

**Mountain Passes, Roads & Transportation in the Cape:
a Guide to Research**

INTRODUCTION

February 2009

“But there is no finality in historical research. Even when a theme seems to have been worn threadbare by discussion and research and the last word on it appears to have been said, a chance discovery may present a new angle from which endless new facets may arise.”

Sanni Metelerkamp, *George Rex of Knysna*: 10

MOUNTAIN PASSES, ROADS & TRANSPORTATION IN THE CAPE:

A Guide to Research

(Compiled between June 1992 and February 2009)

This research document has been divided into four main parts:

Section A: INDEX OF CAPE MOUNTAIN PASSES

Section B: SCHEDULE OF PIONEERING AND CONSTRUCTION DATES

Section C: CHRONOLOGY

Section D: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

These data have been collected in an effort to **list** (and hence also **record**) some of the documentation and other information available to those interested in the history particularly of mountain passes, but also of roads and transportation. **The aim was to produce a Guide for the use of future researchers in this field.**

Generally speaking the study has concentrated on the history and records of the Dutch East India Company period, of the short Batavian Government interlude, of the Cape Colony (which properly should be called the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope) and of its successor, the Cape Province (which properly should be called the Province of the Cape of Good Hope).

When I joined the Cape Provincial Roads Department in 1949 the Cape Province comprised an area of 276.690 square miles; and was larger than the Transvaal, Natal and Orange Free State Provinces put together, plus another Natal. The Province was divided into 96 Divisions, 26 Native Areas and 142 Municipalities. There were nine District Roads Engineers: based at Cape Town, Oudtshoorn, Port Elizabeth, Queenstown, Middelburg, Ceres, Kimberley, Upington and Umtata, and we operated a number of construction units on the 2 460 miles of National Roads which traversed the Province.

In 1994 the Cape Province was broken up into the Provinces of the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Northern Cape, and a bit of my old (Kimberley) District joined one of the bits of the old Transvaal to form the new Northwest Province. Historic records were (of necessity) rather arbitrarily distributed between these new provinces, and sources of new information are of course also now dispersed.

1994 therefore seemed to me to be a good cut-off date for the collection and recording of information on the territory I have called "**the Cape**".

With the objective decided, it was necessary to define the form which this research document should assume.

In 1992 and 1993 I had compiled a series of eighteen articles, titled *Reminiscences about Cape Mountain Passes*, which were also published as a collection in 1998. In researching the subject I had prepared two editions of an *Annotated Bibliography on Mountain Passes and Poorts of the Cape Province*.

This Bibliography, although adequate for its purpose at the time it was compiled, could, I considered, with advantage have its coverage considerably expanded. I also felt that, while the primary emphasis on mountain passes should be retained, the field of study could well be enlarged to include the more important roads and major bridges, and a skeletal outline of the history of other transportation modes -- while I was about it, as it were.

In 1996 I had published an Annotated Bibliography and a Transportation-Related Chronology prepared during research for my 1998 work on *The Interactive Role of Transportation and the Economy of Namaqualand*.

After excising the bits in the Namaqualand Bibliography relating only to the economy of Namaqualand, and combining this "filleted" bibliography with the earlier bibliography on mountain passes and poorts, I had a basic Annotated Bibliography which acted as a sort of launch pad for the current study.

To meet the objectives of the research it was also necessary to prepare a Chronology of the key relevant events, as reported by the various authorities consulted. Here again I was fortunate in being able to use certain items from the Namaqualand Chronology as a base from which to start.

As the Chronology grew bulkier it became apparent that a partial summary and index in the form of a concise Schedule of Pioneering and Construction Dates would serve a useful purpose.

At a later stage of the project, when I was retrieving data about particular mountain passes for various people who had heard of my work, I realised that although it was comparatively easy to do this with a word-processor the product was getting rather big for easy retrieval from hard copy without some additional guidance. It had also become evident that a listing of passes, encompassing all the passes mentioned in various sources, did not exist. An Index of Mountain Passes appeared to be a useful tool for these purposes, and an alphabetical presentation enables it to complement the chronological Schedule of Pioneering and Construction Dates.

Here, then, was a useful field of endeavour which appealed to me, and the required activity has subsequently proven to be very interesting and eminently satisfying.

THE FOUR SECTIONS

It will probably be helpful if I detail the approaches used in the preparation of these Sections, and the cover which each is intended to give, so that you are aware of some of the limitations of my work, and how best to utilise it.

I should point out that the particular spelling used in any source document was used for the related entries in the Chronology and the Bibliography (much to the annoyance of my

computer's Spell Check). Historical variations in nomenclature are thus at least partially recorded.

SECTION A: INDEX OF CAPE MOUNTAIN PASSES

As stated, mountain passes were priority items in the research.

The Index is intended to give an alphabetical listing of those mountain passes and poorts in the Cape Province discovered using the sources and time available to me.

All those passes about which histories and/or details could be found have opposite their names the date of an entry in the Chronology. Further dates (if any) are shown at the end of this Chronology entry as "See also" dates. Unfortunately many of the passes are not documented in the Chronology, as nothing other than a bare listing, or a reference without a date, was found during the preparation of this work.

Where applicable, alternative pass names and/or spelling (aka: also known as) have been noted. If a pass has been known by different names through the ages, as opposed to different spellings of the same name, the most favoured or the present name will have the location opposite the name, while the other names will have an entry referring the researcher to this name - eg "Battlenek Pass: see Bottelnek Pass."

An annotation - eg for Amandelhoogte: "(See also Goliatshoogte, Lootsberg Pass, Naudesberg Pass, Perrieshoogte)" - draws attention to the fact that there is a succession of passes along a route.

In all cases an indication of the location of the pass has been given.

An initial guide to the location of the pass has been provided by indicating a direction from some adjacent town - eg "south of Nieu-Bethesda".

A second guide has been provided by referring to route numbers. These route numbers may be found on plan DC484 (N/33426): *Cape Province: national, trunk and main road network* (I used the March 1992 revision). Major route numbers are also noted on the topographical series maps, and are generally shown on road maps put out by Map Studios and various oil companies. Thus, a pass may be described as being "on R326 north-east of Stanford."

Where the road on which the pass occurs has not been allocated a route number it may only be possible to say that the road is "off R63 south of Nieu-Bethesda", but this should give some assistance in locating the pass. In these cases I sometimes have been able to note the Divisional Road number, describing it as being "on DR2254". This information was usually obtained from Cape Province's *Road Network Database*.

The most unhelpful location entries are where I have found some reference to the pass but have been unable to actually pinpoint it. Here I have recorded what information I have found, in the hope that it will give a base from which a future researcher may work. This information may be the degree square from *Index to Places in the Cape* - eg "somewhere 33/34S, 20/21E", or may be the Divisional Road number, or may be a combination of the two - eg "somewhere 33/34S, 20/21E, on DR2254".

I gave it my best try!

SECTION B: SCHEDULE OF PIONEERING AND CONSTRUCTION DATES

The Schedule is not a listing of all items included in the Chronology: it covers only mountain passes, and major roads and bridges. It is a chronological one-line-name-and-date type of schedule, a sort of historical summary of pioneering and major roadmaking activities in the Cape. I fear it is by no means complete, but it is the best I could do in the time available to me.

The dates the projects were pioneered or completed (where available) were selected for recording. These dates also indicate where the reader may find further information in the Chronology.

SECTION C: CHRONOLOGY

Entries in the Chronology present information about the subject or event being considered. The various references from which each bit of information was gleaned are recorded, so that the researcher will know where it is possible to read in more detail about the subject, if so desired. "See also" annotations indicate sources where further information may be found, and list the dates of any other chronological entries.

With the continuing emphasis on mountain passes in the Cape, the intent was to record particularly the following data, where these were available:

- the date any particular pass was pioneered,
- the construction period and other details, including (where discovered) the cost,
- the date of first opening,
- the date of any major washaways, and
- dates of any subsequent major betterments or reconstructions.

I felt that the bibliographic references given after each entry, together with the listing of the passes under various publications in the Annotated Bibliography, should give the researcher initial guidance in investigating in greater depth the history of any pass, should this be his or her wish.

Entries were also made of occurrences of particular relevance to roads and transportation, especially in the Cape, such as:

- the dates certain major roads were constructed, improved or reconstructed,
- the dates certain major or key bridges were constructed,
- various Colonial Acts and Provincial Ordinances relating to the Central Road Board, Divisional Road Boards, Divisional Councils, Regional Service Councils and District Councils,
- various Acts pertaining to National Roads,
- various Commissions of Enquiry into roads and road transportation,
- the tenures of John Montagu, Charles Michell, Andrew Geddes Bain, Thomas Bain, et altera,
- details of animal-drawn transport,
- the first use of mechanical traction on roads in South Africa, the advent of the motor car, tram and trolley bus, and similar noteworthy and relevant transport events,
- certain relevant items from elsewhere, such as important data relating to sea, rail and air transportation.

The entries in this Section were intended to be short and crisp, to keep the completed work to as small a size as possible. But on many occasions I have enlarged on the basic entry to detail data which are not easily accessed for some or other reason, or to record facts which are unique (e.g. oral communications), or just because I got carried away by my own interest in the particular item! Please bear with me - after all, I am doing this for fun!

SECTION D: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The bibliography lists those of the many publications and other items which I consider to be relevant to the area of research which I can remember or trace, and which I feel could be helpful to those wishing to do further research in this area.

The annotations are intended to indicate the field covered in an item, where this is not obvious from the title. Where only a portion of the publication addresses the subject area of interest I have tried to indicate the relevant chapter or chapters, or page numbers. And to maintain the emphasis on mountain passes, I have also noted the names of passes referred to in the text.

Some items I have considered, and then omitted because I feel that the relevant content or coverage is not adequate enough. Some people will disagree with particular exclusions. But again, some will disagree with my inclusion of certain items (and in fact I must admit to including a few simply because I was involved personally, or because I have a particular admiration for the author or publication). However, it is my prerogative to make my own choice, and I trust that the final product will be found to be helpful by the majority of those consulting it.

Engineering textbooks, manuals and research publications have generally not been included, but some sources (e.g. AASHTO; CPA; CSIR Transportek; ITE; SAICE; Transportation Research Board) have been listed to indicate where the researcher interested in a particular field may with advantage seek further publications. Also certain books covering a larger geographic field than only the Cape, such as Alex du Toit's *Geology of South Africa*, have been included for the general and relevant background information which they provide.

COLLECTIONS

Where an item has been annotated as being in "the Ross Collection" this refers to the considerable number of books, articles, papers and other publications which just seemed to accumulate during my research. The libraries of the University of Cape Town have kindly agreed to store these, and to make them available to future researchers in this field, when I pop off to build highways in the sky.

In 1957 Mary Brenda Smith, then studying at the University of Cape Town's School of Librarianship, produced a 58 page bibliography on *The History of Roads in South Africa*.

This unique work, which was until now probably the best available bibliography on the history of roads in South Africa, deserves to have received far greater recognition than has been accorded it. I wish to take this opportunity to salute Mrs Brenda Riontino (as she now is) of St Petersburg, Florida, USA and to thank her for her contribution to research in our field.

IN CONCLUSION

I should like to thank all those who made me welcome in their offices and homes, libraries, archives and museums, and provided me with information or with the means to find the information I sought, as also those who reacted to telephonic, written or (later!) e-mail requests for assistance.

Also to my son Alan who not only provided me with computers but nobly put up with my many requests for help ("The stupid thing has jammed - what do I do now?") and made it possible for me to fill my retirement days with interesting work.

And Eileen, my wife, who kept the inner man fed, and never ceased to make encouraging noises.

I hope that future researchers into mountain passes, roads and transportation in the Cape may find this Guide to be of interest and assistance. Of course, no collection such as this can be comprehensive, complete or all-inclusive. My aim was not perfection; just to do my best.

And to enjoy doing it!!

Graham Lindsay Drury Ross

PrEng, PhD (1924 - ????)

Somerset West

February 2009

The 240 page book *The Romance of Cape Mountain Passes*, published by David Philip in 2002, was based on a small portion, a smidgen, of these data.

A COMPENDIUM OF CONVERSION FACTORS

<u>Non-metric units</u>	<u>Metric units</u>
1 inch (in).....	2.54 centimetres (cm)
1 foot (ft: 12 inches).....	0.3048 metre (m)
1 Cape foot (1,033 ft).....	0.3148 metre (m)
1 yard (yd: 3 feet).....	0.9144 metre (m)
1 fathom (6 feet).....	1.8288 metres (m)
1 Cape Rood (12 Cape ft).....	3.7783 metre (m)
1 furlong (220 yards).....	201.17 metres (m)
1 mile (ml: 1760 yards).....	1.60934 kilometres (km)
1 nautical mile.....	1.8532 kilometres (km) (6080 feet ; 60 nautical miles to a degree of latitude)
1 land league.....	4.4476 kilometres (km) (25 land leagues to a degree of latitude)
1 marine league.....	5.5595 kilometres (km) (20 marine leagues to a degree of latitude)
1 Swedish aln (plural alnar).....	0.594 metre (m)
1 Dutch mile.....	7.644 kilometres (km) (4,75 English miles)
1 Roman mile (5000 feet).....	1.524 kilometres (km)
1 acre (4840 sq. yds).....	0.4047 hectare (4047 m ²)
1 morgen (10244 sq. yds).....	0.8565 hectare (8565 m ²) (the area which could be ploughed in a morning)
1 square mile (640 acres).....	2.59 square kilometres (sq.km)
1 cubic yard (27 cu ft).....	0.7646 cubic metres (m ³)
1 acre foot (1613 cu yd).....	1233.5 cubic metres (m ³)
1 carat (pre 1923).....	205.3 milligrams (mg)
1 metric carat (post 1922).....	200 milligrams (mg)
1 ounce Troy (oz Troy).....	31.1035 grams (gm)
1 Avoirdupois ounce (oz).....	28.3495 grams (gm)
1 pound (lb - 16 oz).....	0.4536 kilogram (kg)
1 Imperial ton (2240 lb).....	1.0160 tonne (t)
1 short ton (2000 lb).....	0.9072 tonne (907,2 kg)
1 (Imperial) pint (pt).....	0.5682 litre (ℓ)
1 (Imperial) gallon (gal).....	4.5459 litres (ℓ)
1 US gallon.....	3.7853 litres (ℓ)
1 Cape rix-dollar.....	1 shilling and 6 pence (1/6d) (Ryks daaler - Rd) (at introduction of British currency in 1825)
1 pound sterling.....	2 Rand – R2 – 200 cents – 200¢ (GBP - £ - 20 shillings) (at introduction of Rand currency in 1961)
1 US dollar.....	0,72 Rand (at introduction of Rand currency in 1961) (USD - US\$ - 100 US cents)

SOME QUOTES TO SET THE SCENE

"My country was never so rich that it could afford bad roads."
- William the Conqueror, 1066.

"One of the most effectual means to promote internal trade
and civilization, is a regular and safe inland communication."
-Ordinance for the Administration of Country Districts, 1805.

"Being cut off from a market for their produce... the inhabitants
must ever remain in their present state of poverty and
semi-barbarism until these passes are made passable."
-Sir Lowry Cole, in his despatch in 1830
to the Secretary of State for the Colonies,
justifying having constructed Sir Lowry's Pass.

"If the community is stagnant,
the condition of the roads will indicate the fact;
if they have no roads they are savages."
-A.T.Byrne, 1902.

"The cars that roll so ceaselessly today
On velvet wheels along the concrete way
Would find no highways spanning hill and vale
Had not the drudging ox-cart blazed the trail."
- E.O.Laughlin.

"The road is the sustenance
without which organised society would be impossible;
it is one of the great fundamental institutions of mankind..."
-Lord Macauley: 1931-1932 Official Yearbook
of the Union of South Africa, page 11.

"Transport is the lifeblood of the community...The development of
a transportation network is probably the single factor most
responsible for the growth of the country's economy."
-Anthony Hocking: "South African Transport", 1976.

"You pay for good roads, whether you have them or not!"
and
"It's not the wealth of a nation that builds the roads, but the
roads that build the wealth of a nation."
- John F.Kennedy / McDonald

"Roads are a vital part of our economy.
The construction of a road is probably one of the
most economically productive actions a government can take."
-Mac Maharaj: 1994 SARF annual general meeting.

An old saying: "If you've got it, a truck brought it."
- Graeme Addison, "FleetWatch", November/December 1999:33.

"Everything in life is somewhere else, and you get there in a car."
-E.B.White: "One man's meat".
