900 and Port Shepstone in 1901.

14 *Natal Mercury*, 15 April 1903.

served to highlight its shortcomings in terms of its lack of a proper water supply and the need to harden its main thoroughfares. The establishment of a town board was seen as the solution to those and other issues.¹⁵

Throughout 1904 efforts were made to promote the need for a town board, particularly in view of the fact that another hotel – Humphreys – had come into business, as well as the need to address the issue of sanitation.¹⁶ At a public meeting held on 29 April, Frank Reynolds (Alexandra County MLA) noted that Umkomaas had grown from a hamlet to a thriving village of more than 60 houses. At the meeting there was consensus on the need to apply for township status and that without such progress Umkomaas would stagnate.¹⁷ That consensus was formally registered at a public meeting in June, when a resolution by the residents of Umkomaas was forwarded to the governor.¹⁸ On 19 January 1905 seven members of the Umkomaas Town Board were elected at a meeting presided over by Resident Magistrate James McLaurin.¹⁹

Generating sources of income is the main objective of any local government structure. Within its first year the Umkomaas Town Board identified an omission in the colonial bylaws concerning licensing fees for the sale of liquor by hotels. In November 1905 a town board clerk, John Stennet, pointed out to the colonial secretary that as hotel and hotel bar licences were combined, they should attract an additional levy. The governor endorsed Stennet's suggestion and the relevant bylaw (No. 105) was amended.²⁰ However, the united front which residents had produced in order to secure town board status did not endure for long. There was an outcry when the board proposed a building clause which compelled developers to erect buildings having a minimum value of £200. Critics claimed the clause would discourage building in what was then a depressed market. The objective of the board, namely to promote a higher standard of construction, which would also generate more income through rates, applied to only 37 vacant stands at the time.²¹ This criticism dissipated in the face of the board's decision to promote a safe bathing area on the sea shore and the development of a broad path and a landing stage for pleasure launches on the foreshore of the Mkomanzi.²²

15 *Natal Mercury*, 13 June 1903.

16 *Natal Mercury*, 15 January, 25 February, 19 March, 2 May, 14 June 1904.

17 *Natal Mercury*, 2 May, 10 May 1904. An editorial in the *Mercury* on 23 May 1904 applauded the "public spirit" of the residents of Umkomaas in this regard.

18 *Natal Mercury*, 14 June 1904.

19 CSO 1781, No. 715, 24 January 1905; *Statistical yearbook of the colony of Natal*, 1906, 262

20 The levy was set at £20 for the first year and £15 for succeeding years. CSO 1801, No. 9168, 27 November, 9 December 1905.

21 *Natal Mercury*, 15 and 27 January 1907.

22 *Natal Mercury*, 18 April, 7 May, 20 June 1907.

DRIFT HOTEL

ESTABLISHED
— 1868. —

UMKOMAAS.



Thirty miles from Durban on the glorious South Coast.
Situating on the beautiful Umkomaas River.
Four miles from the Sea. Unrivalled Scenery.

**KRANTZ, MOUNTAIN AND GLEN. BOATING.
SEA and RIVER BATHING, and MOTOR LAUNCHES.**

NATIVE KRAAL LIFE CAN BE INSPECTED.
AN IDEAL SPOT FOR THE HOLIDAY.
EXCURSIONS DAILY FROM DURBAN.

FOR PARTICULARS APPLY:
THOS. COOK & SON.

In November 1907 the bathing area, which had been secured with stanchions and torpedo netting, was officially opened, adding to the attractiveness of Umkomaas as a tourist destination. As a report noted at the time, “Umkomaas depends entirely on the sea and the river for its charm”. Further evidence of the village’s growth manifested itself with the erection of twelve street lamps, the clearance of bush wood from four miles of streets and the provision of latrines for Africans.²³ Before the end of 1907 more street lamps were erected and a sports field was in the process of preparation, while the first motor launch, the *Victoria*, made its appearance on the river.²⁴

The town board’s coffers received a windfall in 1908 by way of a cheque for £477 from the surveyor-general’s office in payment for erven sold on behalf of the board. The significance of this sum is apparent when compared to the board’s 1909/1910 budget, which amounted to £356 in total.²⁵ As the end of the colonial period approached, the progress Umkomaas had made since its acceptance of township status was reflected in the amenities of which it boasted: street lighting, sanitary measures, safe bathing, a public sports field and tennis courts, a new hall and a high profile as a holiday and tourist destination.²⁶ By the time of Union in 1910, its telephone trunk line connection with Durban was expected within a matter of weeks.²⁷

But while white settlers took pride in the growth of their settlement, they exhibited intolerance towards the “intrusion” of Indian settlers in Umkomaas. Just weeks into the Union dispensation, a petition was launched against the issuing of further trading licences to Indian traders. “Great indignation was expressed locally” when a trading licence was transferred from a European to an Indian whose premises were situated within half a mile of local white storekeepers.²⁸ Disdain towards Indian traders was a reality in the colony since the 1880s. The reaction of settlers in Umkomaas was typical of the colonial era. As Bhana and Brain have stated, “the increasingly anti-Indian sentiment in the whole of South Africa after the end of the South African War led to the introduction of immigration restrictions in all states. This overall sentiment was carried into the Union period.”²⁹

23 *Natal Mercury*, 11 November 1907. The work done on the safe bathing area had included rock blasting. The end result secured bathers against the threat of a backwash into the surf.

24 *Natal Mercury*, 3 and 31 December 1907. By November 1909 there were three privately owned launches on the river: the *Victoria*, *Swift* and *Fly* (*Natal Mercury*, 13 November 1909). The Mkomanzi was navigable for eight miles (*Natal Mercury*, 17 June 1908).

25 *Natal Mercury*, 10 January 1908; 2 June 1909. It should also be noted that if Umkomaas had not had a town board in terms of Law 11 of 1881, it would not have been a beneficiary of the surveyor-general’s cheque.

26 *Natal Mercury*, 24 January 1908; 8 April 1910.

27 *Government Notice*, No. 287, 1909; *Natal Mercury*, 8 April 1909.

28 *Natal Mercury*, 25 June 1910.

29 Bhana & Brain 1990:193.

Social life

Rail links, improved roads and communication assisted in promoting greater social interaction on the South Coast and integrated the South Coast more closely with the rest of the colony. Whereas the Alexandra County correspondent for the *Mercury* in 1876 had referred to Natal as “our adopted land”,³⁰ settler ties with Britain did not diminish. This was well-illustrated by the programme to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII on 25 June 1902. Held in the Volunteer Hall at Umzinto, it commenced with an address by Resident Magistrate McLaurin, followed by the hoisting of the flag, distribution of medals, tree planting, lunch, and sports which was rounded off by a dance and bonfire.³¹ Imperial loyalties were again illustrated on the death of King Edward in 1910. On the day of his funeral, Friday 20 May, all businesses closed and special services were held around the colony.³²

That same community solidarity was reflected on occasions when those who had been pillars of settler society passed on. When Samuel Crookes, Alexandra County sugar pioneer and founder of what became Crookes Bros. Ltd., died in March 1906, his funeral was attended by over 100 people.³³ A similar outpouring of respect and sense of loss was manifested on the death of David Aiken in Port Shepstone in 1908. His lifetime involvement in civic affairs and public works saw “practically all of Port Shepstone gathered at the cemetery”, a press report noted.³⁴ The passing of William Bazley on 10 March 1908, however, received only cursory notice. A report in the *Mercury* noted that “he had been ailing for some time”, having retired after many years as a public servant who was “responsible in the first place of opening up Port Shepstone for regular traffic”.³⁵ Bazley retired as harbour engineer at Port Shepstone in 1895. Subsequently, he became roads superintendent in the Public Works Department. In 1901, John Rethman (Alfred County MLA) petitioned the Legislative Assembly for a small land grant for William Bazley in compensation for his services in facilitating access to the mouth of the Mzimkulu. Supporting the motion, Prime Minister Albert Hime stated that Bazley had “incurred enormous risks and danger to life and limb. He has lost his health and received injuries, besides he [was] not paid as a diver but has done the work of a diver.” The motion was approved.³⁶

30 *Natal Mercury*, 30 December 1876.

31 *Natal Mercury*, 23 June 1902.

32 *Natal Mercury*, 25 May 1910.

33 *Natal Mercury*, 13 March 1906.

34 *Natal Mercury*, 6 October 1908.

35 *Natal Mercury*, 12 March 1908. In his book, *Nil Desperandum*, Denzil Bazley (2000:151) incorrectly states that William died in May 1908.

36 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 30, 1901, 765-766.

In 1904 the Legislative Assembly approved a vote of £1 000 for Bazley as a gratuity. Speaking in support of the item, Rethman pointed out that Bazley had been forced into premature retirement as a result of the breakdown of his health which came about from his diving exertions in blasting rocks at the entrance to the Mzimkulu.³⁷ Bazley was buried alongside his father in the cemetery at St. Patrick's church, Umzinto.

Emphasis on cultural activities was particularly evident in Umzinto. In addition to local drama productions and the Caledonian Society,³⁸ an annual children's show was held. The show held in 1905 produced 285 exhibits of child craft which ranged from sewing to baking and works of art. The comment by the *Mercury's* Umzinto correspondent aptly expressed the settler philosophy of sustaining norms and values by remaking the British social order, thereby lending credence to James Belich's argument³⁹ about British settlers replicating the social order of their home country:

In after years the success of the exhibitors, be it in the pantry or in the workroom or in the world of art, will be traceable to these shows for they are bound to instil carefulness in the minds of young people⁴⁰



Figure 11.2 Umzinto Amateur Dramatic Club, *Natal Pictorials* 1906

37 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 37, 1904, 60; 157.

38 The Volunteer Hall in Umzinto was filled to capacity on the occasion of the St. Andrew's Day concert in 1909 put on by the local Caledonian Society (*Natal Mercury*, 3 December 1909).

39 Belich 2005:53.

40 *Natal Mercury*, 15 June 1905.

Recreation had also become routine with intercounty cricket matches and tennis tournaments having regular slots on the calendar. This extended to sporting fixtures among Indians and women. For example, the Umkomaas Indian Football Club played a home match against the Durban Stella side in September 1907.⁴¹ In the late summer of 1906 a ladies versus men cricket match took place at the Umzinto cricket ground.⁴² Horse racing at Park Rynie became an established part of South Coast life – hence the name South Coast Sporting Club based at Park Rynie. A typical race meeting featured a full card of nine races.⁴³ Regattas on the Mzimkulu added diversity to the recreational calendar when the first regatta was staged in February 1905.⁴⁴ Rifle associations continued to prove popular with the establishment of three new ones, the Umtwalumi and District Association, the Scottburgh Rifle Association and the Umkomaas Rifle Association.⁴⁵



Figure 11.3 The Umzinto cricket team of 1903/1904

41 *Natal Mercury*, 4 September 1907. The Stella side won 1-0.

42 *Natal Mercury*, 20 March 1906. The men had to use broomsticks instead of bats, bowl underarm and field left-handed.

43 *Natal Mercury*, 13 June, 3 August 1904.

44 *Natal Mercury*, 10 February 1905.

45 *Natal Government Gazette*, No. 3470, 16 May 1905; *Natal Mercury*, 10 November 1904; 18 January 1905. In 1904 there were 62 rifle associations on record in the colony (*Votes an Proceedings*, Vol. 42, 1904, xiv-xvi, xix).

Visual entertainment in the form of the ‘bioscope’ was another novelty on the South Coast in the first decade of the twentieth-century. Rees’s bioscope, as it was known, enjoyed full houses in Port Shepstone during July 1905, which left viewers keenly awaiting a return round the following month.⁴⁶ The first public library in Lower Umzimkulu opened in Port Shepstone on 14 September 1905.⁴⁷ Until Victoria County held its first agricultural show in 1904, the Umzinto agricultural show was the only one of its kind on the Natal coast, attracting a record 830 exhibits in its eleventh year.⁴⁸ The Lower Umzimkulu Farmers’ Association held its first agricultural show in Port Shepstone in June 1904 and attracted 400 entries.⁴⁹

But apart from the routine state of social activity and interaction on the South Coast, there was an awareness that hospitality should embrace a wider spectrum, namely the tourist and holiday market, as noted above in the case of Umkomaas and discussed in the previous chapter. The growth in the number of hotels in Alexandra County from eight in 1894 to fourteen by 1904⁵⁰ provides evidence of this. The resident magistrate for Lower Umzimkulu, J.J. Jackson, was of the opinion in 1904 that Port Shepstone’s prospects were linked to it becoming increasingly popular as a holiday resort.⁵¹ As a resident, C.M. Etheridge stated “the salvation of the Port Shepstone community rests on their striving to make their town ... the most fashionable water-place in South Africa”⁵²

Consequently the advertising columns of the *Mercury*, then Natal’s largest newspaper, witnessed ongoing competition between the various hotels on the South Coast in promoting tourism to the area. A report on the holiday season of 1904 described Port Shepstone as “the Blackpool of South Africa – the most beautiful resort in Natal”.⁵³ In a subsequent report Umkomaas was referred to as the “Scarborough of Natal, the queen of watering places”⁵⁴

Port Shepstone hotels – there were four in 1907⁵⁵ – attempted to outdo each other in terms of amenities and proximity to the beach. In this respect the Port Shepstone

46 *Natal Mercury*, 25 July 1905.

47 *Natal Mercury*, 20 September 1905. Two years later it had only 25 subscribers who had a choice of 2 283 library books (*Statistical yearbook of the colony of Natal, 1907*, 269). A library was established in Harding in 1886 (*Statistical yearbook of the colony of Natal, 1902*, 334).

48 *Natal Mercury*, 17 June 1904.

49 *Natal Mercury*, 22 June 1904.

50 *Natal Blue Book, 1893/94*, B53; *Magistrates Reports, 1904*, 62.

51 *Magistrates Reports, 1904*, 67.

52 *Natal Mercury*, 2 March 1905.

53 *Natal Mercury*, 5 December 1904.

54 *Natal Mercury*, 20 January 1906.

55 *Natal Mercury*, 13 August 1907.

Hotel was probably the most appealing because it claimed not only to be the closest to the beach but also the most modern in that it was the only establishment with electric light.⁵⁶ Despite all this development an ongoing complaint from businesses and those involved in the hospitality industry concerned the frequency and slowness of the railway service.



Figure 11.4 Adverts for Port Shepstone Hotel, Imperial Hotel and Humphrey's Hotel, all dated 1908

Railway service and extension

Travel and transport were perennial topics of complaint and debate across Natal throughout the colonial period. But the extension of the “iron road” to various parts of the colony did not signal an end to that debate. Instead, it triggered a new debate about the construction of branch lines and, in the case of the South Coast, the speed and frequency of the mainline service.

One complaint about the Port Shepstone–Durban service was that the carriages were not illuminated, with the result that if a train was delayed passengers had to sit in darkness.⁵⁷ A far more pressing issue was the frequency (once a day) and slow pace of the train service, particularly in view of the hospitality business on which

56 *Natal Mercury*, 28 August 1906. Similar advertisements concerning the North Coast did not feature at that time.

57 *Natal Mercury*, 5 September 1902.

much of the South Coast's economy increasingly depended.

Public meetings condemning the rail service were held in Scottburgh, Umkomaas and Umzinto during the holiday season of 1904-1905. The 31-mile journey from Durban to Umkomaas took two hours and twenty minutes,⁵⁸ while the 77-mile journey to Port Shepstone took five hours. Although the Lower Umzimkulu Chamber of Commerce claimed early in 1903 that a faster service would begin later in the year,⁵⁹ no such improvement occurred. Four years later there was still only one daily train to and from Port Shepstone. In order to encourage

weekend visits to the area, the Lower Umzimkulu Chamber of Commerce requested the introduction of a special weekend service to Port Shepstone on a Friday or Saturday evening, but without success.⁶⁰

The appeals of the chamber came at an inopportune time, as Natal's economy was in a state of depression which had commenced in 1903,⁶¹ the South Coast line was running at a loss,⁶² and the longest bridge in the colony was nearing completion over the Mzimkulu as part of the short two and a half mile extension of the railway from North Shepstone to South Shepstone.⁶³

No sooner had the rail link from Durban reached North Shepstone, agitation for it to be extended across the Mzimkulu began. The reasons were obvious: all the hotels were on the south side of the river, as was the magistracy and the commercial hub



Figure 11.5 The Royal Hotel in Umzinto, 1908

58 *Natal Mercury*, 15, 21, 28 December 1904.

59 *Natal Mercury*, 24 July 1903.

60 *Natal Mercury*, 10 April 1902, 29 September 1904, 13 August 1907.

61 Natal Legislative Assembly, No. 3, 1906, Treasurer's Report, 5 June 1906, 29.

62 *Natal Mercury*, 20 April 1905. Earnings of £51 119 were countered by expenses of £54 385. The colony also had a debt of £19 million (*Natal Mercury*, 27 September 1905). Losses on the South Coast line escalated to £19 620 during 1906-1907 (*Government Notice*, No. 529, 26 October 1909).

63 This came at a cost of £27 000 (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 56, No. 3406, 28 June 1904, L.A. Document No. 15, 1904).

of Port Shepstone. As the Lower Umzimkulu Chamber of Commerce stated, the future of the district depended on the extension of the railway southwards as well as inland towards Kokstad in East Griqualand.⁶⁴ A 1902 survey of the likely places where the river could be crossed identified three possibilities: Mannings, which was three quarters of a mile from the river mouth; Batstones, two and a half miles up the river; and a spot near the Umzimkulu sugar mill, about five miles up the river.



Figure 11.6 The Ifafa railway bridge, *Natal Pictorials* 1905

64 *Natal Mercury*, 22 September 1902.

The acting engineer-in-chief of the Natal Government Railways (NGR), W. H. Cobby, recommended the Mannings option as the cheapest and most direct.⁶⁵ By choosing a site so close to the river mouth, Cobby effectively implied that he saw no future for shipping on the Mzimkulu. Tenders for the short railway extension into Alfred County – the first railway in the region – were called for early in 1905.⁶⁶ On 2 September 1907 the first train crossed over the Mzimkulu on the colony’s newest and longest bridge – 1 000 feet in length – and steamed into South Shepstone station. Ironically, after years of agitation and complaint about the lack of a bridge over the Mzimkulu and the inconvenience of having to use the punt,⁶⁷ the occasion was not marked by any particular fanfare – “a reflection of the depressed state of things generally”, remarked the *Mercury*.⁶⁸

Despite this extension, the frequency and speed of the rail service remained unchanged. It was only in 1910, after a deputation from the various South Coast resorts called on the general manager of the NGR regarding the impractical nature of the rail service and the worthlessness of the excursion rates because of the very limited time (only three hours) allowed for day-trippers before they had to catch the return train, it was agreed that special trains making fewer stops would be provided on Wednesdays and Fridays, while a special theatre train was arranged on Saturday evenings for South Coast residents who wished to attend theatre productions in Durban.⁶⁹

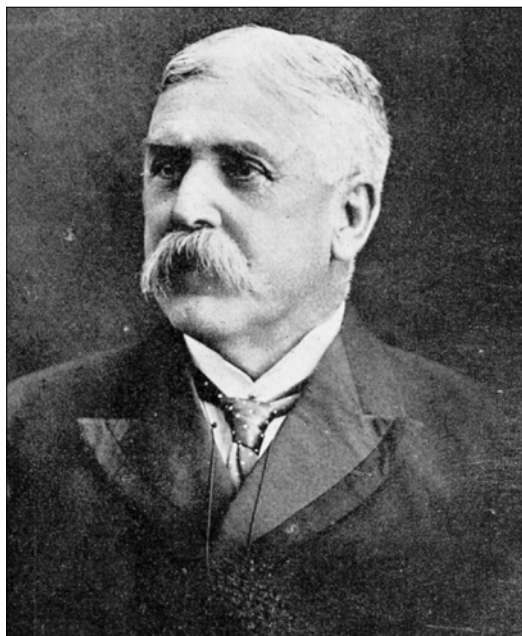


Figure 11.7 Charles Hitchens, *Natal Pictorials* 1906

65 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 56, No. 3406, 28 June 1904, L.A. Document No. 15, 1904.

66 *Natal Government Gazette*, No. 3455, 17 January 1905.

67 *Natal Mercury*, 11 May 1905, 8 August 1905.

68 *Natal Mercury*, 10 September 1907. Earlier in the year a suspension bridge was privately built by the Umzimkulu sugar mill to facilitate the passage of cane from the Alexandra side of the river to the mill. Lady McCallum, wife of the governor, agreed to open the bridge, which was also available for light local traffic (CSO 1830, No. 2596, 28 March, 10 April 1907; *Natal Mercury*, 9 July 1907).

69 *Natal Mercury*, 23 April, 14 May 1910.

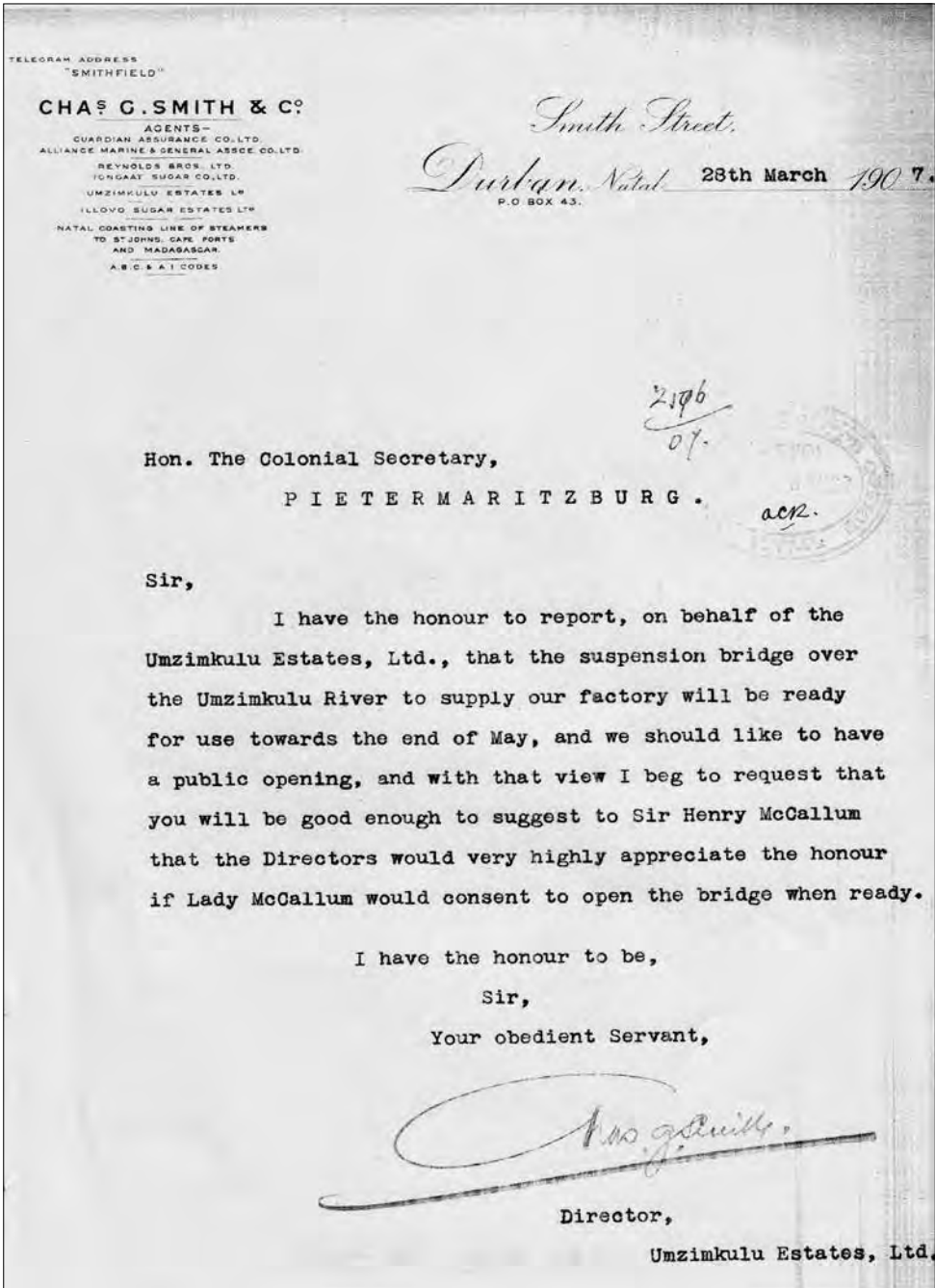


Figure 11.8 Letter on the Umzimkulu bridge from C.G. Smith, 1907

Much of the political debate during this period concerned the extension of branch railway lines. The election campaign of 1902 saw an aggressive debate between Hime, the prime minister, and Hulett, leader of the opposition ‘progressive’ group, over railway rates and extension routes.⁷⁰ In Alexandra County, where Reynolds and Archibald were unopposed as candidates, Reynolds sided with Hulett’s group, while Archibald, an ardent government supporter, preferred Hime.⁷¹ In Alfred County, Rethman and Hitchens both supported Hime because he favoured a railway line from Port Shepstone to the Ingeli mountains and on to Kokstad.⁷² Standing in opposition to Rethman and Hitchens was C.H. Mitchell, a Hulett supporter. The reelection of Hime’s supporters led the *Mercury* to remark that the South Coast “cares more for men than for measures”.⁷³

The Alfred County Railway Bill (20 of 1903), which proposed extending the line briefly into Lower Umzimkulu before heading westwards to link up with the Cape—Kokstad line, passed its second reading on 16 June 1903.⁷⁴ But Hime’s ministry fell on 12 August 1903, after its supply bill was rejected.⁷⁵ The new Sutton ministry found itself saddled not only with mounting public debt, but also with the ambitious Harbour Lands project aimed at the expansion of Durban’s port capacity.⁷⁶ The Alfred County railway development, along with other branch line extensions, became sidelined. As Governor Henry McCallum stated at a meeting in Harding in September 1905, most branch lines ran at a loss and Natal could not embark on any new works unless it was certain that it would prove remunerative.⁷⁷ Adding to the instability was the fact that the Smythe ministry was the third to take office within a two year period.⁷⁸ Thus, in the face of demands by their constituents for progress on the Alfred County railway, Rethman and Hitchens could only cite the parlous state of the colony’s finances.⁷⁹

Exactly two weeks after Governor McCallum’s address to the new session of the Legislative Assembly on 13 November 1906, Smythe resigned as prime minister. Frederick Moor formed a new ministry in which Charles Hitchens of Alfred County was named Minister of Railways and Harbour. This was significant for the

70 *Natal Mercury*, 1, 11 November 1902; 3, 5, 6, 10, 16, 20 December 1902.

71 *Natal Mercury*, 16 December 1902.

72 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 30, 1901, 810.

73 *Natal Mercury*, 19 December 1902.

74 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 33, 1903, 420. In Alexandra County there was support for the Umzinto line to be extended to Highflats and from there on to Ixopo and Underberg (*Natal Mercury*, 25 August 1902).

75 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 34, 1903, 520.

76 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 38, 1905, 80-82; Vol. 39, 1905, 424.

77 *Natal Mercury*, 27 September 1905.

78 After Hime’s ministry collapsed in August 1903, the ministry of George Sutton lasted only until May 1905.

79 *Natal Mercury*, 25 August 1905; 5 October 1905.

South Coast, as Hitchens' portfolio was directly concerned with the two aspects of infrastructure lagging on the South Coast. However, the extent to which Hitchens could address his constituency's needs was limited by issues beyond his control. As discussed later in this chapter, by 1908 Natal's politics was increasingly shaped by intercolonial issues of trade and closer union.

Natal's depleted treasury was the immediate stumbling block for railway extension. Hitchens conceded at a meeting in Port Shepstone in April 1907 that he was unable to promise a line extension to the Ingeli range.⁸⁰ He was castigated a week later in Harding for insisting that the legislature would not entertain the Alfred County branch extension.⁸¹ As such, it was in the Legislative Assembly that Hitchens and the Alfred County rail extension faced denouement. The former prime minister of Natal, C.J. Smythe of Lions River, was adamant that the £37 600 earmarked for Alfred County should be scrapped and tabled a motion in committee to that effect. Hitchens stoutly opposed Smythe, arguing that the Legislative Assembly had accepted the southward extension of the line through Alfred County as a matter of principle. In anticipation of this extension a wattle company had been established some fifteen miles from Port Shepstone at a cost of £15 000 which he anticipated would make the rail extension remunerative.⁸² Although Smythe's motion was defeated in committee,⁸³ he immediately reintroduced it in the Legislative Assembly, stating "we are face to face with a most serious financial depression and things have been going from bad to worse since 1903 ... [The colonists of Alfred County] must agree to wait until times are better before they get their railway". In response, Hitchens accused Smythe of double standards for having supported railway extensions to Mid Illovo and to Howick.⁸⁴

Despite Hitchens' defence of the expenditure on the Alfred railway, prospects for railway extension in Alfred County reached a dead end when the Legislative Assembly endorsed Smythe's motion by 22 votes to thirteen on 4 September 1907.⁸⁵ Residents of Alfred County were reportedly very disheartened by this news and the negative effect it had on the economic prospects of the area.⁸⁶ At a public meeting in Port Shepstone on 23 November, the former MLA for the county, John Rethman,

80 *Natal Mercury*, 30 April 1907.

81 *Natal Mercury*, 8 May 1907. Two letters critical of Hitchens were published in the *Mercury* on 1 June 1907.

82 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 43, 1907, 218-220.

83 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 43, 1907, 222. The vote against Smythe's motion was sixteen to eleven.

84 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 43, 1907, 279-280.

85 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 66, 1907, 539.

86 *Natal Mercury*, 25 September, 23 October 1907.

blamed Hitchens for the debacle over the railway extension, claiming that if the option of a narrow gauge line had been put forward the Alfred railway would have gone ahead. Hitchens rejected Rethman's argument.⁸⁷ In March 1908, at a meeting at Umhlangeni (present day St. Michaels on Sea) attended by about 80 people, Hitchens' attempts to explain why the railway had not been extended south of Port Shepstone met with an irate reception and resulted in the passage of a vote of no confidence in him.⁸⁸

Prospects of railway extension in Alfred County were dealt a further setback when Hitchens resigned as Minister of Railways and Harbours on 8 July 1908 for medical reasons. Although he continued to represent Alfred County in the Legislative Assembly, he missed many sittings.⁸⁹ Colonel E.M. Greene of Lions River was appointed as the new Minister of Railways and Harbours. In Hitchens' absence, Alexandra County MLA John Kirkman resurrected the railways issue in August 1908, when he moved a motion in the Legislative Assembly calling for railway construction to be resumed in Alfred County, Mid Illovo, Hlobane, the North Coast and Pongola – all regions which were handicapped by transport difficulties. Noting that little railway construction had occurred since 1905, he asked whether it was advisable for the colony to acquiesce in this regard, particularly as branch lines served to boost the economy.⁹⁰ Kirkman's motion was passed after a vigorous debate in which twelve members participated.⁹¹

The sentiments of Natal's Legislative Assembly on railway extension were superseded by political considerations beyond its jurisdiction. During the Union convention deliberations (discussed later in this chapter), Prime Minister Moor had given an undertaking that "no fresh railway construction would be proceeded within Natal pending the Union".⁹² Alfred County residents expressed their outrage at a meeting

87 *Natal Mercury*, 26 November 1907.

88 *Natal Mercury*, 6 March 1908; *Natal Mercury*, 21 March 1908. A year later, at a meeting at Port Shepstone on the issue of the Union, a motion of confidence was passed in Hitchens (*Natal Mercury*, 15 March 1909).

89 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 67, 1908, xxxi. Hitchens was marked absent from 44 meetings.

90 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 45, 1908, 243-245. The official opening of a branch line from Esperanza via Donnybrook to Ixopo occurred early in June 1908. The line was the result of the Stuartstown Railway Act of 1904 (*Times of Natal*, 5 June 1908). In colonial times Ixopo was often referred to as Stuartstown. The first resident magistrate was Martinus Stuart (Woodley 1999:57).

91 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 46, 1908, 23. Kirkman followed this up with a letter in the *Mercury* published on 3 October in which he stated that the wattle industry in Alfred County was being hamstrung by the absence of a rail link, particularly as the effect of East Coast fever on livestock was making ox wagon transport costly. The wattle industry commenced in 1902 at Murchison where Emil Zierau established the Alfredia Wattle Company (Alfred County centenary souvenir brochure, KC 20385, 62).

92 *Natal Mercury*, 12 February 1909.

in Harding in March 1909, which followed the failure of their delegation to persuade Moor to change his stance.⁹³ Disillusionment characterised the last months of colonial rule in Alfred County. Letters from residents decried the collapse of the local economy and the fact that without a railway “no district in Natal was in quite so bad a state”.⁹⁴ Those sentiments were echoed by the Alfred County Agricultural Society at its annual general meeting in November 1909.⁹⁵ On the final day of the existence of Natal’s colonial parliament, 3 February 1910, the governor, Lord Methuen, signed the Alfred County Railway Extension Bill, authorising construction of a line from South Shepstone to Murchison Flats.⁹⁶ Railways Minister Greene expressed the hope that the Union parliament would expedite the further extension of this line to the Ingeli range and beyond. But he was reminded by Thomas Watt (Newcastle MLA) that as section 130 of the Union Act required a board to review proposed rail extensions, the line extension was not a *fait accompli*.⁹⁷

Thus, as regards railway extension, stagnation and despondency characterised the end of the colonial period on the South Coast. However, in 1913 the Union government authorised railway extension from Port Shepstone to Harding. Opened to traffic in 1917,⁹⁸ the line was proof of the economic advantage which the Union brought to an area which the colonial government had neglected.

Port Shepstone harbour

Since 1880 the forces of nature, as manifested by the waters of the Mzimkulu and those of the Indian Ocean, had demonstrated that regardless of rock blasting and the construction of breakwaters, accessing the mouth of the Mzimkulu river by ship was risky and at times impossible. As noted in chapter ten, the arrival of the railway at Port Shepstone effectively drew down the curtain on shipping from the Mzimkulu, which as a port had already seen the withdrawal of coastal shipping owners such as C.G. Smith.⁹⁹ Yet, until the last days of the colonial dispensation and far into the Union era, hopes of building a viable harbour on the Mzimkulu persisted.

93 *Natal Mercury*, 26 March 1909.

94 *Natal Mercury*, 9 October 1909. In an editorial on 12 October 1909 the *Mercury* expressed sympathy with Alfred County’s plight.

95 *Natal Mercury*, 5 November 1909.

96 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 69, 766.

97 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 49, 1910, 265-266.

98 Heydenrych 1994:56.

99 As an MLA for Durban County before his resignation in October 1902, C.G. Smith had expressed opposition to any further expenditure on the Mzimkulu harbour works (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 31, 1902, 247).



Figure 11.9 The Umtwalumi, *Natal Pictorials* 1905

Apart from a single visit by the *Pioneer* in April 1902,¹⁰⁰ shipping on the Mzimkulu had ceased. But stimulating hope for the revival of shipping was a staple function of the local political leadership, which in turn enjoyed continued support from the government of the day. In December 1902, Charles Hitchens (Alfred County MLA) predicted that the arrival of a special suction dredger from England would prove “a magnificent revelation” in reviving seagoing traffic on the river.¹⁰¹ But there was serious political opposition to the continued allocation of funds to the Mzimkulu. On 28 July 1903 the Legislative Council endorsed a motion tabled by Marshall Campbell of Victoria County calling for a halt to further expenditure on the Mzimkulu until it was shown that the railway was unable to meet the needs of the Lower Umzimkulu district. The vote came after Campbell established that

- cargo moved by rail was cheaper than by ship by two and a half shillings per ton;
- the cost to the colony for the dredger would be £20 000;
- £10 000 was being budgeted for the construction of a new breakwater, yet no ships had entered the river in more than a year;

¹⁰⁰ *Natal Mercury*, 28 April 1902.

¹⁰¹ *Natal Mercury*, 2 December 1902. On 2 September 1903 the Legislative Assembly approved the dispatch of the dredger *Snipe* to the Mzimkulu (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 35, 1903, 229). After a delay caused by the condition of the river mouth, the *Snipe* entered the Mzimkulu on 14 January 1904 (*Natal Mercury*, 20 January 1904).

- only one train with one and a half truckloads of goods frequented Port Shepstone daily; and
- more than £70 000 had been spent on the development of Port Shepstone harbour over two decades without any tangible result.¹⁰²

Campbell's motion provoked a barrage of criticism in several quarters. Hitchens and Rethman, as Alfred County representatives, responded, predictably, that for too long Port Shepstone had been neglected and that once the harbour works were completed, it "would astonish Natal as regards its earning powers". Colonial Secretary J.G.Maydon saw the continued development of the harbour as "a highly remunerative investment", particularly in view of the fishing grounds to the south of the Mzimkulu.¹⁰³ George Sutton, who a short while afterwards would succeed Hime as prime minister, sympathised with Campbell but felt that with great prospects for the export of lime and marble from Port Shepstone, the harbour works could not be suspended.¹⁰⁴ Despite the stance of the Legislative Council, the Legislative Assembly remained firm in its commitment to funding the Mzimkulu harbour works and allocated a further £10 000 to the project on 2 September 1903.¹⁰⁵ Reynolds and Maydon's sugar interests in the Umzimkulu sugar mill,¹⁰⁶ as well as the need to retain the political support of the four South Coast MLAs, undoubtedly played a role in the new Sutton ministry's decision to continue the funding.

In the letters column of the *Mercury*, Campbell countered the lengthy objections by the secretary of the Lower Umzimkulu Chamber of Commerce, W.G. Camp, by posing a single question: Did the trade of Port Shepstone warrant sea as well as rail carriage?¹⁰⁷ His question went unanswered. In an editorial on 30 July the *Mercury* suggested that a competent marine engineer should be employed to advise on the possibilities of developing the Mzimkulu river mouth. It cited the Cape government as having sought such advice on the possibilities of Port St. Johns, failing which, the paper opined "the Natal Government are blindly spending money without knowing what they are doing".¹⁰⁸ At a well-attended public meeting in Port Shepstone where Campbell's motion was condemned, a similar resolution was passed calling for expert opinion to be canvassed on the possibilities of the river mouth.¹⁰⁹

102 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 12, 1903, 78, 86-87, 90.

103 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 35, 1903, 225;227-228

104 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 12, 1903, 89.

105 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 35, 1903, 228. The Hime ministry fell on 12 August 1903.

106 Dickinson 1989:21-23.

107 *Natal Mercury*, 3 and 5 August 1903.

108 *Natal Mercury*, 30 July 1903.

109 *Natal Mercury*, 10 August 1903. At the time of the uproar over the Mzimkulu harbour works a delegation from the Natal parliament travelled to Zululand to examine shipping prospects at the mouth of the

As a damage control measure the new Sutton ministry dispatched a ministerial delegation to Lower Umzimkulu to assure its residents that the government had their best interests at heart. Promises were made that a bridge over the Mzimkulu would be constructed in due course. Colonial Secretary Maydon's rhetoric included the view that for a small outlay Port Shepstone could be made into as good a harbour as the one in East London.¹¹⁰ One of the results of this visit was the transfer of the Port Shepstone harbour works from the Public Works Department to the Durban Harbour Board, a move which the Lower Umzimkulu Chamber of Commerce hailed as encouraging.¹¹¹ Fuelling the dream of a flourishing port was the assertion by the secretary of the chamber that ships of 5 000 tons and more in size would one day be frequenting Port Shepstone harbour.¹¹²

The dredger *Snipe's* entrance was delayed until 14 January 1904 as a result of severe blockage of the river mouth.¹¹³ Reports on its dredging work promoted the impression that it was just a matter of time before steamers once again sailed up the Mzimkulu.¹¹⁴ Edwin Camp persisted in his optimism, asserting that Port Shepstone would soon become the second port of Natal¹¹⁵ as 200 African labourers and 26 whites laboured on construction of the new Kinsey seawall.¹¹⁶ Even the new resident magistrate, J.J. Jackson, felt that the *Snipe* augured better times for Port Shepstone. He stated in his report for 1904: "Renewed confidence in the future of this town appears to have resulted from the date of the entrance of the dredger, there having been a considerable increase in the number of buildings erected and new stores opened".¹¹⁷

As was the case with railway extension, the depressed state of Natal's economy resulted in the new Smythe ministry, which took office in May 1905, pursuing a more frugal

Mhlatuzi river. A preliminary survey did not yield satisfactory prospects (*Natal Mercury*, 11 August 1903; 25 September 1903).

110 *Natal Mercury*, 7 October 1903. The *Mercury* of 9 October scorned Maydon's comparison with East London, stating that his opinion "cannot be accepted as authoritative".

111 *Natal Mercury*, 19 October 1903.

112 Letter to the editor from Edwin Camp, *Natal Mercury*, 5 November 1903. Camp's view was reinforced by the chief engineer of the Public Works Department, J.F.E. Barnes, who informed the Lower Umzimkulu Chamber of Commerce that he anticipated that "vessels of considerable tonnage" would enter the Mzimkulu "in a very few years' time" (*Natal Mercury*, 17 November 1903).

113 *Natal Mercury*, 20 January 1904.

114 A report by the Lower Umzimkulu Chamber of Commerce in July 1904 claimed that shipping would resume within three months (*Natal Mercury*, 21 July 1904). According to *Government Notice* No. 645 of 1904 the *Snipe* had cleared 22 000 cubic yards of silt by September 1904. The length of the new breakwater had reached 830 feet by December 1904 (*Government Notice*, No. 829, 1904).

115 *Natal Mercury*, 7 October 1904.

116 *Government Notice*, No. 645, 1904.

117 *Magistrates' Reports 1904*, 67.

course. Nonetheless, J.G. Maydon, as minister of railways and harbours, requested a further £7 500 in 1905 for the *Snipe* to continue dredging – whilst admitting that no vessels had actually used the river during the previous year – and an additional £750 to “make good the work which has already been completed” on Kinsey’s seawall. He promised that thereafter “not one penny piece will I authorise”.¹¹⁸ Although the Legislative Assembly approved the funding, opposition to this expenditure was growing. Veteran politician Sir James Liege Hulett of Victoria County made it clear that he would oppose any future expenditure on the Mzimkulu harbour works.¹¹⁹

Despite the sterling efforts of the *Snipe*, which was reported to have moved a further 19 000 tons of silt and spoil by the end of January 1905, project engineer D.C. Davey remarked that “the channel does not appear to improve greatly”.¹²⁰ Yet, on the occasions when the channel was clear, a depth of seven to eight feet was reported at low tide,¹²¹ which was a great improvement on the levels that prevailed when the *Somtseu* was a regular caller. Seagoing traffic continued to avoid the Mzimkulu. The end of official indulgence regarding the Mzimkulu harbour works was quietly indicated by the withdrawal of the *Snipe*, which was redeployed in Durban harbour in January 1906.¹²² Still local opinion continued to cherish hopes of a harbour. Under the heading “Port improvements”, the *Mercury’s* Port Shepstone correspondent stated in April 1906:

At last our signal station is beginning to resume its rightful appearance; the new flagstaff has sprung up. This in conjunction with the new lighthouse already in position will make our port look quite aristocratic and up-to-date.¹²³

The Smythe ministry’s withdrawal of support from the harbour works did not go unnoticed by the Marburg Norwegian community, which submitted a petition to the Legislative Assembly in June 1906 demanding that the Mzimkulu entrance be made safe for “craft engaged in the fishing industry”.¹²⁴ In noting that a promise had been made that “no effort would be spared to speedily complete this port”, the petitioners placed the supporters of the Smythe Ministry, such as the South Coast

118 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 39, 1905, 569-571.

119 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 39, 1905, 573. W. Pepworth of Klip River slated the expense as a “wicked waste of public money”, while J.M. McIntosh of Durban County said the money “might as well have been thrown into the sea” (*ibid.*, 570, 572). An editorial in the *Mercury* on 6 April 1905 echoed these views: “The main question is what use is now being made of Port Shepstone since the arrival of the railway ... There does not seem any justification for spending money on the place.”

120 *Government Notice*, No. 72, 1905.

121 *Government Notice*, No. 221, 1905.

122 *Natal Mercury*, 27 January 1906. The *Snipe* was delayed in leaving the Mzimkulu by blockage of the channel (*Natal Mercury*, 20 December 1905).

123 *Natal Mercury*, 20 April 1906.

124 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 64, 1906, 256.

representatives, in a difficult position. Hitchens rallied support for the petition by cogent reference to the fishing industry, while Maydon, as minister of railways and harbours, contended that it was “the plain duty” of all “to furnish every opportunity necessary” to facilitate navigation on the Mzimkulu.¹²⁵

Although the petition was supported, the margin of opposition indicated that political indulgence towards Port Shepstone harbour was in terminal decline.¹²⁶ The “Gallery Notes” column in the *Mercury* predicted in July 1906 that despite fresh ministerial promises, Port Shepstone would remain what it had been for a number of years – a port in name only.¹²⁷ The vote in support of the Marburg petition fuelled a fresh round of agitation. A public meeting in Port Shepstone in July resolved to send a deputation to Pietermaritzburg to demand continuation of the harbour works.¹²⁸ Addressing the Port Shepstone Agricultural Show, Hitchens urged his audience to “keep on worrying the Government about the harbour”.¹²⁹ At an election meeting in August he went so far as to assert that completion of the Port Shepstone harbour works was of greater importance than the construction of wharves at Congella in Durban bay.¹³⁰ The clamour for a harbour development reached a new level of persistence in 1907 with the formation of the Port Shepstone Harbour Association, which aimed to complete the harbour works privately.¹³¹

As late as 1909 the notes on Port Shepstone contained in the *Natal Directory* held out the hope that once the harbour works were complete, shipping on the Mzimkulu

125 Citing a Customs Department return, he stated that fish to the value of £38 000 had been landed from the fishing grounds south of Port Shepstone in 1905. The Mzimkulu’s proximity to the fishing grounds would greatly assist any of the smaller trawlers whose range was limited by the fact they were based sixty miles away in Durban harbour. “The Colony has the opportunity, for a small outlay, of making Port Shepstone the port for landing the whole of the fish [harvest]”, Hitchens stated (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 40, 1906, 576-578).

126 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 64, 1906, 431. The vote was 19 to 12. Hulett was among those who opposed the motion.

127 *Natal Mercury*, 19 July 1906. W. Mills of Port Shepstone drew a parallel of Port Shepstone with Port Victor in South Australia (*Natal Mercury*, 5 June 1906). In both cases the proximity of those ports to larger harbours, Durban and Adelaide respectively, resulted in them languishing in development which was stunted even further by railway extensions. By the 1890s Port Victor was found unsuitable for the larger ships which were calling at Adelaide and ceased to function as a port. In 1921 its name changed to Victor Harbor (www.coastandcountry.com.au/Portrait-of-a-coastal-town).

128 *Natal Mercury*, 20 July 1906.

129 *Natal Mercury*, 30 July 1906.

130 *Natal Mercury*, 29 August 1906. At a meeting in May 1906 in Port Shepstone, Major P.A. Silburn (future Alfred County MLA) claimed that if one fifth of the money spent on the Congella scheme had been spent on the Mzimkulu river mouth, Port Shepstone harbour would have been completed (*Natal Mercury*, 7 May 1906).

131 *Natal Mercury*, 13 August 1907. Nothing ever came of this association’s aims.

would be a reality.¹³² Such hopes were futile as the die was cast. In his report for 1906/07, the auditor-general noted that all surplus stock from the Port Shepstone harbour works had been transferred to the Central Stores in Durban and that there was a “cessation of work” on the Mzimkulu.¹³³ Nonetheless, illustrative of just how convinced local opinion was as to the ultimate establishment of a harbour was the application filed by one Henry Latham Hutchinson in 1907 for the post of Port Shepstone harbour master, which was about to fall vacant with the retirement of Captain de Lacy Staunton.¹³⁴

Speculation about the establishment of a whaling station at the mouth of the Mzimkulu temporarily revived hopes for harbour development during 1908 and 1909.¹³⁵ But this did not materialise and the decade ended with the lament in the *Mercury* that the Mzimkulu mouth was a “dismal sight – completely blocked up” and that the efforts of William Bazley had come to naught.¹³⁶ The idea of establishing a fishing harbour at Port Shepstone persisted beyond the colonial period.¹³⁷ The Natal Provincial Administration (NPA) appointed a commission in 1914 to examine the feasibility of a fishing port on the Mzimkulu, in 1928 the Fishing Harbours Report of the Union Government made reference to the potential of Port Shepstone, and in 1934 the Board of Trade reported favourably on prospects for developing a fishing industry at Port Shepstone. In 1944 the report of the Post-War Works and Reconstruction Commission of the NPA “strongly recommended” that the Union government conducted the necessary investigation with a view to establishing the cost of a harbour works at Port Shepstone.¹³⁸

Nothing came of any of those recommendations. The construction of the road and rail bridge across the river mouth in 1959 finally put paid to the hopes and dreams of the Aikens, Bazleys, Camps, Hitchens, Rethmans and others who for decades had nurtured the idea of a thriving port on the Mzimkulu.

132 *Natal Directory 1909*, 649.

133 *Auditor-General's report*, 1906-1907, 245. Despite this report, Hitchens, as the Minister of Railways and Harbours, succeeded in obtaining approval for £825 to repair damage to the seawall caused by heavy seas (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 42, 1907, 31).

134 CSO 1841, No. 6105, 28 August 1907.

135 *Natal Mercury*, 7 September 1908; 25 September 1909. In December 1909 the surveyor-general was reported to have inspected the proposed whaling station site (*Natal Mercury*, 3 December 1909). A point at which whales were hauled ashore was subsequently established at Park Rynie.

136 *Natal Mercury*, 8 December 1909.

137 *Natal Mercury*, 13 March 1911.

138 *Natal Government Gazette*, No. 1913, 27 January 1944.

Political issues and trends: Towards union

African unrest and the Bhambatha rebellion

In 1906 the colony was convulsed by a backlash from the African community which culminated in the Bhambatha rebellion. The imposition of a new £1 poll tax¹³⁹ in addition to the existing hut and dog taxes, increased rents and debts, the restrictive pass laws, and police aggression and unsympathetic courts created a tense and unhappy climate which effectively placed African traditions under siege.¹⁴⁰ Collection of the new tax began in January 1906. Resentment of it coincided with confrontation. In February 1906 two white police officers were stabbed to death near Richmond during a confrontation with an armed *impi* [a squad of Zulu warriors]. The month before, a white farmer was murdered in the Camperdown district. As a result, women and children in Richmond, Ixopo, Highflats, St. Faiths and Bulwer were quartered in buildings encircled with barbed wire and trenches.¹⁴¹

The response of the colonial militia was high-handed. From 12 February Colonel Duncan McKenzie's Field Force carved a swathe of destruction as it headed southward towards Umzinto, burning kraals and seizing livestock on the grounds that the owners may have been involved in the killing of the police officers near Richmond. At Umzinto McKenzie confronted Charlie Fynn and his *indunas* over their refusal to pay the poll tax. After imposing a fine of 1 200 head of cattle, sentencing 38 of Fynn's men to fines, floggings or gaol sentences and imposing the death sentence of five of them, the Field Force withdrew.¹⁴² A report in the *Mercury* on 17 March noted that peace and quiet had returned to Alexandra County. Subsequent reports confirmed this trend with "good humoured" Africans paying their taxes.¹⁴³ Despite the apparent peace, the Alexandra Agricultural Association decided not to hold its annual show "in view of the unsettled state of the country".¹⁴⁴ The decision was made in the light of the massacre of an estimated 600 supporters of Bhambatha by colonial troops at the Mome gorge in the Nkandhla forest on 10 June.

Bhambatha was a minor chief in the Umvoti district who had a history of resentment towards his white neighbours. After Bhambatha refused to pay the poll tax and

139 The tax was imposed as part of the austerity measures the government was taking to increase its revenue in the face of economic recession. It was also intended to compel Africans to seek employment on the mines and in the towns.

140 Guy 2006:23.

141 Guy 2006:50.

142 Guy 2006:50, 55. The governor did not impose the death sentences.

143 *Natal Mercury*, 10 April, 8 June 1906.

144 *Natal Mercury*, 11 June 1906.

attacked a police detachment sent to confront him, he and his followers sought refuge in the Nkandhla forest. Determined to crush this rebellion, the Natal government raised special forces, including what was described as an irregular unit. Assisted by a battery of six maxim guns, they massacred Bhambatha and his followers in the Mome Gorge. In a sequel, the government forces brought death and mayhem to the Maphumalo district, burning more than 7 000 huts and leaving 30 000 homeless. In all, an estimated 3 500 Africans lost their lives during this period of unrest.¹⁴⁵

In tandem with the alarm which the unrest caused in settler society came a constitutional crisis. The new Liberal government in England was opposed to the execution of twelve Africans who had received death sentences from a military court in Richmond as a result of their role in the February killing of the two white police officers. Although the new secretary of state for colonies, Lord Elgin, subsequently backed down, what was seen as “illegal bullying” by the British government and interference in the internal affairs of a self-governing colony drew sharp criticism from the governments of New Zealand and Australia.¹⁴⁶ Politically both the response of the British government and the unrest amongst Africans in Natal played a significant role in Natal’s subsequent approach to the closer union debate which is discussed later.

Alexandra’s representatives

The prominent political profiles generated by Thomas Reynolds and General Sir John Jarvis Bisset in the 1880s were not emulated by those elected to represent the South Coast in the last decade of the colonial dispensation. Robert M. Archibald seemed to bring some distinction to his home county by his election as speaker of the Legislative Assembly in 1903, a position he held until its disbanding on 3 February 1910. “I am sensible of my own deficiencies in many respects”, he stated in his acceptance speech.¹⁴⁷ Those deficiencies were reflected in the pages of volume 33 of the *Debates of the Legislative Assembly* where “Points of Order” was recorded as the single largest item, running to almost three pages.¹⁴⁸ The compiler of the *Mercury’s* “Gallery Notes” column once claimed that “Mr Archibald’s lack of firmness’ was responsible for “a great deal of unnecessary talking”.¹⁴⁹ Nonetheless,

145 Lambert 1989:391-394; Guy 2006:170.

146 Guy 2006:41-44. The twelve were executed in public in Richmond on 2 April 1906.

147 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 33, 1903, 1. With the death of his wife Mary in February 1903, Archibald may have embraced the post of speaker as a means of filling the void in his life.

148 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 33, 1903, x, xi, xii.

149 *Natal Mercury*, 15 June 1904. Hitchens was supportive of his South Coast colleague, stating in July 1903 that it was “painful to see how constantly and how frequently” members appealed to the Speaker on points of order “when there is no point of order connected with the matter”

upon his retirement from public life he was commended by Prime Minister Frederick Moor for the dignified way in which he conducted the business of the Legislative Assembly.¹⁵⁰

Archibald had strong roots on the South Coast. After serving as manager on the Clairmont sugar estate in the Isipingo area,¹⁵¹ he moved to Umzinto in 1872. By 1875 he had established his own trading store, Archibald and Co. branches of which were later established in Ixopo, Equeefa and Highflats. In addition to his trading interests, he came to own five farms in Alexandra County and established a reputation of reliability and integrity.¹⁵² His position and track record in the community provided a springboard for his political aspirations, which saw him represent Alexandra County for twenty years. Though a staunch supporter of government, Archibald was a very popular figure, as is summed up in a letter to the *Mercury* in 1908:

There is no man in Alexandra County more esteemed than the senior MLA, Mr R.M. Archibald. His kindness and courtesy to everyone, his interest in all that concerns the county are too well known. Were he to veer around tomorrow and become a Progressive – the opposite of what he is today – he would still be returned by his constituency. The name Archibald, the influence of Archibald, is sufficient to lead the electorate of Alexandra by the nose.¹⁵³

Whereas Archibald was conscientious in his parliamentary duties, the same cannot be said of Frank Reynolds. After a disappointing showing in the Legislative Council between 1894 and 1897,¹⁵⁴ Reynolds' election to the Legislative Assembly in 1902 (along with Archibald) was unopposed. But his performance on behalf of his constituents in the Legislative Assembly was negligible.¹⁵⁵ Although he was noted as a member of the opposition grouping that was formed against the Hime ministry in 1902, he appears to have made little contribution to its profile.¹⁵⁶ Reynolds' singular achievement in the parliamentary sessions of 1903 was to record the second worst attendance record – 49 absences.¹⁵⁷ More regular in his attendance during the 1904 session, his failure to contribute in the assembly resulted in the unflattering observation: "The member for Alexandra County has apparently taken a vow of

(*Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 34. 318-319).

150 Gordon 1978:325.

151 *Natal Mercury*, 14 January 1868.

152 Gordon 1978:202, 244, 245, 254.

153 *Natal Mercury*, 1 July 1908.

154 As noted in the previous chapter.

155 His only speech of note concerned the 200% rise in the price of coal used by the NGR (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 31, 1902, 348-349).

156 *Times of Natal*, 5 March 1902.

157 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 61, xxxviii. F.S. Tatham of Pietermaritzburg had the worst attendance record.

perpetual silence. It would seem he has no opinions on any subject".¹⁵⁸ His silence continued during his final two years (1905-1906) in the Legislative Assembly, which again were characterised by poor attendance.¹⁵⁹ Despite this conduct he incurred not a word of criticism from his voters, who in 1910 saw fit to elect him as their sole representative for the constituency of Umzimkulu in the Union parliament.¹⁶⁰ Although he lacked the credibility of Archibald,¹⁶¹ Reynolds' political career was undoubtedly premised on his wealth and influence as the head of Reynolds Bros. and his position in the sugar industry. His collaboration with his brother, Charles, in the ill-treatment of indentured labourers on their estates and their disdain for the attempts of the protector of Indian immigrants to reform their management methods, was indicative of the arrogance of their power.

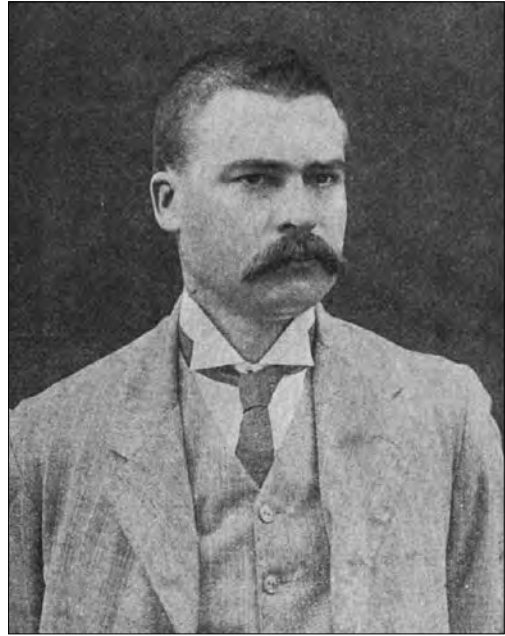


Figure 11.10 P.A. Silburn, *Natal Pictorials* 1910

The 1906 election

Meetings in Alfred County during the election campaign of 1906 were characterised by bitterness and disappointment over the lack of infrastructure development.¹⁶² The political temperature was also increased by the fact that, for the first and only time in the history of Alfred County colonial politics, four candidates contested the county's two legislative seats.¹⁶³ Charles Hitchens and Major Silburn were returned in a record 74 percent poll¹⁶⁴ although neither of them actually resided in the county.¹⁶⁵ The reasons for their victory over local opponents seemed to lie in the

158 *Natal Mercury*, 29 September 1904.

159 *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 63 xxxviii; Vol. 64, xxxviii.

160 Schoeman 1977:31. Reynolds polled 534 votes to the 377 of John Kirkman.

161 Archibald received the highest number of votes in his career (208) in the 1906 election, nearly a hundred more than his nearest rival, Kirkman (*Times of Natal*, 20 September 1906).

162 *Natal Mercury*, 21 April, 7 September 1906.

163 The sitting MLAs Hitchens and Rethman were opposed by C.H. Mitchell and Major P.A. Silburn.

164 *Natal Mercury*, 20 September 1906. Out of 422 electors 315 voted.

165 Silburn resided on the Berea in Durban. Hitchens lived in Bellair, south of Durban (*The South African*

expertise Hitchens displayed as an authority on harbour matters.¹⁶⁶ Silburn appears to have earned his political stripes as a result of a speech he delivered in Marburg in May of 1906, when he was reported to have impressed his audience with his strong views on defence, particularly in the wake of the Bhambatha rebellion which had alarmed colonists, and his opinions on what was called the native question.¹⁶⁷

John Kirkman, who replaced Reynolds in Alexandra County, Hitchens, who headed the poll in Alfred County, and John Rethman, who lost his seat to newcomer Percy Silburn, were amongst the few candidates to champion the enfranchisement of women.¹⁶⁸ Kirkman later endorsed a women's suffrage bill in the Legislative Assembly, stating that he had no difficulty in trusting women "to guide the politics of the country".¹⁶⁹

Major Percy Arthur Silburn was something of a political carpetbagger. A resident of Berea in Durban, he was dismissed from the military in 1904 because of disparaging remarks he made in a magazine about Natal's military system.¹⁷⁰ Invited to stand as a candidate, he succeeded in ousting long-standing resident and representative John Rethman by 149 to 124 votes.¹⁷¹ Apart from his interest in fibre production in Alfred County (mentioned briefly in chapter ten),¹⁷² Silburn's chief political interest concerned how closer ties between the four colonies should be arranged. In 1909 he published a short treatise on the subject entitled "The constitutional crisis in South Africa".

Charles Hitchens, who also hailed from outside of Alfred County although he owned property in North Shepstone, was one of the more talented politicians of the day, serving as minister of railways and harbours as well as treasurer in Moor's ministry until poor health obliged him to resign his ministries in July 1908. Nonetheless, he provided conscientious representation for his constituents from the time of his election in 1893. His particular fields of expertise concerned harbour development and finance. As such he contributed much to the colony beyond the confines of Alfred County and enjoyed a career beyond the colonial era as a Union senator. Whereas

Who's Who, 1908, 368, 188).

166 *The Mercury* of 22 February 1906 described him as a "sapient member" of the Legislative Assembly.

167 *Natal Mercury*, 7 May 1906.

168 *Natal Mercury*, 11, 17 and 25 September 1906. In 1904 a petition forwarded by Annie Colepeper and 541 others calling for the enfranchisement of women was presented to the Legislative Assembly (*Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 62, 1904, 309).

169 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 48, 1909, 239. The bill was defeated by nineteen votes to twelve.

170 *Natal Mercury*, 4 July 1904; *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. 62, 1904, 466.

171 *Natal Mercury*, 20 September 1906.

172 *The Natal Agricultural Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 27 March 1908, featured an article by Major Silburn on fibre agriculture in the Lower Umzimkulu area.

Archibald, John and Thomas Kirkman, John Rethman and William Hutchinson tended to be insular and parochial in their political outlook,¹⁷³ Hitchens' involvement in Durban port matters and his experience in the shipping business afforded him a perspective and an expertise which his South Coast colleagues lacked.

As noted in the first half of this chapter, the South Coast stagnated in terms of infrastructural development, and much the same happened in the field of politics where the region was politically isolated from the mainstream of colonial politics. This was probably due in part, to two of its four members of the Legislative Assembly, Hitchens and Silburn, residing in Durban.¹⁷⁴ As minister of railways and harbours, Hitchens had accompanied Prime Minister Moor to the Pretoria intercolonial conference of May 1908.¹⁷⁵ Hitchens' interests in the format of a future South Africa had everything to do with the role of the port of Durban and little with the interests of the South Coast. Silburn on the other hand was a rabid imperialist who used his Alfred County seat in the Legislative Assembly to promote his ideology. At a meeting in Port Shepstone, well in advance of the national convention meetings, Silburn slated the idea of a union as a sell-out to Afrikaner interests which would lead to Boer domination of a Union government.¹⁷⁶

The Union issue

The South Coast's two representatives on the Legislative Council, Thomas Kirkman and William Hutchinson, ventured cautious opinions on the issue of union. Like many Natalians they were anxious to preserve local autonomy in any future dispensation and favoured federation as opposed to union.¹⁷⁷ Hutchinson, though, was more sanguine about Natal's destiny, remarking that a closer relationship between the four colonies of South Africa was "a matter that cannot longer be delayed".¹⁷⁸

Politically, socially, economically and historically Natal found itself in a vexed position over the issue of closer union. Politically, there were those who could not reconcile themselves to becoming part of a system in which Afrikaners would be dominant, at least numerically. They wanted to maintain the "Britishness" of Natal and also feared that the Cape's non-European franchise might be extended to Natal.¹⁷⁹

173 Thomas Kirkman and William Hutchinson served in the Legislative Council.

174 *The South African Who's Who, 1908*, 188, 368.

175 Thompson 1960:90.

176 *Natal Mercury*, 9 May 1908.

177 Pursuit of local autonomy was the cornerstone of Moor's premise at the convention meetings (Thompson 1960:168).

178 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. 18, 1908, 30.

179 Thompson 1960:167.

Financially and economically Natal found itself in a dilemma. Its railway receipts, which were derived mostly from trade with the Witwatersrand, constituted over half its total revenue. Thus, it could not afford to be alienated from the Transvaal. If Natal was not part of a future South African dispensation, that trade would go to the Cape ports and to Delagoa Bay, in which case Natal could face bankruptcy.¹⁸⁰ Thus, whatever misgivings Natalians may have had about joining a union, they had little choice but to participate because of their economic dependence.

On the positive side, many Natalians perceived that a united South Africa would be comparatively immune from British imperial interference. This was noted in the wake of what was seen as the unsympathetic attitude of the British government towards Natal over the Bhambatha rebellion and Natal's conduct of native affairs.¹⁸¹ Militarily a united South Africa promised greater security for settlers and would deter uprisings such as Natal experienced in 1906.

Trenchant discussion of closer union involving the concept of federation, capitals and their location as well as the proportion of representation of each colony in a union parliament dominated colonial society in the run-up to the first national convention meeting held in Durban in October 1908. Adding to the climate of doubt was the view that Natal's best interests could not be served by Prime Minister Frederick Moor as the leader of the colony's delegation to the convention. Both Patrick Duncan, Transvaal legal adviser and former lieutenant-governor of Natal, Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, then Cape governor, regarded Moor as weak and vacillating.¹⁸²

By the time the national convention resumed its work in Cape Town in January 1909, news of its deliberations in Durban provided local politicians with substance for fresh debate. Major Silburn wasted no time in condemning the Natal delegates as having no mandate for their participation and demanded an immediate general election.¹⁸³ Of course Silburn himself had no mandate from his Alfred County constituency to make such a demand. Subsequently, at a meeting in Port Shepstone he bluntly rejected union as an option, denounced the idea of dual official languages as destined to cause "endless confusion", along with the proposed provincial councils which he claimed would be "solely at the mercy of the Union Parliament". His remarks were applauded and a vote of confidence in him was passed.¹⁸⁴ But when Hitchens addressed a meeting in Port Shepstone a month later he also received a vote of confidence after warning against the dangers of isolation and urging union

180 Thompson 1960:168.

181 Thompson 1960:168.

182 Thompson 1960:169.

183 *Natal Mercury*, 13 February 1909.

184 *Natal Mercury*, 15 and 16 February 1909.

as the option from which Natal had the most to gain.¹⁸⁵ In noting the dichotomy in public opinion in Port Shepstone the *Mercury* remarked: “We do not expect democratic notions to be very highly developed in Alfred County”.¹⁸⁶

Such political schizophrenia did not afflict Alexandra County, which loyally followed Archibald’s lead. At a public meeting in Umzinto in March 1909 his audience accepted his praise of the Natal delegation for its work at the convention in obtaining seventeen representatives for Natal in the future Union parliament, noted that the convention had not been prescriptive regarding Natal’s Indian labour dispensation and supported a union as the way forward. However, Archibald’s colleague, John Kirkman, expressed misgivings about the proposal that the appointment of provincial administrators should be the prerogative of the Union government.¹⁸⁷ The only other meeting reported in Alexandra County was held in Umkomaas in May. Although poorly attended, Archibald nonetheless underlined his support for union by noting that to reject it would mean a loss of £80 000 on the sugar trade with the Cape.¹⁸⁸

In contrast to the South Coast a flurry of public meetings took place elsewhere in the colony, particularly in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, in the buildup to the referendum scheduled for 10 June 1909. The Closer Union Society ran an effective campaign that featured huge pro-Union advertisements in the press, as well as billboards. The largest meeting took place in the gardens of the Durban Town Hall on 9 June, with 5 000 settlers in attendance.¹⁸⁹ Although the referendum outcome was said to be uncertain into the final week,¹⁹⁰ the results were decisive. In a 58 percent poll across the colony, three quarters voted in favour of union. Despite the apparent dichotomy of opinion in Alfred County and indifference in Alexandra County, both returned resounding votes in support of union – 83 percent and 86 percent respectively.¹⁹¹ As the *Mercury*’s Umzinto correspondent

185 *Natal Mercury*, 15 March 1909.

186 *Natal Mercury*, 17 March 1909. Silburn continued his campaign in the Legislative Assembly, concluding that support for the Union was “the most iniquitous act ever passed by a British legislature” (Thompson 1960:357, 361).

187 *Natal Mercury* 11 March 1909.

188 *Natal Mercury*, 26 May 1909.

189 *Natal Mercury*, 10 June 1909. The Closer Union Society manifesto stated that no Union meant a railway war, ruined industries, increased taxation, more unemployment and more debt. The anti-unionist Natal League, led by the former head of the NGR, Sir David Hunter, and supported by the *Natal Witness* and the *Natal Advertiser*, saw union as subjecting Natal to Boer government (Thompson 1960:393-395).

190 Thompson 1960:395.

191 *Natal Mercury*, 14 June 1909. Thompson (1960:396) noted that the mandate Natal voters gave for union was much clearer than the one Queensland voters gave for the Australian commonwealth in 1899. Only 55% of Queenslanders favoured the commonwealth option.

remarked: “Alexandra County was almost solid for Union and everything passed off very quietly, as everything usually does in this place”.¹⁹² Indeed, the country districts were more supportive of union than the urban communities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg. The relative isolation of those districts and the scare that the unrest of 1906 produced, as well as fear of the possible negative economic impact on the sugar industry if union was rejected, were arguably conclusive in promoting the view that a union dispensation would provide greater security.

The Natal parliament endorsed the outcome of the referendum in a brief session in late June. As Moor remarked on 3 February 1910, the final day of the colonial parliament, Natal was “stepping into a larger sphere of political life and usefulness”.¹⁹³ Natal’s membership of the Union was a *fait accompli*. On the South Coast a large crowd celebrated the occasion with an alfresco lunch and an afternoon of sport at Umkomaas on 31 May 1910.¹⁹⁴ Archibald retired from public life and passed on in 1913. Silburn, despite his vehement opposition to union, won election as a Unionist Party candidate in the Point constituency of Durban in the September 1910 election for the Union parliament. Reynolds, as noted earlier, was returned as the Member of Parliament for Umzimkulu,¹⁹⁵ while Hitchens took up a seat in the Union senate. For the South Coast, colonial rule from Pietermaritzburg, which commenced when it was simply an extension of Durban County in the 1850s and was extended to Alfred County in 1866, had ceased.

In closing

History seemed to repeat itself during the final years of the colonial period, when infrastructural development stagnated in terms of shipping and railway extension. Politically, when Natal joined the Union in 1910, the South Coast’s political representation reverted to what it had been in 1873 – a single Member of Parliament whose constituency now extended as far afield as Underberg, Ixopo and Bulwer.¹⁹⁶

The fragile nature of political support for the Hime, Sutton, Smythe and Moor ministries, which respectively held office during the last eight years of colonial rule, resulted in the courting of the South Coast’s legislative representatives for support. This was particularly evident in the ongoing willingness to spend money on the Mzimkulu harbour works.

192 *Natal Mercury*, 19 June 1909.

193 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 69, 1910, 695.

194 *Natal Mercury*, 3 June 1910.

195 Schoeman 1977:23, 31.

196 During the responsible government era, the South Coast had four representatives in the Legislative Assembly.

However, the enterprise which characterised settlement of the South Coast from the outset continued to manifest itself. Exemplifying that trend was the opening of a new sugar mill in November 1907 by Crookes and Sons at Renishaw. Imported from A. and W. Smith of Glasgow, it was the only one of its kind in Natal. Featuring eleven sets of rollers, it could process 150 tons of cane and produce sixteen tons of sugar in a day. In praising the Crookes' "spirit of enterprise", the *Mercury* noted that sugar planters did not confine themselves to sugar planting only. Wattle plantation, maize, bean and potato cultivation, a piggery and dairy production of 100 pounds of butter per week were features of the Crookes' agricultural pursuits at their Cedars estate.¹⁹⁷

Such enterprise fulfilled Charles Barter's observation made in 1852 that it was in Natal's coastal district "that the capitalist who looks for large returns must invest his money".¹⁹⁸ Despite all their difficulties and disappointments, in less than 50 years settlers on the South Coast transformed what Barter described as "a belt of land covered for the most part with thick underwood"¹⁹⁹ into a thriving and productive region.

197 *Natal Mercury*, 19 November 1907.

198 Barter 1852:121

199 *Ibid.*



Conclusion

Imaginatively one already realises the day when marts, warehouses, shops and private dwelling houses shall make this spot a conspicuous feature on the coast ...

— John Robinson, *Natal Mercury*, 9 May 1861

A home for me along the coast,
A daily look upon the sea;
For it exalts and thrills me most:
Its voice and rolling majesty
Surpass what mountain ranges boast.

...

A home for me where freely grows
What feeds the fragrant cup of morn;
Where the sugar cane its juice bestows
Where health matures the nodding corn
And where in flakes the cotton blows.

– “*The Coastlands: Natal*,” by ‘SP’ (verses 1 and 5),
Natal Witness, 30 January 1852.¹

1 This poem was written within weeks of the news that Edmund Morewood had produced the first sugar at Compensation on the North Coast. The writer presciently noted corn (maize) and cotton as two other crops which would be grown along the coast. Cotton was first grown on the Isipingo flat in 1849. Although its production proved disappointing, in 1906 a fresh attempt to cultivate it was reported in Alexandra County (*Natal Agricultural Journal*, 9(10):1007.

The area south of the Mkomanzi was described in 1863 as “richly ... endowed by nature [but] its present aspect will scarcely allow for it a higher designation than that of a beautiful wilderness”.² By 1910 European settler colonisation had transformed the South Coast, along with the rest of the colony. Roads, bridges, telecommunications, railways, churches, mission stations, schools, shops, recreation fields, hotels, homes, farms, plantations and sugar mills, all added up to settlement and established a permanent and conspicuous footprint on which the generations beyond the colonial period have built. In every respect the South Coast reflected the role and legacy of the British Empire as Niall Ferguson has noted:

The British Empire acted as an agency for imposing free markets, the rule of law, investor protection and relatively incorrupt government on roughly a quarter of the world ... There seems a plausible case that empire enhanced global welfare.³

The cultivation of sugar provided the impetus for the southward migration and land exploitation by settlers in what came to be known as Alexandra County. It was a different case in Alfred County. Although Archibald Sinclair produced the first sugar there by 1874, not until the early twentieth century did sugar production become the mainstay of the coastal part of Alfred County, known as Lower Umzimkulu from 1889 when it became a separate magisterial district. The lack of a clear economic incentive, such as the sugar provided in Alexandra County, resulted in settler migration to Alfred County beginning only in 1882 with the arrival of 229 Norwegian settlers, and it was only after 1908, with the consolidation of Umzimkulu Estates’ acreage following the incorporation of Barrow Green estate and the Aiken’s Ruthville estate,⁴ that sugar became the chief product of Lower Umzimkulu. Even then sugar production never rivalled the tonnages produced in Alexandra County.⁵

The dominance of sugar on the South Coast gave rise to what might be called a “sugarocracy”, that is a small group of financially and politically powerful and influential men. Chief amongst them were the Reynolds brothers – and Frank Reynolds in particular. As noted in chapter five, the rise of the Reynolds in the Umzinto district commenced with the efforts of Lewis, when he secured the Umzinto Sugar Estate in 1874. By 1880 his brother Thomas was able to boast that the estate, which had been reduced to ruin by 1870, had a “substantial balance on the right

2 *Natal almanac and yearly register*, 1863, 42.

3 Ferguson 2008:xxi.

4 Dickinson 1989:21-23.

5 In 1909 Lower Umzimkulu produced only 280 tons of sugar compared to 5 175 in Alexandra County (*Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal*, 1909:98).

side.”⁶ In 1883, Thomas made the most substantial investment on the South Coast until the commencement of railway construction when he acquired the Umhlanga estate⁷ and his sons, Frank and Charles, bought up estates in the Equeefa valley, Ifafa, Humberdale and took over Bazley Bros.⁸

In the Scottburgh/Umkomaas district another sugar empire developed: Samuel Crookes and Sons, which resulted from the acquisition of the Renishaw, Maryland and Restalrig estates. In 1913, Crookes and Sons was formed into a limited liability company known as Crookes Bros. Ltd.⁹ Charles George Smith, whose business was known as C.G. Smith & Co. Ltd., completed the consolidation of the sugarocracy. In 1913, the firm’s board, which already included Frank Reynolds, was expanded to include Crookes Bros. William Pearce, who in 1906 had floated Illovo Sugar Estates south of Amanzimtoti, joined the board in 1916. In 1917, C.G. Smith & Co. became the sole agents for the sale of all sugar and other products of Reynolds Bros., Crookes Bros., Illovo Estates and Umzimkulu Estates.¹⁰ Thus, an enterprise which was initiated by some 24 pioneers south of the Mkomanzi river over a period of 50 years grew into an industry dominated by two families, the Reynolds and Crookes.

Despite its phenomenal growth, in terms of sugar production, the South Coast never rivalled that of the North Coast. Governor Henry Bulwer’s claim in 1879 that “at no distant day the rapid extension of sugar cultivation” in Alexandra County would “compete with that in Victoria County”, never materialised.¹¹ In 1909, the Inanda division of Victoria County alone produced 31 623 tons of sugar. The combined total for Alexandra County and Lower Umzimkulu was only 5 455 tons.¹² Fifty years later the South Coast still accounted for only fifteen percent of Natal’s overall sugar crop.¹³

Comparing the two coastal regions politically, the North Coast was predominant over the South Coast. Not only did it enjoy political representation from the beginning of representative government in 1857, but its representatives were among the most influential in the colony. James Renault Saunders, the “Father of Indian immigration,” as he called himself,¹⁴ represented Victoria for nearly 30 years and was a powerful figure in the sugar industry. Henry Binns, who was Prime Minister

6 *Natal Mercury*, 24 August 1880.

7 *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, GG44.

8 Osborn 1964:316-317, 324-325.

9 Osborn 1964:320-321.

10 Osborn 1964:292; Dickinson 1989b:37.

11 *Natal Witness*, 8 November 1879.

12 *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal*, 1909:98.

13 Guest & Sellers 1994:11.

14 *Natal Mercury*, 21 January 1885.

of Natal from 1897 to 1899, was another influential Victoria County politician and sugar planter who also served on the IITB. James Liege Hulett and Marshall Campbell, as both politicians and members of the sugarocracy, added further clout to the influence of Victoria County.¹⁵ An additional advantage the North Coast enjoyed was that as early as 1885 it had three representatives in the Legislative Council, whereas the South Coast had only one representative from 1873 to 1890. Although Thomas Reynolds proved a worthy representative, those who followed him lacked his experience and influence.¹⁶ Charles Hitchens, who represented Alfred County from 1893 until 1910, was well-versed in financial and harbour matters, but like his fellow South Coast representatives his dependence on the various ministries to continue funding Mzimkulu harbour development and the need of his constituents for branch railway extensions required him to pursue a politically moderate role.

The success of the sugar enterprise was premised on the use of indentured Indian labour.¹⁷ As early as 1878, the resident magistrate for Alexandra County, Gould Arthur Lucas, noted that the use of indentured Indian labour on sugar estates exceeded that of local African labour.¹⁸ But following the ending of indentured immigration in 1911, a major change occurred within the labour field. Generally, Indian labour in the cane fields declined from 56 percent of the labour force in 1914-1915 to only 7 percent by 1944-1945. African migrants from Pondoland came to constitute the mainstay of labour on the sugar plantations.¹⁹ The presence of Indians on the South Coast was almost entirely the result of the sugar industry. By 1909 there were some 10 000 residing in the two counties.²⁰ Of that number fewer than 2 000 were employed on the sugar estates, which meant that the majority were settlers engaged in various commercial enterprises ranging from crop cultivation to storekeeping.²¹ Although their presence obviously added to the racial composition of the region, their interaction with indigenous Africans appears to have been peaceful and commercially rewarding in that, as elsewhere in Natal, Indian shopkeepers garnered the lion's share of what was called "the kaffir trade."²²

15 As noted in chapter eleven, from 1903 both Hulett and Campbell were opposed to the continued funding of harbour development on the Mzimkulu.

16 Despite his business experience, Frank Reynolds proved a poor representative. General Bisset was an effective representative, but he served for less than two years.

17 As late as 1909, Robert M. Archibald (MLA), stated in evidence to the Clayton Commission that "stoppage of indentured labour would mean absolute ruin" to the sugar industry (CSO 1878, No. 5276, 1909, 59).

18 *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, JJ19.

19 Dickinson 1994:168, 171.

20 *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal*, 1909:13.

21 In 1908, Indians held nineteen trading licences in Alexandra County and seven in Alfred County (Bhana 1985:261).

22 Bhana 1985:245. Much of that trade was in the hands of what were called "Arab" traders. They were Moslems who immigrated to Natal from 1875 and who originally hailed from the west coast of India.

As a region for European settlement, Alexandra County was particularly fragmented due to the presence of several African and mission reserves.²³ Theophilus Shepstone, a member of the Native Locations Commission, considered it necessary to apply the policies of insulation and amalgamation in order to bring about a *modus vivendi* between colonists and Africans, whom he regarded as residents in Natal and not refugees as the settlers claimed.²⁴ In addition to those reserves there was the land of Mnini and the Thuli people, which was given to them as compensation when they were relocated from the Bluff peninsula. Although subject to Shepstone's authority as the Secretary of Native Affairs, such reserves fostered traditional customs and governance,²⁵ and consequently resulted in the development of a dual economy on the South Coast – a subsistence one alongside a capitalist, commercial economy. While one reflected minimal economic growth, the other grew rapidly – at least as far as the sugar industry was concerned.²⁶

In addition to reserves, by 1890 Africans, through chiefs, had purchased 147 918 acres of Crown land in Alfred and Alexandra counties.²⁷ Fragmented land allocation, as well as the relatively small settler population of the South Coast, resulted in scattered settlement, unlike the development of close settlement and land intensification which was attempted in certain parts of Australia.²⁸ Whereas small farm enterprises were encouraged in Australia – not with much success – in the belief that the small, independent farmer was the backbone of a healthy and wealthy society, the reverse occurred on the South Coast of Natal with the emergence of the sugarcocracy: Reynolds and Crookes consolidated the sugar business into one dominated by a few major stakeholders.

Whilst sugar production was monopolised by white settlers, aspects of food production were dominated by Africans and Indians, maize being the most cultivated crop.²⁹ Exports from Port Shepstone included fruit, tea, coffee and butter, which were produced by settlers.³⁰ Apart from these items and some timber, hides and lime,

23 These included the Amahlongwa (which occupied 7 464 acres), Ifafa (7 500 acres), Mtwalumi (13 407 acres), Mzombe (8 000 acres) and Equeefa College (3 000 acres) (*Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1871).

24 Guy 2013:5, 10.

25 Hurvitz 1953:63.

26 Editor John Robinson criticised what he called the “ban” on white settlement in the reserves on the grounds of their potential “for scores of prosperous sugar estates” (*Natal Mercury*, 25 April 1861).

27 Lambert 1995:78-79. As Lambert has noted, “in a society which had no concept of individual tenure, men risked either chiefly or lineage disapproval by making individual purchases” (*ibid.*:73). Such purchases also drew Africans into the colonial cash economy in a limited way (Bundy 1972:172).

28 Keneley 2002:363-379.

29 In 1904, of the 17 000 acres under maize in Alexandra County, 3 000 acres were cultivated by Indians and 12 000 acres by Africans (*Magistrates Reports*, 1904, 62).

30 *Natal Mercury*, 14 October 1885.

there was little else of substance. The tea production of 123 202 pounds in 1909 was small compared to the Lower Tugela division which produced 1 050 000 pounds.³¹ The wattle industry near Murchison in Lower Umzimkulu occupied 9 000 acres by 1909, but was hampered by the absence of a rail link.³² An absence of capital also stunted economic growth. As the resident magistrate for Lower Umzimkulu stated in 1895, “thousands of acres of splendid bush land lies idle for want of capital to develop it”.³³ Prospects of garnering the interior trade from East Griqualand and Kokstad did not come to fruition until the early years of Union when a rail link was established. Thus, tourism and the hospitality business was recognised and embraced as the solution to an otherwise economically limited region.³⁴ The South Coast totally outperformed the North Coast as a tourist destination until well into the twentieth century when Umhlanga Rocks, Salt Rock and Ballito on the North Coast provided competition.

The most glaring failure in respect of economic development concerned the colonial government’s neglect of the potential of the Norwegian immigrants. Having emigrated from fishing villages with the inducement that they would be able to resume their fishing occupation at Port Shepstone, the failure of harbour works on the Mzimkulu to materialise into a viable port for small craft caused great bitterness among them.³⁵ As the notes on Port Shepstone stated in the *Natal Directory* of 1909, the Norwegian settlers “were dumped there by the Government”.³⁶ Yet, in terms of their numbers (229) they were the single greatest number of white settlers to make the South Coast their home during the colonial period. Disillusionment with their plight led many to seek their fortunes on the Witwatersrand goldfields,³⁷ whilst as early as 1883 some of the Marburg settlers went to work on the construction of the railway north of Pietermaritzburg.³⁸

31 *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal* 1909, 99.

32 Alfred County centenary souvenir brochure, KC 20385, 62; *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal*, 1909, 95. At the time the New Hanover district had nearly 41 000 acres of wattle plantation. Tannin from wattle trees was used in the processing of hides for leather.

33 *Natal Blue Book*, 1894/95, B65.

34 The post-1910 period saw the emergence of a string of coastal resorts, particularly between Hibberdene and Port Edward, which included Sea Park, Umtentweni, Uvongo, Shelly Beach, Margate, Ramsgate and Southbroom.

35 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 40, 1906, 576-578. Speech by Charles Hitchens (MLA), in response to a petition from Marburg settlers. In 1890 the Marburg settlement applied for a grant of £300 to construct a fishing boat. In motivation, their letter to the colonial secretary stated that proximity to the good fishing grounds off Port Shepstone would strengthen their economic situation. The official response was that the government was “unable to accede to your request” (CSO 1264, No. 3874, June 1890; 1 August 1890).

36 *Natal Directory* 1909, 649.

37 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1892/93, B25; *Natal Blue Book*, 1894/95, B65.

38 *Natal Mercury*, 20 November 1883.

By the time of Union in 1910 there were just three villages on the South Coast – Umzinto, Umkomaas and Port Shepstone. All had started off as hamlets, but only one, Umkomaas, progressed to town board status in terms of governance. Places such as Park Rynie with its race course, Umzumbe, Umtwalume and Scottburgh were small settlements whose existence was of note either as a mission station, a railway halt, or in the case of Scottburgh, as a seaside venue for day-trippers.

In each of the established settlements the rudiments of colonial society were in place: a church, a school³⁹ and a commercial zone which, depending on circumstances, may have included a hotel. As regards religion, records show that throughout the period church attendance was regular. As an English magistrate observed in 1904, “the colonial-born Natalian supports his religious association in a manner which could teach lessons to his relatives at Home”.⁴⁰ The first settler church, St. Patricks, on the South Coast was established at Umzinto in 1862.⁴¹ This Anglican congregation was housed in a temporary shelter until 1869 when the church building was completed.⁴² Its cemetery is a resting place for many of the founding families of the district, such as the Archibalds, Bazleys and Reynolds. Umzinto, as the oldest settlement, as the first to erect its own hall. Paid for entirely by local subscriptions, its establishment reflected the social cohesion and economic stability of the Umzinto district.

The isolation of the South Coast due to a lack of infrastructural development was undoubtedly a factor in promoting social cohesion, particularly in Alexandra County. As early as 1860 the Umzinto Rifle Club was formed, and by 1866 settlers in the Umzinto district had set aside a weekend in July as an annual social event. It was held at Park Rynie and involved sporting events and pony races.⁴³ The compiling of eighteen petitions during the period 1880 to 1885, a record unequalled in any other part of the colony, reflected the dogged determination and solidarity of South Coast settlers to improve their infrastructure and thereby lessen their isolation. But that energy and agitation was not sustained and became less frequent and strident once infrastructural needs – telegraph line, bridges and railway – were addressed.⁴⁴

39 Although non-indentured or free Indians were also settlers, there was only one state-aided school for them south of Isipingo. It was situated in Umzinto (Report of the Superintendent of Education, 1905, 31).

40 *Natal Mercury*, 23 September 1904.

41 *Natal Blue Book*, 1862, S8-9.

42 Spencer 1983:25.

43 One of the conditions of the races concerned ethnicity: “No coloured riders allowed” (*Natal Mercury*, 19 July 1888).

44 On 16 July 1888, the *Mercury* remarked that the “once energetic and combative” Alexandra Association seemed to have gone into hibernation.

Exemplifying that decline was the inability of Port Shepstone residents to form a sanitary board, let alone a town board.⁴⁵

As regards to gender, the women of Alexandra County were the first in the colony to form a revolver and rifle club when they did so in 1895. On that occasion forty ladies signed up for shooting practice in Umzinto.⁴⁶ But they appeared reticent on the subject of enfranchisement. They applauded when John Kirkman said he looked forward to the day that he could say “fellow electors” in addressing a meeting, rather than “ladies and gentlemen”,⁴⁷ but beyond that the women of the South Coast showed little signs of militancy as far as the suffragettes movement or women’s rights in general were concerned. Umkomaas showcased the most prominent women of the region. Georgina Nelson, who served as post mistress at Umkomaas for over 30 years, was certainly the doyen amongst them. Hotel management was also their forte. In 1905, Mmes. Salmon, Humphreys and Williams managed three of the four hotels in Umkomaas.⁴⁸

Colonisation obviously had an impact on the natural environment. A commission of enquiry into the pollution of streams in 1881 noted that sugar mills were responsible for discharging so-called dunder (the dregs of sugar cane juice) into streams and thereby polluting them. Although the commission’s fieldwork included visits to Equeefa and Umzinto, its findings were not specific to any one area of the coast. It also noted that faecal pollution, as a result of an absence of latrines in indentured Indian barracks, was responsible for an increase in illness amongst Indians on the sugar estates.⁴⁹ As noted in chapter nine, housing conditions for indentured labour remained generally poor for the entire indenture period. Pollution of rivers from sugar mills also proved ongoing.⁵⁰

The destruction of natural woods was a concern noted early on in the period, particularly in Alfred County. In 1871, Resident Magistrate Henrique Shepstone complained that Crown forests were subject to “careless and wanton destruction”.⁵¹ This concern was echoed by his successor, James Giles, in 1874 with specific reference

45 Durban Archives Repository, LU 1464/04, Vol. 3/2/13, 13 September 1904.

46 *Natal Mercury*, 18 May 1895.

47 *Natal Mercury*, 11 September 1906. This occurred at a public meeting at Umzinto on 8 September 1906.

48 *Natal Mercury*, 11 May 1905.

49 *Government Notice*, No. 388, 1881. The commission recommended that Indian barracks should be supplied with latrines.

50 CSO 1176, No. 175, 15 June 1887. Awareness of the need to address the pollution of streams found expression in an editorial in the *Natal Advertiser* on 8 November 1886 which called for appropriate legislation “to abate the nuisance”.

51 Document No. 11, 1871 presented to the Legislative Council on 2 August 1871.

to the Ingeli forests.⁵² Geographically, however, this area falls outside the scope of this study. As with the provision of policemen and district medical officers, too few conservators were employed to monitor the vast areas of veld and forest which were open to exploitation.⁵³ Although legislation was passed in 1866 to “prevent the indiscriminate destruction of certain valuable wild animals”,⁵⁴ as with legislation concerning other aspects of colonial governance, law enforcement capacity was seriously lacking. An advertisement for the Imperial Hotel at Port Shepstone in 1906 boasted of “good shooting in the immediate neighbourhood”.⁵⁵ From that it may be seen that the exploitation of fauna persisted throughout the colonial period.

From a small population of just 392 in both Alexandra and Alfred counties in 1866,⁵⁶ by 1909 the white settler community in Lower Umzimkulu and Alexandra County had grown to 2 021.⁵⁷ Whatever its shortcomings, the South Coast’s exposure to and experience of colonisation moulded a settler society which reflected British imperial interests and values. Moreover, the Norwegians and Germans who settled in Alfred County by and large identified with these interests.⁵⁸ But on the fringes of that white settler community were Indians who came as passengers or had completed their terms of indenture⁵⁹ and who, despite being British subjects, were not only excluded from the settler core on the grounds of race and culture, but whose presence was resented because it was seen to pose a threat to white commercial interests. The existence of only one state-aided school for Indians south of Isipingo also reflected the extent to which Indians were marginalised as settlers.⁶⁰

On the other hand, the Africans, as indigenous inhabitants, were regarded as a totally separate ‘society’ which was subject to colonial laws in addition to traditional customs. Yet despite their total exclusion from settler society, as a community Africans ironically made the greatest financial contribution (in the form of hut tax)

52 CSO 494, No. 3416, 4 December 1874.

53 Poor remuneration of just £12 per annum was hardly an inducement for recruiting conservators (*Report of the Natal Forests*, 1889, 75).

54 Law 10 of 1866, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 18, No. 1019.

55 *Natal Mercury*, 6 January 1906.

56 CSO 264, No. 43, 4 January, 28 February 1867. At that time no distinction was made between the coastal area of Alfred County, known from 1889 as Lower Umzimkulu, and the rest of the county.

57 *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal*, 1909, 12.

58 By 1890 many of them had become naturalised British subjects (*Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1890/91, B47).

59 It is not possible to specify how many of the Indians on the South Coast were passengers as opposed to those who were indentured, as only general figures were listed. According to the *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal* (1909:13) there were 8 257 in Alexandra County and 1 760 in Lower Umzimkulu.

60 The school was in Umzinto.

to the colonial revenue after customs dues and railway returns.⁶¹ But apart from the occasional inoculation campaign they received nothing in return for their financial contribution which was really intended as an inducement for them to seek employment in the white man's economy. Ironically, however, despite the large African population,⁶² throughout the period under review the complaint amongst settler agriculturists was of a scarcity of African labour, which was arguably testament to the ability of Africans to earn an independent living.⁶³

In terms of development the South Coast was more of a hostage to economics than geography in that it was removed in proximity from Natal's economic lifeline, the Overberg trade with the interior.⁶⁴ That trade became more pronounced from the 1870s with the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley, and the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in the 1880s.⁶⁵ As such, the resources of Natal were channelled into rail and bridge construction so as to link the port of Durban with the interior. The North Coast was also negatively affected as a result where infrastructure development was concerned. Not surprisingly, a report on Victoria County in the *Natal Farmers' Magazine* of 1894 noted that "industries are stifled for want of transport; residents in this county have been very long suffering".⁶⁶

If the South Coast was a work in progress, it was a very slow one. With the exception of social cohesion amongst the settlers of the original South Coast frontier, Isipingo, and subsequently those of Alexandra County, progress with regard to infrastructure development, political representation and economic development lagged behind other counties of Natal. What the South Coast lacked was a valuable mineral such as coal. As noted in chapter five, when news of substantial coal deposits in northern Natal became official in 1878, Governor Henry Bulwer made it clear that every effort should be made to "secure the means of our future coal supply".⁶⁷ By 1888 Bulwer's view had become holy writ.

61 In 1886, for example, hut tax collected from Africans amounted to £72 299; customs revenue amounted to £140 401 and railway returns realised £178 287 (*Natal Blue Book*, 1886, R2).

62 In 1909 the African population in Alexandra County was put at 39 681 and 25 220 in Alfred County (*Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal* 1909:13).

63 In his report for 1904, Alexandra County Resident Magistrate James McLaurin remarked that "native labour was scarce and unreliable" and that Africans were "getting more lazy and indolent every year" (*Magistrates' Reports*, 1904:64).

64 Le Cordeur 1966:247-262. Shipments of wool from beyond Natal's borders increased from £120 776 in 1870 to £389 285 in 1875 (Leverton 1968:159).

65 The completion of the railway line to Johannesburg in 1895 saw a surge in rail revenue from £526 493 in 1895 to £1 136 213 in 1896 (*Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 25, 1897, 148).

66 *Natal Farmers' Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 15, 16 April 1894, 74.

67 CSO 646, No. 2149, 18 June 1878.

Governor Havelock was adamant that “every available means of furthering the rapid and satisfactory completion” of the railway to the Transvaal border had to be adopted.⁶⁸ At the cost of over £1 million and despite severe engineering challenges because of the steep gradients between Ladysmith and Newcastle, construction of the railway to the coal fields and beyond was expedited.⁶⁹ Between 1889 and 1909 the coal output of that area increased seventy fold and saw more than £2 million invested by 1903.⁷⁰ The collieries had ready markets in the NGR, the port of Durban and the Witwatersrand. If the coal fields had been located near Port Shepstone, there can be no doubt that the same effort and funding would have been expended to exploit their worth. But all the South Coast had to recommend itself was a modest sugar production. The largest investment on the South Coast, an amount of £450 000 by 1913, was made by Reynolds Bros.⁷¹ Whereas coal production had increased seventyfold in twenty years, sugar production on the South Coast increased only twelve fold in just under 50 years.⁷² As a result the South Coast did not attract substantial investment and was therefore historically handicapped more by its lack of investment appeal than by the nature of its geographical challenges in terms of the numerous rivers which traversed it.

Nonetheless, two predictions about the attractiveness of the South Coast as a tourist and holiday mecca have proved highly accurate. The first was by John Robinson in 1861 and concerned Scottburgh:

Imaginatively one already realises the day when marts, warehouses, shops and private dwelling houses shall make this spot a conspicuous feature on the coast and when wealthy sheep farmers of the uplands with enervated sugar planters on the coast shall fly to Scottburgh in pursuit of pleasure and health.⁷³

The other was by Thomas Keir Murray in his capacity as Minister of Lands and Works during a debate in May 1894 concerning the construction of the South Coast railway: “The beautiful spots along the seaside in a few years’ time will develop into favourite seaside resorts.”⁷⁴

68 Message No. 17, 2 September 1888, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 40, No. 2319.

69 LC No. 12, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. 40, No. 2318, 4 September 1888.

70 Coal production went from 25 609 to 1 786 583 tons (Edgcombe & Guest 1985:317, 337).

71 Osborn 1964:325.

72 A total of 451 tons was produced in 1862, with 5 455 tons in 1909 (*Natal Blue Book*, 1862, X2-3; *Statistical Yearbook of the Colony of Natal* 1909:98).

73 *Natal Mercury*, 9 May 1861.

74 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 22, 1894,193.

A black and white photograph of a stack of several old, worn books. The books are stacked vertically, with some showing significant damage to their covers and spines. The pages are yellowed and the binding is frayed. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image, containing the text 'Bibliography and addenda'.

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List of abbreviations

AGO	Attorney General's Office
BMR	Border Mounted Rifles
CSO	Colonial Secretary's Office
GH	Government House
IITB	Indian Immigration Trust Board
JP	Justice of the peace
KCC	Killie Campbell Collection
KCMG	Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George
LA	Legislative Assembly
LC	Legislative Council
LU	Lower Umzimkulu
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council
NGR	Natal Government Railways
NPA	Natal Provincial Administration
PAR	Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository
SNA	Secretary for Native Affairs

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Appendix A

Employment of indentured Indians by the leading sugar planters on the South Coast during the period of indenture.

Source: Study based on ships' lists.

Employer	Total number employed over the period
Aiken – Ruthville:	151
Bazley – Nil Desperandum	520
Crookes – Renishaw	751
Hawkesworth – Beneva	1 086
Kirkman – Beeverstowe	377
Reynolds – Umzinto	5 827



Directories of male inhabitants in Scottburgh, Umtwalumi and Umzumbi (*Natal Directory 1908*), and Alfred and Alexandra counties (*Natal Almanac and Register, 1878*).

SCOTTBURGH.

A small township situated on the south coast of Natal, and distant 38 miles from Durban. A popular seaside resort, possessing safe facilities for salt-water bathing, and a lovely beach. An interesting feature of the place is the fishing station, which has been established for some years.

There is a hotel, a general store and bakery, with post and telegraph office attached, and numerous beach cottages are to be found. Connected by road with Umzinto, eight miles distant, the seat of magistracy.

The Natal Police have a station on the site of the old Scottburgh Lighthouse. This was removed to Port Shepstone after the erection at Green Point of one of the best lighthouses on the coast, which points out to navigators the dangers of the Aliwal Shoal.

Arnold, H. M., trooper, N.P.

Beck, Robt., fisherman.

Brown, Chas., fisherman.

Duckworth, H., manager, fishing station.

Hassall, T. H., hotelkeeper.

Johnson, C. G., lighthouse keeper, Green Point.

Justice, Mrs. E. E.

Leopold, Mrs.

Mellon, F., storekeeper, Renishaw Estate.

Miiner, W. E., Freeland Park.

Newman, Mrs. H. R.

Robinson, G. C.

Sharp, H., trooper, N.P.

Varty, H. A. B., supervisor of mission reserves.

Wheeler, H. D., storekeeper.

UMTWALUMI.

A station on the South Coast Railway Line, 11 miles beyond Alexandra Junction, and 56 miles from Durban.

Apelgren, C., farmer and builder.	Ferguson, H. A., farmer and storekeeper.
Black & Middleborough, storekeepers.	Fynn, Jas., farmer, Nangween.
Black, R. J., bookkeeper.	Goldstone, A. G., farmer and transport rider.
Blamey, M., farmer.	Goldstone, H., farm manager, The Farm.
Brown, —, stationmaster.	Goldstone, W., farmer, The Grange.
Bull, A., foreman, N.G.R.	Kinsey, B. H., storekeeper.
Calf, J. E., farmer and storekeeper.	Lawson, T. L., farmer, Allerton.
Casson, R., farmer, The Flats.	Manuel, Rev. L., missionary.
Chester, C., storekeeper.	Middleborough, E. H., general agent.
Crawford, W. R., farm manager.	Nelson, F., Ashton Farm.
Cruickshank, R., farmer, Victoria.	Reynolds, H., Daventry Estate.
Curry, E. P., farmer, Darrington.	Rigg, L., farmer, Regina.
Fayers, W. F., farmer, Allerton.	Robertson, Geo., clerk.
Farrell, P. J., farmer and storekeeper, Mount Kerry.	Sevensson, —, foreman, N.G.R.
	Turnbull, T. D., farmer, Tophet.

UMZUMBI (Station.)

A station on the South Coast Branch of the N.G.R., 67 miles from Durban. The township is named Shurmerton, and it is believed that the name of the station is to be altered accordingly.

Allen, Miss F. G., missionary.	Jchansson, O., stationmaster.
Backenstoe, Dr. W.	Melville, H., fruit grower.
Bateman, H., farmer.	Miller, H., missionary.
Bonney, J., platelayer, N.G.R.	Raw, H. F., farmer.
Brodhead, J. P., missionary.	Reed, Miss A., missionary.
Cruickshank, J. D., fruit grower.	Ross, J. F., fruit grower.
Grace, A., platelayer, N.G.R.	Roxburgh, —, farmer.
Guy, A. H., railway contractor.	Royle, J. C., storekeeper.
Heafford, F. W., storekeeper.	Ryff, J.
	Warrington, S. R., farmer.

Umzumbi Mission Station.

Twelve miles from rail, inland.

(Via Umzumbi Station.)

Bjorseth, Miss J., teacher.	Raw, K. P., farmer.
Frost, Miss C. E.	Smith, Miss L. C., principal, Umzumbi House.
Morrison, H., general store-keeper and postmaster.	Watts, J., farmer.
Raw, H. F., farmer.	

Appendix B

MALE INHABITANTS OF ALFRED COUNTY.

NAME.	PROFESSION.	PLACE OF ABODE.
Brickhill, William	Store-manager	Isigolwenie
Bell, G.	"	Umtamvina
Barker, E., jun.,	"	"
Clothier, Thos.	Farmer	Slexel
Clothier, A.	"	Umskulana
Darby, W. W.	Merchant	Harding
Downs, W.	Storekeeper	"
Downs, H.	"	"
Eddie, Charles	Surgeon	"
Furniss, John	Wagonmaker	Ingeli Bush
Fisher, R.	Storeman	Harding
Giles, James	Resident Magistrate	"
Goodwin, Jos.	Storekeeper	Alfred County
Higham, R.	Gentleman	Umbango
Heathcote, E.	Storekeeper	Alfred
Hall, T. O.	Merchant	Zuurberg
Hogan, W.	Storeman	"
Knox, W. H.	Storekeeper	Ingelie
Lynch, Thos.	Sawyer	"
Lynch, John	"	"
Low, William	"	"
Lennox, James	"	"
Lilje, C. H.	Hanoverian Missionary	Ebenezer
McKenzie, D.	Constable & Messenger	Harding
Moss, Charles	Ferryman	Lower Umzimkulu
Muller, —	Storekeeper	Marburg
Neimack, W.	Farmer	Macton
Payn, William	"	Fyn's Bush
Payn, Alexander	Transport-rider	"
Rosler, R. K.	Hanoverian Missionary	Elim
Ringo, Julius	Farmer	Umboboie
Stafford, E. T.	Storekeeper	Ingelie
Stanley, J. S.	Bookkeeper	"
Stoppel, P.	Hanoverian Missionary	Marburg
Shepstone, T.	Magistrate's Clerk	Harding
Tyrrell, E. E.	Merchant	"
Wooley, R.	Road Superintendent	Alfred
Wooley, James	"	"
Wardell, P. T.	Blacksmith	Zuurberg
Winn, Thomas	Wagonmaker	"
McKenzie, R.	Field-cornet	Harding
Wooley, R.	"	Lower Umzimkulu
McKenzie, D.	Poundmaster	Harding
Wooley, R.	Justice of the Peace	Lower Umzimkulu

NOTE.—No return furnished by Field-cornet, Ward No. 3, Durban.

Appendix B

COUNTY OF ALEXANDRA.		
NAME.	RESIDENCE.	POSTAL ADDRESS.
Abrahams, Sidney John	Bushey Park	Umzinto
Aiken, James	Maryville, Ifafa	"
Aiken, James Burnett	" "	"
Aiken, David Chalmers	" "	"
Archibald, Robert Montgomery	Umzinto	"
Arbuthnot, William Thomas	Greenwood	"
Arbuthnot, McDuff	"	"
Arbuthnot, Herbert	Glenmundy	"
Arbuthnot, Fitz James	Rydal Mount	"
Arbuthnot, Norman	" "	"
Armstrong, Robert C.	Glenmore	"
Anderson, George	Umzimkula	Umbango Lr. Umzimkula
Anderson, Robert	Umzinto	Umzinto
Arbuthnot, Mrs. (widow)	Greenwood	"
Ballenden, Christopher Jobson	Roseneath	Lower Umkomas
Barker, Joseph (Rev. Canon)	Pasonage	Umzinto
Bazley, John	Nil Desperandum	"
Bazley, William	Otterbourne, Ifafa	"
Bazley, George	Equefa	"
Bazley, Edward	Ifafa	"
Bazley, Harry	Nil Desperandum	"
Beath, Thomas	Equefa	"
Brander, Alexander (J.P.)	Bellemont	"
Bridgeman, Henry (Rev.)	Umzumbi	"
Brie de Wold Helmer Theodore	Ifafa	"
Bremner, William	Umzinto	"
Booth, Dr. Lancelot Parker	Umzinto	"
Baytop, W.	Equefa	"
Caldwell, Brothers	Carbuttdale, Ifafa	"
Campbell, Marshall	Umzinto Lodge	"
Collingham, William	Scottborough	"
Conyngnam, John Dame	Ellengowan, Ifafa	"
Cooke, Henry William	Kelso Grove	"
Cooke, William	"	"
Crocker, John	Mount Devon	"
Crocker, James Harvey	"	"
Crocker, Brothers	Umzinto	"
Crookes, Samuel	Ellingham	Lower Umkomas
Darcy, Norris Edward	Equefa	Umzinto
Doughty, Henry	Umkomas	Lower Umkomas
Ellis, Henry	"	" "
Eratt, George	Ungobella	Umzinto
Fisher, Aubray	Umpambinzoni	"
Fitzgerald, Hans Cauldfuld	Devil's Glen	"
Francis, Henry Vernon	Umkomas	Lower Umkomas
Fynn, George	Umtwalami	Umzinto
Goldstone, Samuel	"	"
Hargraves, James	Umzumbi	"
Hart & Bazley	Equefa	"
Hawkins, William	Ifafa	"
Hawksworth, William (M.L.C.)	Equefa	"
Hawksworth, Edward William	Benares	"
Hawksworth, Brothers	Equefa, Central	"
Higham, John	Umzema	"
Johnstone, Bunting	Ida Vale	Umzinto
Joyner, Donald	Ifafa	"
Kilbon, Rev. Chas. W.	Umtwalami	"
Kirkman, Thomas	Croftland	"
Kirkman, John	Beaverstoue	"
Knox, Charles	Umzinto	"
Knox, James	Ifafa	"
Larkin, George	Larkfield	"
Larkin, Robert	The Flatcrowns	"
Landers, Joseph, sen.	Park Rennie	"

Appendix B

NAME.	RESIDENCE.	POSTAL ADDRESS.
Landers, Thomas	Maryland	Umzinto
Landers, Joshua	Reneshaw	"
Langton, William	Umkomas	Lower Umkomas
Lawson, James	Udomisina	Umzinto
Laya, Theodore	Restalrig	"
Low, Andrew	Alexandra	"
Lucas, Gould Arthur	"	"
Man, Henry	Umpambinyoni	"
McKenzie, John, J.P.	Craigie Burn	Lower Umkomas
Miles, John	Ifafa	Umzinto
Millan, James B.	Umzinto Lodge	"
Newman, Noah	Alexandra	"
Nourse, John	"	"
Ogle, Henry	Inonduta	"
Paglan, Charles	Alexandra	"
Parkin, William, sen.	Hull Valley	Lower Umkomas
Parkin, Robert	"	"
Peddie, William Henry	Umkomas	"
Pennington, Richard	Lower Umzinto	Umzinto
Pigg, George	Inland View	"
Pigg, William	"	"
Prescott, Colonel J. W. P. John	All alone	"
Purse, Samuel	Runshaw	"
Quick, George Baron	Umzinto	"
Redman, Edward W.	"	"
Redman, John	"	"
Redman, Robert	"	"
Rennie, Alexander Stuart	Umtwalumi	"
Reynolds, Charles	Umzinto	"
Ross, James	"	"
Saunders, Charles J. R.	"	"
Salter, Alfred	Ungobella	"
Shooter, Charles Thomas	Umkomas	Lower Umkomas
Shooter, William	Hull Valley	"
Sinclair, Charles Ross	Ungobella	Umzinto
Sinclair, Archibald	Umzimkulu	Umbango Lr. Umzimkulu
Sinclair, Andrew	Cowick, Ifafa	Umzinto
Stewart, Thomas Corrie	Dunraget	"
Sunkel, Carl Fredrick	Ifafa	"
Taylor, A. J. & Co.	Umkomas	Lower Umkomas
Thomas, David Chalmers	Hopewell, Ifafa	Umzinto
Thompson, William	Amahlongwa	Lower Umkomas
Thornton, William	Alexandra	Umzinto
Thorpe, Frederick	Moat Farm, Ifafa	"
Tucker, Captain Heber Reeve	Strathern	"
Turton, John	Canonby	Lower Umkomas
Tryon, Spencer	Ifafa	Umzinto
Wackrill, James	"	"
Welch, John	Umzemai	"

Appendix C

Shipping movements to and from Durban, 1880-1902.

Source: Compiled from listed newspapers and archival documents.

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	14 May 1880	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Buffalo</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 June 1880	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Buffalo</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 June 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Adonis</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 June 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Adonis</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 June 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Adonis</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 July 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Adonis</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 July 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	19 July 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 July 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	31 July 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 August 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 August 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	23 August 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	6 September 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 September 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 September 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	27 September 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 October 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	9 October 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	18 October 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 October 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 October 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 November 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	13 November 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	20 November 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	27 November 1880	CSO 786, No. 4386
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Umkomaas	13 January 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 January 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	2 February 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Umkomaas	14 March 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	22 March 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	15 April 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Umkomaas & PS	19 April 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Umkomaas	5 May 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Umkomaas & PS	17 May 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	31 May 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	13 June 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 June 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 June 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	14 September 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	23 September 1881	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	26 September 1882	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Umkomaas	27 September 1882	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Adonis</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 November 1882	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 February 1883	<i>Natal Witness</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Port Shepstone	25 May 1883	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Zulu</i>	From Umkomaas	5 December 1883	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Commodore</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 December 1883	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	8 December 1883	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Zulu</i>	To Umkomaas	10 December 1883	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 December 1883	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Zulu</i>	From Umkomaas	15 December 1883	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 January 1884	<i>Times of Natal</i>
<i>Zulu</i>	To Port Shepstone	21 February 1884	<i>Natal Witness</i>
<i>Zulu</i>	From Port Shepstone	22 February 1884	<i>Natal Witness</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	19 March 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 March 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 April 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 April 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 April 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	8 May 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 May 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Port Shepstone	17 June 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 July 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 August 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 September 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 September 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 November 1884	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Port Shepstone	14 February 1885	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 March 1885	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 October 1885	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	31 December 1885	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	23 February 1886	<i>Natal Advertiser</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	25 March 1886	<i>Natal Advertiser</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	17 April 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 June 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Carnarvon</i>	To Mzinto Bay	24 June 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	2 July 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Carnarvon</i>	To Mzinto Bay	19 July 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	2 August 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 August 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Carnarvon</i>	To Mzinto Bay	13 August 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Carnarvon</i>	To Mzinto Bay	2 September 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 September 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Carnarvon</i>	From Mzinto Bay	23 September 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Carnarvon</i>	To Mzinto Bay	24 September 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Port Shepstone	1 October 1886	<i>Natal Advertiser</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	13 November 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	6 December 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	10 December 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	22 December 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Mzinto Bay	30 December 1886	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Mzinto Bay	12 February 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Mzinto Bay	15 February 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Alfredia</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 February 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Mzinto Bay	11 March 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Alfredia</i>	To Port Shepstone	15 March 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Mzinto Bay	24 March 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Mzinto Bay	28 March 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Alfredia</i>	From Port Shepstone	28 March 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Alfredia</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 April 1887	<i>Natal Advertiser</i>
<i>Alfredia</i>	From Port Shepstone	12 April 1887	<i>Natal Advertiser</i>
<i>Alfredia</i>	To Port Shepstone	9 May 1887	<i>Natal Advertiser</i>
<i>Alfredia</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 May 1887	<i>Natal Advertiser</i>
<i>Alfredia</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 June 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Alfredia</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 July 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Alfredia</i>	Wrecked at Port St Johns	13 July 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Mzinto Bay	29 July 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Mzinto Bay	16 August 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Mzinto Bay	29 August 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	10 September 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	13 September 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Mzinto Bay	30 September 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	10 October 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Mzinto Bay	20 October 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Mzinto Bay	25 October 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Mzinto Bay	27 October 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Mzinto Bay	31 October 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	17 November 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	21 November 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	28 November 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From and to Mzinto Bay	30 November 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	2 December 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Mzinto Bay	12 December 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	To Mzinto Bay	14 December 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Mzinto Bay	19 December 1887	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Mzinto Bay	6 January 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 January 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	31 January 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Lion</i>	To Mzinto Bay	2 February 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Mzinto Bay	4 February 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	28 February 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 February 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Lion</i>	From Mzinto Bay	29 February 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 April 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	25 April 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	28 May 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 May 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	27 August 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	28 August 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	3 September 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	5 September 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	7 September 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	12 September 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	17 September 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To / from Mzinto Bay	20 September 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	10 October 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	24 October 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	25 October 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	27 October 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	2 November 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 November 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 November 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	out of service	7 January 1889	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 March 1889	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	2 April 1889	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 April 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	1 May 1889	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	3 May 1889	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	Servicing Delagoa/Cape		
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 April 1890	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	2 September 1890	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 September 1890	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 November 1890	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 November 1890	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	17 December 1888	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 January 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 February 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 February 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 March 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	13 April 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	9 May 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	12 May 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From/to Port Shepstone	8 June 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 June 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 August 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 August 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	26 August 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 August 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	11 September 1891	11 September 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 October 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 October 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To/from Port shepstone	3 November 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	18 November 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	19 November 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	From Mzinto Bay	21 November 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	To Mzinto Bay	24 November 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	From Mzinto Bay	30 November 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 December 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 December 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	12 December 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	14 December 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	To Mzinto Bay	18 December 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 December 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	To Mzinto Bay	28 December 1891	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Gertie</i>	From Mzinto Bay	4 January 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Mzinto Bay	8 January 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	13 January 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 January 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	From Mzinto Bay	4 February 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	To Mzinto Bay	5 February 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	From Mzinto Bay	8 February 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	To Mzinto Bay	11 February 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 February 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	To Mzinto Bay	17 February 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 February 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	To Mzinto Bay	18 February 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	From Mzinto Bay	20 February 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 February 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	To Mzinto Bay	27 February 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	From Mzinto Bay	7 March 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	Under new ownership; plying Cape ports	23 September 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	16 March 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	30 March 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	16 April 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 April 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	2 May 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 May 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 June 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 July 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	9 August 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	11 August 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	8 September 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 October 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	25 October 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 November 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 November 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	28 November 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	6 December 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 December 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 December 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	20 December 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	To Mzinto Bay	21 December 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Mzinto Bay	23 December 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	From Mzinto Bay	24 December 1892	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	6 January 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	To Mzinto Bay	9 January 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 January 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	8 February 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 February 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	3 March 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 March 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 March 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 March 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	3 April 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 April 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 April 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 May 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	28 August 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 September 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 October 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	12 October 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	9 November 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 November 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 December 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 December 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 December 1893	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	8 January 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 January 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 January 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 January 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	6 February 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	8 February 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	21 February 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 February 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 March 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 March 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	21 March 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	27 March 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	9 April 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 April 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	20 April 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 April 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 April 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	5 May 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	7 May 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 May 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	21 May 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	6 June 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 June 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 September 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	1 October 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	3 October 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	17 October 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	31 October 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	8 November 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	14 November 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 November 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	30 November 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	3 December 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	19 December 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 December 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	31 December 1894	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	15 January 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 January 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	19 January 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	1 February 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	5 February 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 February 1895	<i>Times of Natal</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	12 February 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	28 February 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 March 1895	<i>Times of Natal</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 March 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 March 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 March 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 March 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 March 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	28 March 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	8 April 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 April 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 April 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	12 April 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 April 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	25 April 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 April 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 April 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 May 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	8 May 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 May 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	13 May 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 May 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 May 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	From Port Shepstone	1 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	21 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 June 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	5 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	8 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	To Port Shepstone	19 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	From Port Shepstone	27 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 July 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	7 August 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	8 August 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 August 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 August 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 August 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 August 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 August 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 August 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 August 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	2 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	From Port Shepstone	2 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	7 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	From Port Shepstone	11 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	19 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	23 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 September 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	5 October 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Norman</i>	wrecked - Mvoti mouth	7 October 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	14 October 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	14 October 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 October 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	23 October 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 October 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 November 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	15 November 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 November 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	19 November 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 November 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	5 December 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 December 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 December 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	19 December 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 December 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	25 December 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	14 January 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 January 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	16 January 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 January 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	31 January 1895	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	1 February 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	3 February 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 February 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 February 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 February 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 February 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	2 March 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 March 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 March 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	11 March 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 March 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	14 March 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 March 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	23 March 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	28 March 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	3 April 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	3 April 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 April 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	15 April 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 April 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 April 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 April 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 April 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	5 May 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	11 May 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 May 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	16 May 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	18 May 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 May 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 May 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 May 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 May 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	8 June 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 June 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 June 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 June 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 July 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	16 July 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	25 July 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 July 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 August 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 August 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 August 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	25 August 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 August 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	31 August 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	9 September 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 September 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 September 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 September 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	25 September 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	6 October 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 October 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	8 October 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 October 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 October 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 October 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 October 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	26 October 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	3 November 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 November 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 November 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	12 November 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	12 November 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 November 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 November 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 November 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	2 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	25 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	28 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	30 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	31 December 1896	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	1 January 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 January 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 January 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	11 January 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	16 January 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 January 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	20 January 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	22 January 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 January 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	2 February 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	2 February 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 February 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 February 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	13 February 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 February 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 February 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 February 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 February 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	27 February 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	2 March 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 March 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 March 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

* *Somtseu sold*

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
* <i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	8 March 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 March 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	17 March 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 March 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	1 April 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 April 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	17 April 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	20 April 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	28 April 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	3 May 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	3 May 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 May 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 May 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	17 May 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	19 May 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 May 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	31 May 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 June 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 June 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 June 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	15 June 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 June 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	18 June 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 June 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	1 July 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	1 July 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 July 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 July 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 July 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	17 July 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	19 July 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 July 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	31 July 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 August 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 August 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 August 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 August 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 August 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	23 August 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	28 August 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	1 September 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 September 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	13 September 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 September 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 September 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 September 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 September 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	13 October 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	15 October 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 October 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	28 October 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	2 November 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	9 November 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 November 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	13 November 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 November 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 November 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 November 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 November 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	8 December 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	8 December 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 December 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 December 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 December 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 December 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 December 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 December 1897	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 January 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 January 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	11 January 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	11 January 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 January 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 January 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 January 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 January 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 January 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	31 January 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 February 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
* <i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 February 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 February 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	22 February 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 February 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 February 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	25 February 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 March 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 March 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	19 March 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	19 March 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	19 March 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	21 March 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 March 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	28 March 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	28 March 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 April 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	8 April 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 April 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 April 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	21 April 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	21 April 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	25 April 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	25 April 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 April 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 April 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 May 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	4 May 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	9 May 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 May 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 May 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	12 May 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 May 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 May 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 May 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 May 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	31 May 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	3 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	7 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	21 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	29 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 June 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	7 July 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 July 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 July 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 July 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	15 July 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 July 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	25 July 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 July 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	1 August 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	2 August 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 August 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	16 August 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	16 August 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	18 August 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 August 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	25 August 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	25 August 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	30 August 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	1 September 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	3 September 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	5 September 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 September 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 September 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 September 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	24 September 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 September 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 September 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Sobantu</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 October 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 October 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 October 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	15 October 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	15 October 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	22 October 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 October 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	31 October 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	31 October 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 November 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 November 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 November 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	18 November 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 November 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 November 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	6 December 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	8 December 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	13 December 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 December 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	19 December 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	22 December 1898	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 January 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 January 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	17 January 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	23 January 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	25 January 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 January 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 January 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 January 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	2 February 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 February 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	20 February 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	23 February 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 February 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	28 February 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 March 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	13 March 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	18 March 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	19 March 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	27 March 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	28 March 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 April 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 April 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	21 April 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 April 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	25 April 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 April 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 May 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	13 May 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	15 May 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	18 May 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 May 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 May 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	3 June 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	3 June 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 June 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 June 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 June 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	1 July 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	1 July 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	6 July 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	6 July 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 August 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 August 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 August 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 August 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	22 August 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 September 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 September 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 October 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 October 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	11 October 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 November 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	16 November 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	23 November 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 December 1899	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	3 January 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	12 January 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	19 January 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 January 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 January 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	27 January 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 February 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 February 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 February 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 March 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	8 March 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	12 March 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	12 March 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	From Port Shepstone	26 March 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	26 March 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 March 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 April 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 April 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	9 April 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 April 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	13 April 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	5 May 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	21 May 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 May 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 May 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 June 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 June 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 June 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 June 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 June 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	18 June 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	22 June 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 June 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 June 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	30 June 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	4 July 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	13 July 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 July 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	1 August 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	1 August 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	18 August 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	27 August 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	10 September 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	17 September 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	24 September 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 September 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 October 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	11 October 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	26 October 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>H.Mundahl</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 November 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	To Port Shepstone	26 November 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>H. Mundahl</i>	To Port Shepstone	29 November 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	6 December 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>H.Mundahl</i>	From Port Shepstone	8 December 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Umzimvubu</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 December 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>H.Mundahl</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 December 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	15 December 1900	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Penguin</i>	From Port Shepstone	1 January 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>H.Mundahl</i>	From Port Shepstone	14 January 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	26 January 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	11 February 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>H.Mundahl</i>	Wrecked at Port Shepstone	16 February 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	11 March 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Appendix C

Name of ship	Destination	Date reported	Source
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	3 April 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	11 May 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	17 May 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	28 May 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	To Port Shepstone	6 June 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Somtseu</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 June 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	12 August 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	10 September 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	To Port Shepstone	23 September 1901	<i>Natal Mercury</i>
<i>Pioneer</i>	From Port Shepstone	28 April 1902	<i>Natal Mercury</i>

Other titles by the author

Labourer or Settler? Colonial Natal's Indian Dilemma (2011)

From a wealth of archival sources, Du Bois eruditely narrates what is arguably the seminal chronicle of the South Coast's development. He comprehensively unravels the kaleidoscope of personalities and unpacks the various interests that impacted on this otherwise parochial backwater. Black Africans, white settlers, Indian labourers competed on the agrarian "playing field" that was dominated by sugar cultivation.

Dr. Scott Everett Couper

Author of Albert Luthuli: Bound by Faith

Duncan Du Bois provides a detailed and fascinating history of a hitherto much-neglected part of what was the colony of Natal. Based primarily on original archival research, he traces the southward advance of the white settler frontier and its sugar-based economy from Isipingo to the Mzimkulu river and, without the sugar engine, to the Mtamvuna.

This study highlights challenges faced by settler enterprise which were not unique to that particular region, but crucial in shaping its history. These included rugged geography, slow infrastructural development, insufficient investment capital and a heavy demand for labour to meet the needs of plantation agriculture. The settler economy's relations with and reliance on indigenous African people and imported Indian workers therefore constitute further important dimensions of the book.

As such it is a valuable addition to the history of white settlement and its impact, both human and environmental, on southern Africa.

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