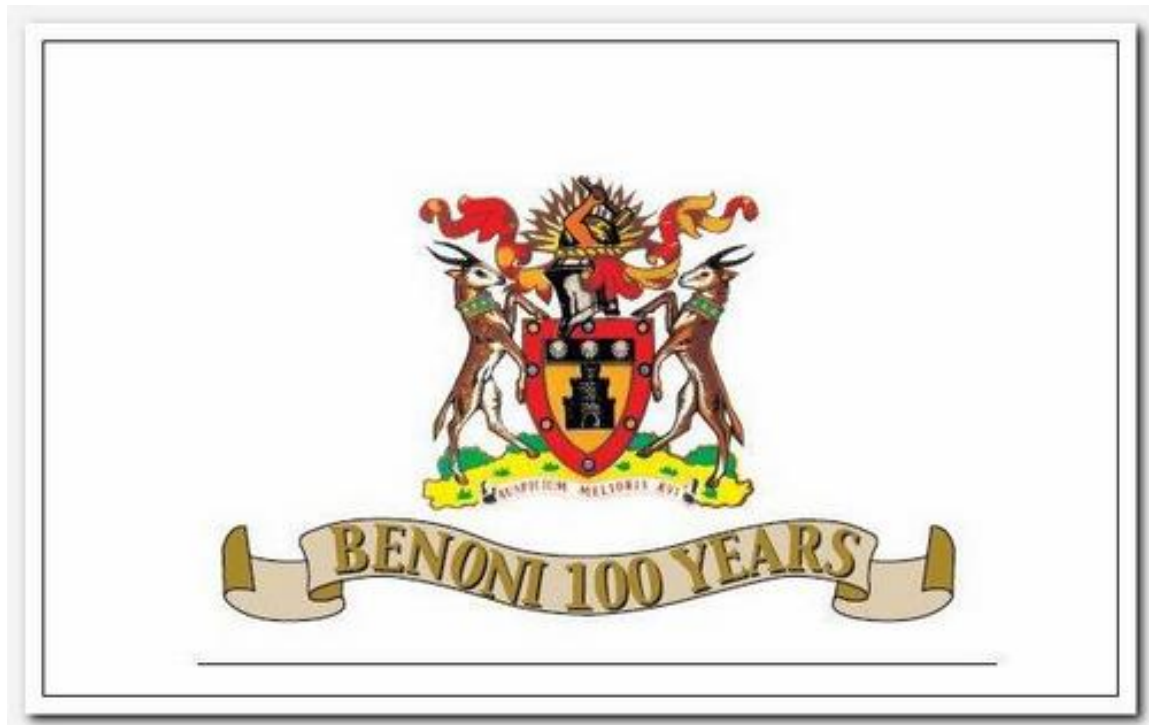


BENONI

A Golden Anniversary for a Golden City



Notes on the Benoni Coat of Arms

- *The Benoni coat of arms, commissioned in 1937 was drawn up by the College of Heralds in England and registered with South African Bureau of Heraldry in Pretoria in 1966.*
- *The Motto 'Auspiciu Melioris Aevi' means "A pledge for better times."*
- *The 'Four Farms' or 'fonteins', (Rietfontein, Vlakfontein, Modderfontein and Kleinfontein) are immortalized by the four silver and blue roundels (or bezants in heraldic terms with the colours denoting fountains in heraldry) in the border of the shield whilst the four bezants of gold symbolize the gold-mining industry.*
- *The triple castle in the centre is derived from the arms of the town of Bedford in England of Sir George Farrar's' origins whilst the triple escallops occur in the Duke of Bedford's arms.*
- *The arm wielding a hammer represents industry and the rising sun behind it expresses hope for the ascending destiny of the municipality.*
- *The two South African Springbok wear triple bezants in their collars, also representing the gold mining industry.*

ED: Unfortunately, the Benoni Coat of Arms is, since Benoni's amalgamation into the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, no longer officially in use which is a pity indeed, but such is progress!

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Please note that any text coloured in *Purple Italics* denotes a link to that subject. Hover your mouse over the Purple text and perform CTRL + Click to jump to that reference.

The Motivation and Acknowledgements for this book

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The Motivation for this book

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This book has been put together by a group of enthusiastic Benoni residents who wish to preserve the historical story of their town in a format that is easy-to-read and simple to reference chronologically. Long hours of dedicated work went into collecting information, compiling stories, interviewing, researching and putting it all together. Not much has been published about our history since the late 60s so we also hope to capture the highlights and the lowlights of the period following that era and it is hoped that the Benoni Public will contribute to this cause.

This is not intended to be an authoritative book: we can leave that to the true historians. The authors have also not made much attempt to analyze, elaborate upon or comment on political, civic, corporate or individuals' actions unless it was a key event such as a war, government change, depressed economic conditions or the likes as this is beyond both the scope of this book and our capabilities. In some cases though, it has been necessary to touch on such issues in order to understand the implications that these had upon the history of Benoni.

We have made every endeavour to be factual and as accurate as possible in presenting the Benoni story sans politics and many of the tales are put forward in a light-hearted manner despite the oft grave nature of the subject. This is deliberately done in order to keep things cheerful in line with the spirit of the celebration of our Golden Jubilee. History is in the past and we cannot change it!

The naming of the various races has been restricted to 'Blacks', 'Whites', 'Coloureds,' 'Chinese,' and 'Indians' but the terms 'Boer' and 'Burgher' have been used to describe the Transvaal Republic's Afrikaner up until the end of the Second Anglo Boer War, as these were the terms used at the time. Subsequently we refer to them as 'Afrikaners'.

'Uitlanders' was the term used to described non-Boer nationals who entered the Transvaal Republic, mainly on speculative forays and later in droves, as the Goldfields were developed. Their presence was for the most part resented by the Boers and Burghers, however, they became the primary source of income for the, at times, near-bankrupt government so they could not be ignored. This led to much strife in later years, particularly after the abortive 'Jameson Raid' and the British forged ahead with their Imperialistic policies, most notably of those of Rhodes and Milner together with the 'Uitlander' mine-owners, many of whom became fabulously wealthy 'Randlords'.

The average Boer simply wanted to be left alone and was notably intolerant of external interference and the prevailing advances of civilization in the Western world.

A similar situation however could be applied to the Bantu tribes who populated the Transvaal at the time of the Great Trek and for whom the arrival of the Boer meant struggles and wars in the future and this is the way life prevails, be it invasions from Uitlanders, Boers or neighbouring tribes. Effectively, we are presently being invaded by millions of 'refugees' from other African states! Such is the making of our History!

Our history includes so many individuals who contributed to the political, social, industrial and spiritual success of Benoni that it would be impossible to note them all here, so, in general but with a few exceptions, we have striven to leave these good people anonymous otherwise we could simply end up with a huge list of names: there are so many deserving mention!

Acknowledgements:

Our sincere thanks and acknowledgements are extended to:

The “Benoni Centenary Book” team who, under the instigation of genealogist and historian **Glynis Millett-Clay**, formed the committee and who, motivated by her enthusiasm and wish to preserve the records of old Benoni, worked doggedly, collecting and compiling so much of the data that contributes to this book.

The team consisted of:

The Late Rentia Roodt – Benoni Librarian for many years.

Glynis writes: “She was an absolute darling. It was through her that I was inspired to re-write the first book written by J.B. Whitehouse for the 100 year celebration after I met her in 2005. She provided so much information and was extraordinarily helpful in providing photo-stats and newspaper cuttings from the library archives dating back to the very early 1900's – and all kept in such fine order!

It was from this meeting with her that I phoned the Benoni city Times, spoke with Hillary Green and who suggested that I approach the Chamber of Commerce. There I met the Chairman at the time, Navin Bhana. After meeting Navin, we then we got the small committee together.”

Bob Allison: Bob has kindly allowed us to use his Benoni-Biz web-site for the on-line storage of the book, has provided expert formatting and editorial skills that have ensured a uniform and manageable book layout and has also lent much experience in editorial know-how to the editor.

Paul & Gusta Botes: Paul has kindly allowed the use of his superb watercolours that so beautifully capture the essence of Benoni, both old and new, and many of his finely executed watercolours of Benoni grace this book.

Joe Civin: Being one of the oldest residents of Benoni, he has provided a wealth of historical knowledge.

Keith Gardiner: A latecomer to the committee, Keith has written the introductory articles and Chapters 1, 2 & 3 and is presently compiling and editing the remaining chapters. He is the current editor of the book and although he will soon be leaving South Africa and retiring to some Utopian island, his intention is to complete the book remotely and would be encouraged further, especially if interested Benonians would submit their own historical material. Suitably interesting material will be willingly accepted, appreciatively acknowledged and may be submitted to:

gardtel@gmail.com and glynis@kwikmark.co.za ***Please copy both of us!***

Paxie Kelsey: Paxie is a keen genealogist and a very dedicated local historian.

Anne Smith: Anne belongs to Friends of the Library and is an enthusiastic Benoni historian.

Hillary Green: Although not on the committee, the Editor of the Benoni City Times has provided encouragement for and promotion of the Benoni-book cause through her newspaper and has also offered free use of articles and photos taken from the BCT archives.

Peter Woods: Also not on the committee, Peter is a noted East Rand Historian and a prominent member of the Boksburg Historical Association and who has kindly provided many photographs and the stories of the early Railways. His Father, Mr. D. G. Wood was a senior S.A.R. official.

For those who seek a deeper insight, particularly into the earlier history, albeit with obvious European bias, there are many more detailed stories told in the *History of Benoni* (hereafter referred to as *HOB*) by **J. B. Whitehouse** (*circa* 1937) and *Benoni, Son of my Sorrow* (hereafter referred to as *B.SOM*) by **Deryck Humphriss** and **David G. Thomas** (*circa* 1968). It is here also acknowledged that without these two references, the writing of this book would have been a most onerous task indeed since they have both provided the source of so much early material.

Credit must also be given to the late **Ken McLuckie** for his booklet called 'Benoni - The Golden Days' which recounts many interesting facts and reminiscences of his life and times in Benoni. All are recommended reading for any Benonian with an interest in their past but, for more on the way our history was shaped politically and prior to democracy, we suggest reading **T.R.H. Davenports'** 'South Africa. A Modern History.'

We must warmly applaud those property owners in the older parts of Benoni town who have made the effort to restore the old buildings instead of demolishing and rebuilding. This trend seems to be catching on, much to our delight, and it shows the interest that the early history holds for so many! Our town is extremely rich in architecture dating from the early part of the last century through to the art-deco period and we fervently believe that these characteristics needs to be conserved and cherished for the benefit of our children.

The Editor, Keith Gardiner

The format

The layout is composed of an introductory section followed by a history-by-decade commencing from 1907 when Benoni was granted Municipality status until 2006.

It incorporates a click-to-view-additional-material format for quick and easy reference.

The introductory Chapters I, 1-9, discuss the geological origins and the Discovery of gold, how Benoni was named, and Benoni's founder, Sir George Farrar. They also record the early mining efforts and events prior to Benoni Municipality's establishment in 1907.

A time-line is (Ed: *will be*) included in the Introduction to Chapter 9 that highlights major incidents such as:

- *Town established*
- *Town granted municipality status*
- *Epidemics*
- *Storms*
- *Reticulation of water, sewerage and electricity*
- *Strikes 1 and 2*
- *World Wars 1 and 2*

up to contemporary times.

Chapters 1-10 detail the chronological story of the Municipality of Benoni from its establishment in 1907 until our Golden Jubilee celebrated in 2007. Within the text are links to cameos, reminiscences, incidences, remarkable personalities, achievements and lots of other interesting stuff.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy our efforts!

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The earliest known photograph of Benoni, 1909 (Benoni. Son of My Sorrow. p18.)

Notes

1. *In 1906, Mr. H. T. Elliot of the Kleinfontein Estates and Township Company announced that there were over 200 houses and 600 inhabitants in the town of Benoni. (B.SOMS P42.)*
2. *This photo was probably taken from the Kleinfontein no 4 Shaft head-gear, east of the town, behind Fruit 'n Veg. In a clearer picture taken some years later and from the same spot, one can see Homestead Dam and Kleinfontein farm on the right horizon.*
3. *This is probably looking across towards Wilstead Street on the right with Harpur, Lake and Amphill Avenues snaking off to the top left corner.*
4. *At this time, most structures were made of wood and iron, there was no running water nor electricity provided and the roads were yet to be macadamized.*

Introduction

Where we came from

I1: Golden Slumbers

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'In the beginning' our Earth was rather an unhappy little child. Running a high fever, she heaved restlessly and suffered from severe indigestion, burping and spewing forth floods of magma which, slowly, as her temperature eased, solidified into igneous rocks from which formed the basalts and granites that now comprise most of the earth's crust.

Baby's skin, unprotected by a decent atmosphere was also battered by meteorites great and small, (no wonder she was so grumpy!) but several billion years later, after even more cooling, her violent colic winds and chronic bed-wetting erosions had formed the sediments and gravels which even later formed conglomerates, sandstones and other geological features along the shores and river-deltas of a great marine basin underpinned by the granites of yore. Ongoing teething troubles and upset tummies resulted in violent crust displacements, fractures and volcanic intrusions which distorted, folded and caused multiple layer formations of these conglomerates.

And the Gold?

There is ongoing debate as to whether:

- 1) hydrothermal fluids (superheated water emanating from below the Earth's crust) then infiltrated the already-formed conglomerates along the fractures and transported gold in dissolved sulphide molecules which precipitated the precious metal into these gravels or,*
- 2) the much older, already-formed gold was eroded from elsewhere and transported by rivers and streams into deltas that emptied into the basin-shaped inland sea and then deposited into the gravels prior to compaction.*

The former is the theory touted by the 'hydrothermalist' camp whilst the latter is believed by the 'placerists'.

Recent methods of determining the age of gold has shown that the latter theory is more likely since the gold has shown, by these methods at least, to be older than the host conglomerates. For the technically-gifted amongst our readers, Jason Kirk, a geochemist at the University of Arizona in Tucson explains:

“Two elements sometimes found inside gold, rhenium and osmium, help serve as a radioactive clock. Rhenium naturally decays into osmium over very long spans of time—it takes about 42.3 billion years for half of a sample of rhenium to transmute, or some 10 times the age of Earth. By dissolving gold grains in acid and measuring the ratio of rhenium to osmium inside the sample, scientists can determine the gold's age. It turns out that gold samples from three places in the Rand are three billion years old, “a quarter of a billion years older than its surrounding rock”

Case closed? Perhaps...

{See here for a more scientific description} http://superiormining.com/properties/south_africa/manqalisa/geology/

Nevertheless, over time, these conglomerates, under forces we cannot imagine, became unified: pebbles, silt and gold were compressed and heated, forming the gold-bearing reefs that we now know occupy the area we call the Witwatersrand Basin. (To the layman, it should be understood that these reefs are now mostly solid and extremely hard rock!)



A sample of Conglomerate or ‘banket’ ▲

Then, around 2 billion year ago, the 10 kilometre-diameter Vredefort meteor thumped, uninvited, into our baby Earth’s poor little bottom near the present town of Vredefort in the Orange Free State, about 100 kilometres South-West of Johannesburg. (Imagine the meteorite being around 10 kilometres in diameter or about the size of Table-mountain!)

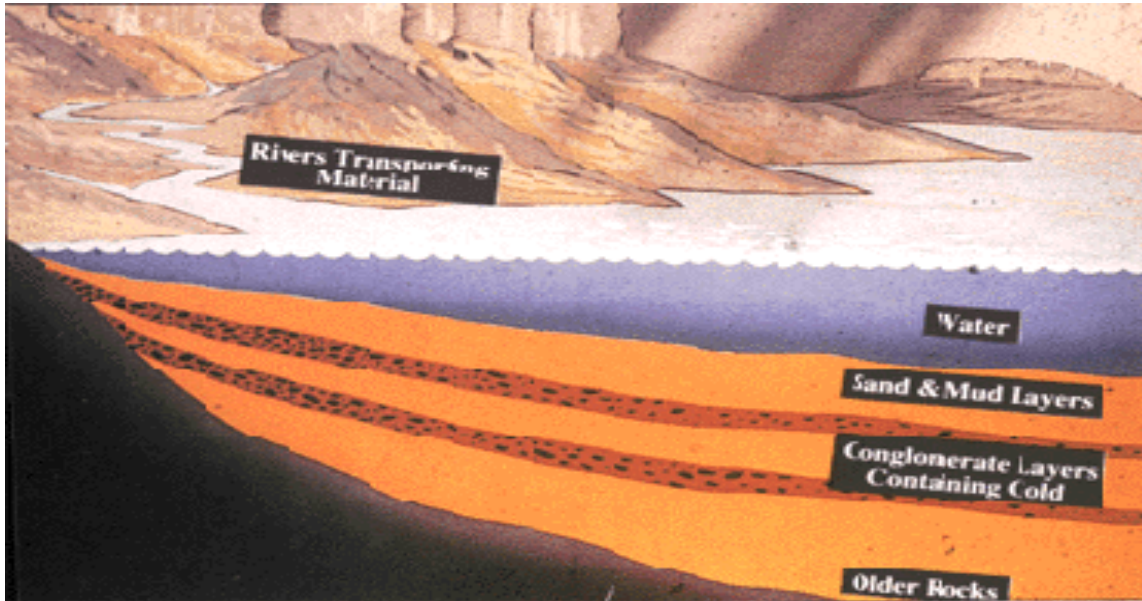
It is the oldest and largest clearly visible meteorite impact site in the world but more importantly, it resulted in the downward thrusting of much of our basin, especially in the South towards the Free-State and hence much of the gold reefs were saved from erosion. If the meteor strike had not occurred, it is unlikely that much of the Witwatersrand or the gold would have been preserved.

As an example of this, it is believed by the geologists that a mountain range existed out North-to-South-West of Johannesburg and from whence the source gold might have been transported into our basin in the ‘placerist’ theory. These mountains have long since disappeared as could have our basin of gold had it not become largely submerged.

A partially exposed part of the rim or ‘outcrop’ along the Witwatersrand remains at ground-level but it generally deepens into the crust as it heads away into the South, South-West and South-East, though, due to those ancient geological upheavals, it does duck and dive somewhat, especially in the East-rand area and pops up unexpectedly here and there. Furthermore, the rim is neither as continuous nor as perfectly arced as a basin’s, there being places where the rim is massively displaced or has not even yet been discovered, probably due to the lack of an ancient river-delta being at that point. This seems to add further weight to the ‘placerist’ theory above.

Our rim loosely forms a 500-odd kilometre arc from the East at Kinross, near Bethel in Mpumalanga through Nigel, Springs, Benoni, Boksburg, Germiston, Johannesburg, on through the West rand towns of Roodepoort, Krugersdorp and Randfontein to

Carletonville, Klerksdorp, Orkney, Welkom and Virginia in the West. In places the reefs dip to more than 7 kilometres deep and currently (in 2007) the deepest mine in the world extends to 3.6 kilometres beneath the surface at Western Deep Levels mine near Carletonville in the Free State.



Theoretical schematic of how the conglomerates were fed gold fragments from deposits in surrounding mountains, (long since eroded) into the Witwatersrand Basin. The Vredefort Meteorite strike then largely tilted and buried the inland sea thus preserving it from erosion.



Google Earth image showing the extent of the Witwatersrand Gold Reef series and the impact site of the Vredefort Meteor. As one proceeds South-Westwards or South-Eastwards from the Witwatersrand, the mines become deeper. On the Witwatersrand, some gold-bearing outcrops were originally found at ground level.

It should also be appreciated that due to the multi-layering of the conglomerates that there are usually four-or-more-or-sometimes-less reefs associated with our basin and that not all are always payable! The Main-reef is usually the thickest but not usually as gold-rich as the thinner Main-reef leader usually placed further to the South, indicating a younger formation period if the basin theory is to be pursued. Other leaders such as the Kimberly and Bird reefs come and go on either side of the Main-reef, testament to the moving and shaking that went on during the formation of the basin and then again, there's no guarantee which will be the richest! From time-to-time Mother-Earth even provides a little incentive in the form of a pay-shoot, an unexpected little pocket of super-rich banket.

In time, the earth-child slowly grew up, grinding restlessly through her pubescent teens, her volcanic acne outbreaks subsided and she became more mature, quite and contented, growing herself a cocooning, protective atmosphere formed mainly out of the carbon-dioxide that had spewed forth from those earlier pubescent volcanoes.

And so she blossomed into her beautiful, earthy, blue-green colour making herself far more accommodating towards life-forms as we know them: she nurtured and provided the conditions for life to flourish.

The Baby-Grumpling-Earth-Child had become Mother-Earth at last!



Nothing changes some may say! Quite the contrary when it came to Mother-Earth as the now-ancient rocks below continued to metamorphose into unpronounceable geological matter whilst above, stuff eroded, things grew, creatures great and small pro-created with some even managing to extinct themselves!

Yet the very soft-skinned and vulnerable human, sans neither fearsome teeth nor ripping claws evolved, against all odds it would seem. He finally deduced "I think, therefore I am!" which made him think that he was indeed a superior being, so he philosophized, scratched around and generally did what superior beings do on Earth and that usually meant developing an insatiable desire for a betterment of his present situation, and for many, that meant the securing of wealth.

Along our Reef meanwhile, and beneath his feet, the gold-bearing reefs lay slumbering and undisturbed. [\(Return to Index\)](#) [Chapter 1,](#)

12: The First Benoni Inhabitants

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Compelling evidence has been unearthed by the late Raymond Dart, Phillip Tobias and Robert Broom amongst others at fossil-sites to the West of the Rand which suggests that mankind might actually have its origins very close by to Benoni for it seems possible that our ancient cousins may have roamed about here some 2 to 3 million years ago.

Australopithecus Africanus was thought to have been a distant ancestor of modern humans due to his ability to walk upright and he also had a superior brain kind area size compared to his contemporary apes. It is believed by many that the Sterkfontein area, the 'Cradle of Mankind' spawned the very family from which all humankind in the world has evolved.

This conjecture is again the subject of much debate as the definitive 'missing link,' essential to the 'evolutionist' theory pertinent to humankind is still proving to be somewhat elusive, yet it naturally pleases the 'creationist' camp who resolutely refute any descendancy from dumb apes!

More recent Stone-age artefacts probably of Hunter-gatherer origin were found in 1933 and 1938 by Reverend Patterson, North of the old Cranbourne Station in town and also in Rynfield. Archaeologists consider these to be several thousand years old and pre-dating the Christian era.

Modern-day archaeological digs show that migrant Bantu people who had probably originated in Central to West Africa inhabited areas in and around Johannesburg from as long ago as 1200 AD during the African iron-age. It is recorded however, that when the first white men passed over the area around Benoni that there were no occupied settlements at all, possibly due to the plundering and scattering carried out in 1823 by the fierce Mzilikazi warriors who eventually packed up and left for Zimbabwe in search, perhaps, of better sport. Notwithstanding this fact, the evidence of prior habitation is there in the ground in the form of pottery, crude, but very effective iron furnaces, piles of ash, burial sites, foundations of huts and so-forth. These ancient sites can clearly be seen from the air (and with Google Earth) along the river-valleys to the East, especially

near Bronkhorstspuit where vast kraal and dwelling ruins remain to this day. Unfortunately, those that probably existed around Benoni, and which would have undoubtedly been adjacent to the Blesbokspruit and tributaries are now covered by the unavoidable urban sprawl and the mining-industry's excavations.



Iron-age settlement remains above Bronkhorstspuit Dam.

Then in the early to mid 1800s came the proud but embittered Voortrekkers who were



trying to escape far from the despised colonial British rule that had, amongst other insults, banned slavery, enforced English language at schools down in the Cape and later, Natal. The God-fearing Voortrekker wished for nothing more than to simply settle down and farm his Transvaal Republic grasslands in peace with the Good Lord at his side and as far from the British as possible.

Voortrekkers Ascending the 'Berg. They performed some amazing feats of navigation!

And so it was that by the mid 1860s, the “four farms” surrounding the subject of this book, Modderfontein, Vlakfontein, Rietfontein and Kleinfontein had been laid out and inhabited by Boer families and the simple farming life prevailed around the Blesbokspruit and the many pans, springs and rolling grasslands of the area. [{Return to Index} 12:](#)

Origins of the name Benoni

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The farm named **Benoni**, surrounded by these four farms was not originally inhabited, it being a piece of 'uitvalgrond' as the Boers called it. These areas of unclaimed lands or 'falling out ground' (presumably called that because they didn't 'fall within' any demarcated farm) came about because in those early days the method for mapping out a farm was allegedly carried out something as follows:

The farmer would choose a nice-looking spot, invariably close to an un-inhabited, reliable water supply and from there he mounted his horse and rode at a leisurely pace for half an hour towards the four directions of the compass, each in turn, building cairns at each extremity and the lines which then encompassed these cairns formed the boundaries of his farm. Naturally, this rather haphazard method resulted in bits of unclaimed and un-named land being left in-between the claimed, named and inhabited lands. If one however studies the old maps showing the four farm boundaries, the boundaries are not as clear-cut as one would imagine using the four markers system so there seem to have been other factors at play here of which we will probably never know. Nevertheless, the Benoni farm was originally just such a piece of un-named, uninhabited, 'uitvalgrond' and it was never established as a farm.

It was thus later tasked to the then Surveyor-General of the Republic, Johan Rissik, (one of the three Johan/Johannes's after whom Johannesburg is named.) back in the 1880s, that, whilst he was busy mapping the Republic farms he should also identify, map and provide names for these bits of 'uitvalgrond' so that they could be leased-out or sold in order to raise a little more cash for the then very dimly-filled Transvaal governmental coffers. The farm Benoni was not actually occupied until a Mr. E. W. Noyce leased it in October 1895 where he established a trading store nearby to the modern Snake Road/New Modder roads. We will hear more about Mr. Noyce later!

The origin of the name Benoni is most certainly Biblical and came about according to Genesis 35. We read that while Jacob and his wife Rachel were travelling through the wilderness to Bethlehem, Rachel gave birth to a son, whom, due the great difficulties and complications of the labour, with her last breaths she named 'Ben-Oni' in Hebrew, or 'Son of my sorrow' before she sadly succumbed. Jacob, thankfully, had the graciousness to re-name the innocent new-born child 'Ben-Jamin' or 'Son-who-will-be-fortunate' or, in some transcripts 'Son-of-my-right-hand' providing him with considerably more scope and hope for the future than the original!

So! Amongst several, the most poignant story as to why the name Benoni was assigned to the un-claimed land was that Surveyor-General Rissik had had so much difficulty in finding the beacons that determined the boundaries of the surrounding farms that he considered his efforts in mapping out the uitvalgrond in-between them to be synonymous with the difficult labours suffered during the birth of poor Rachel's 'Son of my sorrow.'

On the more practical side, it has been said that the name choice was an arbitrary, alphabetical one assigned to the bits of 'uitvalgrond' which the God-fearing Rissik

mapped and named in sequence and there is perhaps some substantiation in the form of Apex, Benoni, Cloverfield etc.

Again! The jury remains out!

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14: The Four Farms

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Four farms originally surrounded the Benoni Farm and are integral to the history of our town since they are largely included in the Benoni Municipal area and were intrinsically part of the great Gold-mining era that started it all.



Map1: The Four “fontein” Farms surrounding Benoni. (Courtesy The Chimes Tavern)

The modern Google earth map of the area above (*Map 1*) has been overlaid with a pre-1900 map (prior to Benoni having been laid out as a township) and this should help to clarify matters. Notice how precisely the borders overlay many of the modern roads and boundaries, however the streams are not too accurately placed probably because they were less important than boundaries and so were not so carefully mapped as well as their being subjected to changes of course over the years due to floods and erosion. It's also curious that the farm Brakpan, although nuzzling up against Rietfontein, Brakpan and is not traditionally considered in the story of Benoni although it formed part of the Benoni Municipality until they (Brakpan Town) decided to go solo in 1919. Coal was being mined on the Brakpan farm by 1888 and was supplying local Benoni mines by wagon. The Rand tram built in 1890 served to carry their coal to the Witwatersrand mines both from here and the coalfields discovered in Springs. Although it was called a tram, it was in reality a pucker railway and this was merely a ploy by Kruger to avoid trouble from burghers who were opposed to any sort of new-fangled gadgetry that would disturb their way of life.

Rietfontein

The first farm to be established in the area was **Rietfontein**, granted by the Government of the Transvaal to D. J. Strydom on 11 September 1862 and it covered 1 118 Hectares.

The Apex gold mine was started up there in 1893 and coal mining commenced in 1897.

About half of it is now incorporated into the Benoni municipality mainly in the areas of Dunswart, Benoni South Extensions, Actonville, Apex and Wattville. The remainder forms part of Brakpan. The boundaries loosely followed the part of Lancaster Road that runs directly East-West and, and, if extended to the West would meet the Benoni and Kleinfontein boundaries at Dunswart. Extending to the East it vaguely followed Dewald Hattingsh and extended through to beyond Apex before swinging South-East to run parallel to the railway line along an imagined extension to End road in Brakpan. The Western boundary starts at Dunswart and follows Van Dyk road all the way down to Elsburg Road where it turned eastwards to form the Southern boundary until it meets the Eastern boundary at the Siding /End Road intersection back in Brakpan.

Kleinfontein

Johan Hendrik Botha found a small but attractive perennial spring a few miles to the north of Rietfontein and accordingly named his farm Kleinfontein. He bought the farm from the Government in February 1866 for 250 Pounds.

In the late 19th century, the farm seemed to be the site of some activity, probably because it was close to the Blesbokspruit crossing that was required on the route to and from the East when coal was ox-waggoned in to the Johannesburg mines from Witbank. A liquor licence application from that time was obviously put to good stead.

The farm also hosted an important conference between Lieutenant-Colonel Owen Lanyon, the Acting Administrator of the Transvaal and the Boer leaders and several thousand Boers in 1878 after the British had annexed the Transvaal, the latter an event that eventually provoked the First Anglo-Boer war.

The farm was loosely bounded by the modern landmarks of Harpur Avenue to the South of Benoni City, up Snake and Pretoria roads and on along O'Reilly Merry in the East before curving around to follow a line through Agate Street in the North and joining Mercury at the confluence of Venus road, following Mercury road across the top of the present Homestead dam (before it was built) before following Atlas Road all the way down to where an imagined extension of Harpur would meet Atlas at Dunswart. The farm was originally 2,586 Ha in extent.

In 1895, after a few changes of ownership, the whole farm was sold to the G & F Syndicate, the primary member being George Farrar who knew that there was gold-bearing reef in the South Eastern corner of the farm, near to where the first gold was discovered on the Benoni farm. (We will speak more of Sir George in Chapter *The Father of Benoni, Sir George Farrar, DSO, Baronet*)

Apparently Sir George Farrar rebuilt this "hunting lodge" on the site of the original homestead and lived there for a while until he moved into his Sir Herbert Baker

designed “Bedford Manor” in Modern Bedfordview. The latter edifice today forms the core of the magnificent St. Andrews school for girls and which, with the help of some extraordinary foresight from the school governors over the years, has retained many of the authentic Victorian fixtures and fittings to this day.

The “Treaty” signed between the 1913 strikers and the mine owners was allegedly signed beneath the oak tree that still stands alongside the old farmhouse.

Even whilst housing estates were being developed all around it after the Second World War, the ever-diminishing farmlands were run as Goldies Dairy by a Mr Goldwyre until 1950 when it was purchased by the Bill Davey family.

Bill became a councillor and eventually the Mayor of Benoni (he became famous for driving for the establishment of respectable housing for Blacks, most notably Daveyton, in the midst of the Apartheid era) and the farm continued to be run as a dairy but also supported the Korsman Ice-cream company of which two of the Davey sons became partners.



The donkeys that pulled the Ice-cream carts around Benoni in the fifties were grazed upon the farm.

Korsmans Dairy Ice-cream Pony Cart in the 1950's. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)

The old farmhouse now gracefully resides, as a reminder of a more romantic age perhaps, on a half-hectare stand in modern suburbia in Bill Davey Drive.



The Kleinfontein Homestead today.

The G & F syndicate disposed of the non-gold bearing parts to the north of the Blesbokspruit and this now forms most of Farrarmere, Government Village, Northmead, Airfield, Goedeberg, Atlasville, Alphen Park, and Lakefield whilst the barren land to the

South of the spruit, excluding the gold-rich areas to the East of course, was established as the Town of Benoni and eventually extended to include Westdene, Western Extension and The Stewards.

Vlakfontein

This farm was established in 1866 and was originally owned by the Nel family amongst others and was 3,692 Hectare in extent.

Sir George Albu established the Van Ryn Gold Mines Estate in 1894 upon the farm and the Estates Manager, who lived in the homestead planted acres of trees, an area used by Benoni residents for picnics for many years and setting the beautiful scene for the Van Ryn Golf Course, now the Benoni Country Club.

The lower Rynfield dam was built for mining purposes in the late 1880s and the newer, larger one upstream was built in 1896. They were originally called the Van Ryn Dams.

The boundaries of the farm on the Western side shared that with Kleinfontein up O'Reilly Merry until President Pretorius where it headed East through Bullfrog and Boat-lake Pans, along Eva road to meet up with Springs road where it headed South-East along the road until it met Jones Street in the Van Ryn Small Holdings and turned South-West along Putfontein road, then bent slightly Northwards, running to the South of the R22 Highway until it met the Kleinfontein farm boundary at Snake road, just east of the Kleinfontein mine dump.

The modern suburbs of Rynfield, Morehill, Cloverdene, Boat Lake Village, Rynfield A.H, Fairleads A.H, Crystal Park and Benoni East A.H. all fall within the original farm.

ED: I have searched for the foundations of the old homestead around Rynfield Dam but have been unable to locate them.

Modderfontein

The farm was first owned by H.P. van der Walt around 1873, covered an area containing fabulous deposits of gold and in time it was to support five enormously wealthy gold-mining companies. At that time, it covered 2,974 Hectare.

Willem Prinsloo became the 2nd owner and after some canny negotiation he sold out to the Rand Mine group, bought another farm and again sold out to a mining house before settling on the Farm Cullinan, east of Pretoria, and we all know what awaited him there!

The story goes that he suspected the existence of gold on his farm. Herman Eckstein, who was the founder of the Rand Mines group, sent an agent W.P. Taylor to Prinsloo to negotiate its purchase price. The story of his journey is related in Taylor's book, *African Treasure*; it says:

“Arriving at the farm, Prinsloo would take nothing less than R200 000 which was an enormous sum at the time. Taylor had to use all his bargaining skills to reduce the figure and at first said nothing about his intentions.

When Prinsloo asked his business, Taylor said he was merely looking for a good farm whereupon Prinsloo replied – “Engelsman, jy lieg! Jy soek goud!” (Englishman, you lie! You seek gold!).

Tailors’ opportunity came one afternoon when a pail of milk, the combined effort of several cows was brought into the homestead. Taylor derided the cows’ lactatory abilities saying that he knew of a cow which produced two pails full daily. The farmer and his wife were incredulous and seizing his opportunity, Taylor offered to prove his point if they would let him have the farm for R140 000. After much discussion and re-thinking, the offer was accepted.

Taylor returned hurriedly to Johannesburg and bought a suitable cow and sent it to Modderfontein. Prinsloo was ready to sell when he saw what the cow was able to do. He was paid R60 000 in gold and the balance in shares which were later worth more than R600 000!

The next farm which Prinsloo bought proved to once again be gold-bearing and again he sold it to Mining Companies for a healthy sum of money. His next farm he bought was in the Pretoria area and hoped to be left in peace and enjoy his wealth. However soon afterwards he was again pestered by gold diggers and this time he threatened to shoot them if they did not leave: this farm he had chosen to settle on was later to become the great Premier Diamond Mine.”

The boundaries of the farm were roughly as follows. In the North it shared its boundary with Vlakfontein farm along Putfontein Road described above whilst to the East it commenced where the Vlakfontein boundary headed South-West at the junction of Jones Street and Springs Roads. A line extended South-East from this junction through to the two pans just East of Modder-East Village was the Eastern boundary and it then headed South-West along Cloverfield Road before turning North-West approximately where Cloverfield joins Orpiment Road. From there it turned South-West again along the South-Eastern boundary of the Santa Hospital property, (Zircon Avenue, Dersley) cut across the R51 just about where main Reef Road joins up to it and on along the Northern Western border of Presidents Park until it met up with the Brakpan farm boundary that forms its Western boundary near two small pans in Germishuis and Danie Streets just to the West of Krugersrus Ext 1. This can be mapped by running an imaginary line just Eastwards of the Chimes Tavern in Benoni, to a point just North of the Jan Smuts Dam in Brakpan North where a large pan was in the old days situated then bending slightly east, running just about along Power Street Brakpan until it would intersect the line running from Santa Hospital boundary mentioned above.

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15: The discovery of gold

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The First Anglo-Boer War came and went, much to the relief, happiness and pride of the Boer, but then in 1886, a little piece of our basins' rim of compressed conglomerate or Banket, as the Dutch later called it, (a slice of the conglomerate often looks like an appetizing slice of Dutch confectionary of this name) was literally stumbled-upon on the widow Oosthuizen's farm in the Langlaagte valley in modern day Johannesburg by a certain Mr. George Harrison.

He was an Australian handyman/pro prospector who had just completed some building work on the widow's farm yet he knew from experience the true glitter of gold when he saw it and the broken lump of rotten conglomerate that he had, through clumsiness, unearthed with his boot atop a nearby hill glistened indeed!

And so it was that the Witwatersrand gold rush was precipitated and which of course brought in an even larger flood of 'Uitlanders' to add to those already there at the Barberton and Pilgrim's Rest gold rushes and all keen to make a their fortunes from this new, apparent Golden Goose. This was much to the chagrin of the poor old Boer who simply wanted to be left alone in peace and quiet (remember?) and this, for reasons of great jingoism, greed, inflexibility, British Imperialist expansion policies and plain stupidity from both sides, eventually led to the miseries, treacheries, braveries and tragedies that became the Second Anglo-Boer War between 1899 and 1902: a far more serious and wretched affair than the First.

This infamous war brought about some obviously detrimental effects upon Benoni which are mentioned later in this book.

By early 1887 the reef had been followed by prospectors (some attribute this to a Mr. Charles Knox) to outcrops on the Kleinfontein, Vlakfontein and Modderfontein farms and to that same piece of 'uitvalgrond' that had been named Benoni by Mr. Rissik. In the meantime, it had been leased, in 1885, to a Mr. Ethelbert W. Noyce by the Republican Government. There was a clause in this lease however that stated that should gold be discovered on the property, Mr. Noyce's lease would be cancelled; and it was here, ironically, in the North-Eastern corner that gold was discovered early in 1887 after which the Benoni farm was duly proclaimed as public diggings but, due to a dispute, only considerably later on the 9th May 1888. Nevertheless, the intrepid Mr. Noyce became, with backing from Natal, one of the directors the Benoni Gold Mining Company which pegged claims on the farm and which became promulgated as a company in September 1887.

This was the first registered gold mine in the Benoni area.

The 'Four Farms of Benoni', namely Rietfontein, and portions of Kleinfontein and Vlakfontein and the Modderfontein farms were soon also proclaimed as public diggings, the first three in 1888 but the latter only in 1894, again due to an Owner/Governmental dispute.

Was our old Benoni beginning to live up to his new name of Benjamin? [{Return to Index} 15:](#)

16: Early Benoni mining endeavours

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Between 1888 until about 1893, the mines in the area were essentially 'outcrop' mining operations where the reef was followed at shallow levels and these early efforts were



pretty crude with timber steps following the inclined reefs metres into the earth. Neither whirring headgear existed here nor even the simple coco pans to carry the excavated rock: just carts and human and animal power.

Some of these original shafts are still visible in the ground to the East of Snake road, behind the modern Republican Press distribution depot on the corner of Snake and New-Modder roads.

The initial conglomerate samples also had to be sent far afield in order to be assayed to determine whether it was payable or not and, depending upon a favourable result, a Gold Mining Company (G.M.C.) would be floated with shares being sold in order to raise the necessary capital for the expensive stamp-batteries and the power needed to drive them let alone the cost of all the rest of the operational overheads.

Those early Benoni mining years were extremely demanding and arduous with many pioneer companies folding after a short while.

Sadly the aforementioned Benoni G.M.C. succumbed to poor payability of the reef in 1889 and it was sold to the Florence G.M.C, one of the directors being our George Farrar. But by 1891 they were also in trouble and their claims were sold at a pittance to the New Chimes who, in 1895, sold these off to the Chimes West G.M.C. at a considerable profit! The latter was a pretty successful effort though and they were merged with the Benoni Consolidated in 1908 but finally closed in 1912 and their claims were taken over by The New Kleinfontein.

The Bell Syndicate prospected a block of 47 claims on the Benoni Farm behind the modern Republican Press distribution depot. This syndicate then floated, also with Natal money, the Chimes G.M.C. in May 1888 which was initially successful but by 1890, also collapsed. Re-launched as the New Chimes G.M.C. with new money, its fortunes had considerably more success until it followed the luck of its predecessor and it was closed in 1896 only to later emerge as the Chimes Exploration Co in 1897. This was then taken over by the Orient Syndicate in 1903 which itself was finally absorbed by the New Kleinfontein in 1908.

Then came the Van Ryn and Kleinfontein G.M.Cs between 1888 and 1889 both of which also soon ground to a halt, as had most of the other earlier failures, due to many factors including incompetent management, prevailing economic conditions and lack of capital.

And so it went for several years. Mining companies being excitedly started up and tasting some success perhaps, but most, depending upon fortune and management, being dejectedly closed down.

One can imagine the difficulties of providing water, power, labour, materials, accommodation and food to the mines which were literally out in the sticks. Almost everything of a technical nature had to be imported from overseas or at least from the far-distant coastal towns of Port-Elizabeth, East-London, Durban or worse still, Cape Town. There *were no railways* in the republic in the early days of course so ox-wagons were the only means of transporting the massive stamp-batteries or rock-crushers, steam-boilers, co-co-pans and rails, corrugated-iron shelters of all sorts and the other engineering accoutrements and personnel requirements that were essential to mining the lucre.

By the beginning of 1892 there were railheads at the borders of the Transvaal, Natal and the Orange Free State, primarily built to serve the mines but they were still far removed from the Reef. By the end of that year, however, the Cape Town to Johannesburg line was completed with connections from East London and Port Elizabeth whilst the Durban to Johannesburg line was completed in 1895. President Kruger had been loathe to allow Uitlanders to take advantage of the situation whilst he had plans for his own Pretoria to *Delagoa-bay railway, but his line was only completed in 1894. (*Maputo)

By now it had become apparent that deep-level mining was required to make a success of the elusive gold that peppered the reefs and the small-time outfits were soon either absorbed by new and larger, well backed outfits, were re-launched with more capital backing or they were simply closed down due to a lack of payable conglomerate.

It should be appreciated that in a good mine *today*, only about 5.1 parts of gold per *million* parts of rock are recovered and that in most cases the gold is actually invisible to the naked eye within the conglomerate so it is an extremely labour and technologically-intensive process to wrestle these minute flecks of gold-dust from the rock. These conditions prohibited the simple panning of gold that would have allowed the hard-working prospector to make his mark as had happened in Pilgrim's Rest and Barberton some years earlier. These were certainly not the inches-thick layers of eluvial gold reef that we find in romantic fiction!

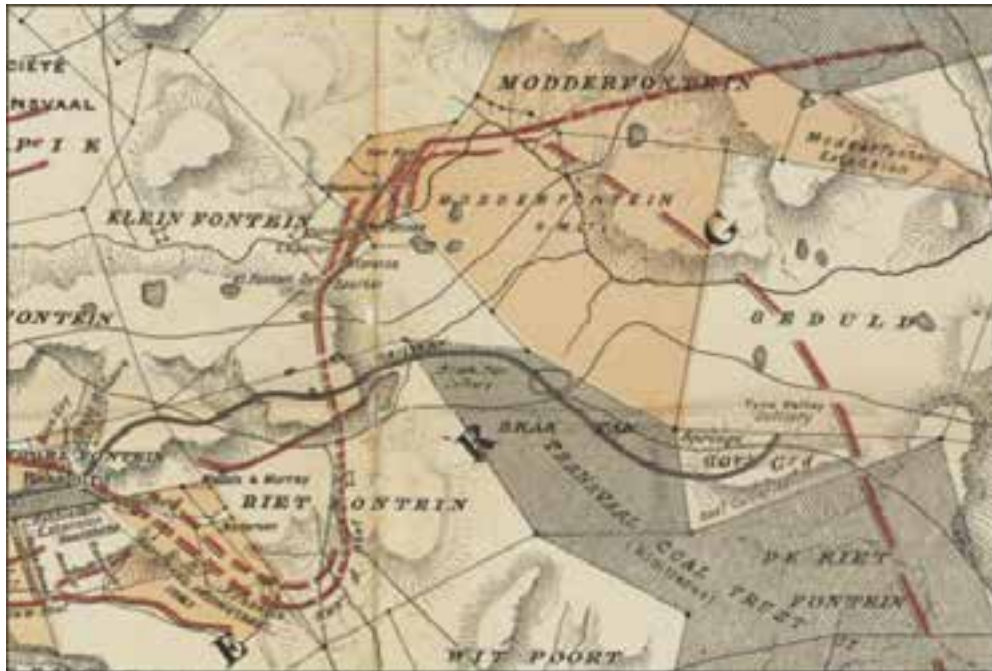
Not all was gloomy however and one of the most favourable aspects for the development of the Benoni goldfields were the close proximity of coalfields discovered and mined in the Boksburg, Brakpan and Springs area and on the later Apex mine (Rietfontein farm) and the coal was soon put to use to fire the boilers that powered stamp batteries, winding engines and all the other paraphernalia required of a mining operation. Prior to their discovery, coal had to be transported by wagon from Steenkoolspruit, out much further east, towards Middelburg or else from the later-discovered, Boksburg coalfields. Then, in 1890, the MacArthur-Forrest cyanide process of gold extraction was introduced and this gave a new lease of life to many gold mines where the yield had previously been marginal or un-payable.

The Rand-Tram built by the Kruger Government was opened from Boksburg to Johannesburg in March 1890 followed by the Boksburg to Springs extension in November 1890. The primary objective of this line was to provide coal to the mines in Johannesburg but there were certainly benefits for the Benoni settlement once a passenger service commenced.



The Rand-Tram was opened from Springs to Johannesburg in 1890.

ED: This was not a 'tram' at all but a pucker light railway. It was called a 'Tram' by Kruger's Volksraad in order to placate Burgher resistance against social advancement. The noisy and somewhat fearsome Steam engine had been referred to by some Boers as "an invention of the devil!" Note the absence of trees in those days!



Map 2. An 1895 map showing the known extent of the gold-reefs at that time (in Red) and the Rand Tram railway-line serving the coalfields at Brakpan and Springs.

ED: Benoni town now sits astride the boundaries of the Kleinfontein and Benoni farms, the later of which is not named here. It is the triangular farm situated between Kleinfontein and Rietfontein. Note how far the railway line was from the Benoni workings near the Florence, Spartan, Kleinfontein, New Chimes, Van Ryn and Modderfontein claims. This situation was only rectified in 1902 when a spur line was opened up to serve the Benoni mines. The Florence GMC was the re-named Benoni GMC, the first gold mine in Benoni.

The water-supply too had been a problem but was solved by damming the Blesbokspruit in many places, and by 1895, there was a chain of dams built, which still exist, in the valley from the Homestead Dam eastwards, including the Kleinfontein dam. See [Map2](#):



The Homestead Dam built in the 1890's. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)

Ed: The water tower on the left is normally mostly submerged but with the uppermost meter or so clearly visible whilst the huge cast-iron outlet valves on the right still exist below the wall. The little boy in the pictures is Dennis Jones whose parents used to own a smallholding in Wordsworth Road. He is now in his seventies!



Sailing on Homestead Dam, 1981. (Courtesy Paul Botes.)

So, together with these blessings, far-thinking individuals saw to it that things progressed and the first real success was the New Kleinfontein G.M.C mine formed in 1902 by a syndicate in known as the Benoni Claim, Gold Mining and Exploration Syndicate Ltd. This was headed by our doughty Sir George Farrar with Anglo-French Exploration Company backing, who had obviously learnt from earlier failures and they finally introduced dynamic, large-scale deep-mining capabilities that proved, at last, to be successful until closure in 1924. This mine had also swallowed up many of the claims of smaller concerns such as the Orient, Chimes West, Kleinfontein, Apex and the Benoni Consolidated along the way.

It was later resurrected by George McKenzie (of McKenzie Park fame) in 1931 who bought it for a pittance but after some reorganization, realized some considerable profits until final closure in 1964. This was the last mining concern to close in Benoni.

The Modderfontein G.M.C. (1888) also came and went until it's re-launch as the New Modderfontein in 1895 after which it was successful until 1952 when mining ceased. The mine, somewhat uniquely, also produced diamonds!

These were followed by the Modderfontein B, Modderfontein Deep Levels and the Modderfontein East G.M.Cs that were established in 1895, 1899 and 1917 respectively and all proved to be extraordinarily successful. The Modderfontein Deep Levels was known as "The jewel-box of the Rand" during its heyday! All were closed by 1962.

The Van Ryn Estates G.M.C. established in 1887 upon the Vlakfontein farm was divided in 1894 into one of the former name plus the Van Ryn West but soon re-combined and become successful until closure 1962.

The Van Ryn Deep GMC was formed in 1902 and had considerable ups and down until its closure in 1945. It had closed down due to labour shortages in 1907 when the Chinese were repatriated, had amalgamated with the Kleinfontein Deep in 1908 which had also closed down and started operations again, only in 1913, after which it was a success. It closed in 1945.

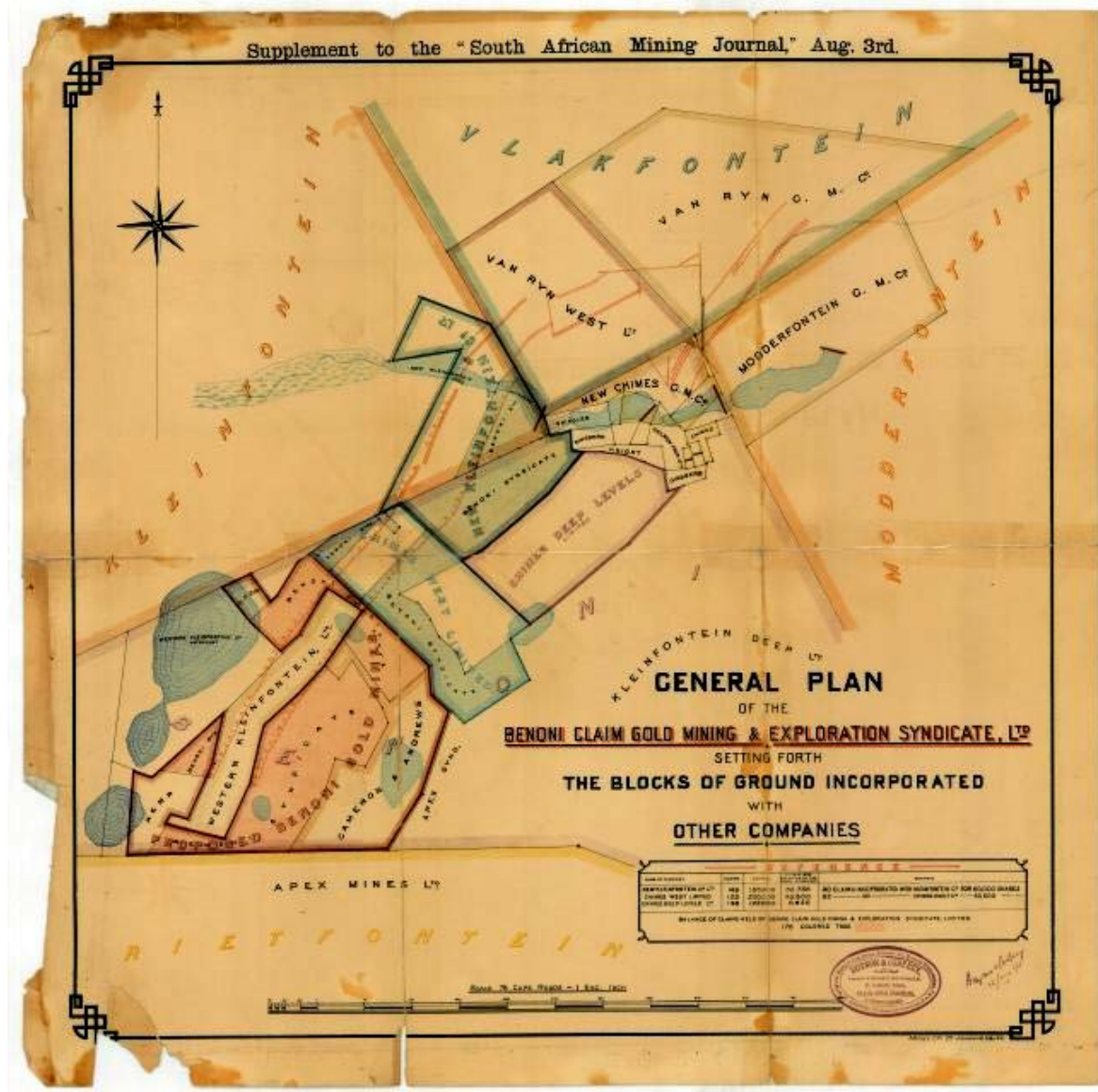
Of interest to Boer-war historians is that the headgear and other equipment on the New Kleinfontein, Van Ryn and Chimes mines were infamously burned down by a Boer Commando under General Piet Viljoen in 1900.

It was no wonder then, that many of the early "Klondiker" type of miner left the Witwatersrand destitute. Here there were no golden nuggets, just the almost invisible reefs embedded in very hard rock which was mostly very deep and which demanded expensive extraction techniques. Yes, this reef was rich beyond compare, but, like a beautiful lady, she required suitable investment before she would be prepared to yield her wondrous treasures and one has to pity those early prospectors for the efforts they put in only to be usurped by big, mainly offshore money.

Our City of Benoni of course owes its very existence to gold, and, following on from the foresight and endeavours of the predecessors of the mining community together with the later efforts of the City Council, a veritable golden stepping-stone had been

provided to develop housing, industries and businesses that would see the continued existence and growth of our beautiful City of Lakes, the Jewel of the East, once the gold was gone.

ED: A more detailed history of these mines may be read in the book "Benoni, Son of my Sorrow" (D. Humphriss, D. Thomas, 1968.) and "History of Benoni" (J. B. Whitehouse, 1937)



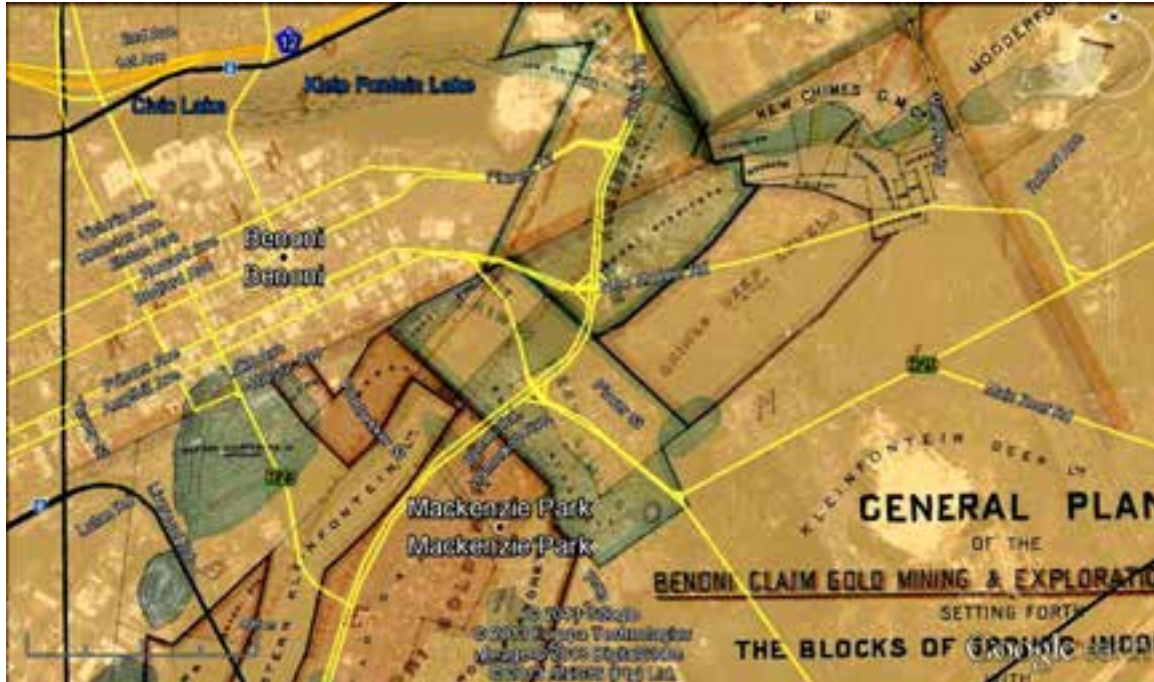
Map3: Benoni Gold Claims, 1895: (Courtesy the late Ken Gibbons)

{Return to [Early mining endeavours](#)}

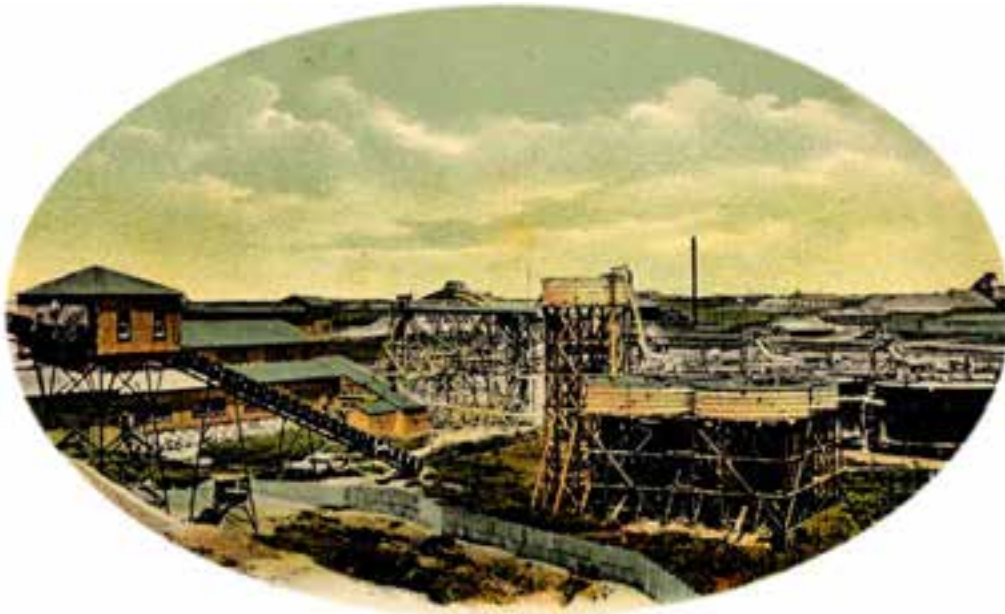
Notes

- 1) This map shows the extent of the Gold Mining Claims in 1895 prior to the laying out of the Benoni Township in 1903-4 and many of the claims are mentioned in the preceding text.
- 2) The boundary between Benoni and Kleinfontein farms is today approximately followed by Harpur Avenue.

- 3) The boundary between Kleinfontein and Vlakfontein is now demarcated by O'Reilly Merry Road and follows onto Snake road at the Southern-most end.
- 4) The largest pan to the left was drained in 1909 and is today the site of Willowmoore Park.
- 5) Middle and Civic Lakes didn't yet exist.



Map4: Benoni Gold Claims, 1895 overlaid onto Google Earth for reader's orientation.



The New Kleinfontein Gold Mining Company in the early 1900s.

Ed: This was situated immediately South of the Kleinfontein mine-dump & Blesbokspruit.



The Van Ryn Gold Mining Company in the early 1900s.

Ed: This was situated between New-Modder and Modder Roads nearby to modern day McKenzie Park.



The Benoni Gold Mining Company in the early 1900s.

Ed: This was situated South of the township on the Benoni farm. {Return to Index} 16:

17: The pre-Municipality years. 1885 to 1906

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Rather reluctantly, it is necessary to indulge in a little history of the old Transvaal. This might be hurtful to some but it happened and so must be reported here in order to put things into perspective regarding the way our Benoni was shaped.

1885-1898

Apart from the tranquil farming activities carried out by the patriarchal Boer folk on the four surrounding farms, the odd passing rider on his way to and from Pretoria or the rousing-up of a commando to quell pesky Pedi tribes in the North, there was apparently little other activity in the area until *The discovery of gold*, recounted above.

Of course, they had natural obstacles to face such as the rinderpest that wiped out their herds, droughts, locust devastations and agricultural diseases all of which played a large part in their happiness but they were mainly content with their solitude with The Good Lord at their side.

Initially there were few miners, most of them having headed for nowadays Johannesburg but some were trying their luck here and as the successes grew, others were quick to follow.

Upon the discovery of gold in 1887 on the Benoni farm, nationalities from all parts of the globe started to arrive in the area around our little Blesbokspruit, fossicking around, staking claims, digging them and hoping for that big strike. Most of them were of British stock and many came from the Kimberly diamond mines (where the little-man was being ousted by the likes of the Rhodes and Barnato colossi). Others came from further afield from the earlier gold-rushes such as the Klondike and California in the USA, the numerous Australian rushes and those from the now-declining gold-mines in the Eastern and Northern Transvaal.

Apparently, it was also quite common for visiting ships to lose considerable numbers of their crew-members once they had landed in the Cape, Natal and Portuguese East African ports and after the news of the untapped riches waiting on the Reef had been discussed over a pint or more in smoky, dock-side taverns.

A bank-clerk in Cape-town or a ship-chandler in Port Elizabeth could be heaving up his bag and be heading off to the Blesbokspruit once he heard of the evident riches awaiting there!

A large group of 'Cousin Jacks' from Cornwall arrived early-on and they were experienced miners from the tin mines back home and provoked the name of 'Little Cornwall' around the Chimes mine area for quite a while. They provided the bulk of the skilled mining expertise for many years and were a notoriously fun-loving and carousing lot!

In 1888, Bill Eaton arrived and after trying his hand at prospecting, he established the mud-brick "Chimes Tavern" named after the nearby Chimes mine. Bill had at one time as many as 200 claims registered in his name but for reasons of the expense of licence

fees and no easily accessible gold, he dropped the lot excepting for the claim where the Chimes Tavern still stands today. There is more detail on this historic hotel here. [CHIMES TAVERN](#)

Now, wherever there is a need for goods and produce of course, entrepreneurial spirit will satisfy that need and before too long, rows of shops and even a few banks were being established by Brits, Australians, Indians, Greeks, in fact of so many nations and, consequently, around the initial mining efforts, a small community began to develop, sprawling along both sides of the Blesbokspruit, primarily Eastwards of modern Snake road. The earliest store was in fact opened up in 1888 by Ethelbert W. Noyce of Benoni Gold-Mining Company fame mentioned in [The discovery of gold](#). This was situated behind the modern Republican Press distribution depot on the corner of Snake and New-Modder roads and this was the area where most commercial and social activity was based. Liquor licences were acquired but there wasn't much else to do on a social level unless one was prepared to ride to Boksburg's Masonic Hotel, the Kleinfontein Homestead or embark upon the occasional foray into Johannesburg where superior attractions awaited.

The National Bank opened up a branch nearby to Noyce's store in 1895 and they were nearly cleaned out by a pair of thugs at gunpoint in 1897 who escaped to Natal via Maputo but they were finally caught in Durban and returned to face trial. Hard labour and a lashing awaited one since he was an escapee and hard labour for the other. Both were released at the commencement of the Second Anglo-Boer War.

A [post office](#) opened in the same place in 1898 as well as a barber and a butcher soon afterwards, however none of these places had electricity, running water or toilet facilities of course!

Jewish people started arriving about this time with the majority escaping from tough times in Lithuania, Russia and Poland and despite the language barrier, they were quick to set up shop and make a living for themselves. Many businesses in Benoni to this day are of Jewish origin. The second shop opened in the settlement was a wood and iron building erected by a Mr Max Ginsberg and his descendant still live and trade in the Benoni area. Mr. Ginsberg also served on the first Town Council of 1907.



The first Jewish shop opened in old Benoni, 1892. It was the second shop opened in the old Benoni settlement. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)

Blacks were being employed in ever-increasing numbers and compounds were being built on the bigger mines but they were apparently not as adventurous, moneyed nor inclined to start up any mining concerns of their own. Here it should be noted that Chief Lobengula, one of the descendants of the Mzilikazi warriors that had plundered the local area in the early 1800s purchased the defunct Florence G.M.Cs stamp-mill and had it transported up to modern Zimbabwe in his efforts at gold mining up there!

The Boers in the early days were also notably disinclined to become engrossed in this mad scramble for riches despite the fact that a general rural impoverishment had prevailed amongst them for some time, aided by pestilence and abetted by a prolonged drought and which had forced many into bankruptcy. This had brought about the 'Poor Burgher' predicament that had seriously concerned the Kruger Government for many years, a situation for which they had no remedy it seems!

The Boer was not accustomed to working for anybody but himself or his 'Pa', and were thus loath to participate in any mining work, certainly not under subjugation by any Uitlander, but, some 'Poor Burghers' who were struggling to make ends meet made themselves useful by providing ancillary work as contractors, digging boreholes, building roads, structures and fences, blacksmithing, wagon-transport riding, making bricks and the like and their numbers were growing accordingly.

A location was established on land between the Benoni Hotel and the Chimes mine around 1902 but it soon became overcrowded as many Blacks not employed by the mines also took up residence there. Poor sanitation and hygiene conditions led to much suffering from disease by the inhabitants.

By then Indians from Natal had arrived and they happily settled around there and set up trade supplying this location with their business.

Around this time, the Benoni hotel was built (*date unconfirmed*) on the site of the present Republican Press distribution depot on the corner of New Modder and Snake roads and became an establishment to rival that of the Chimes Tavern down the road. It was also closer to all of the banks and shops that abounded in that area.



The Benoni Hotel built pre 1900, pictured here around 1930. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)

There is little left of these settlements now apart from a few foundations located behind the old Benoni Hotel site. The majority have disappeared beneath slimes dams over the years.



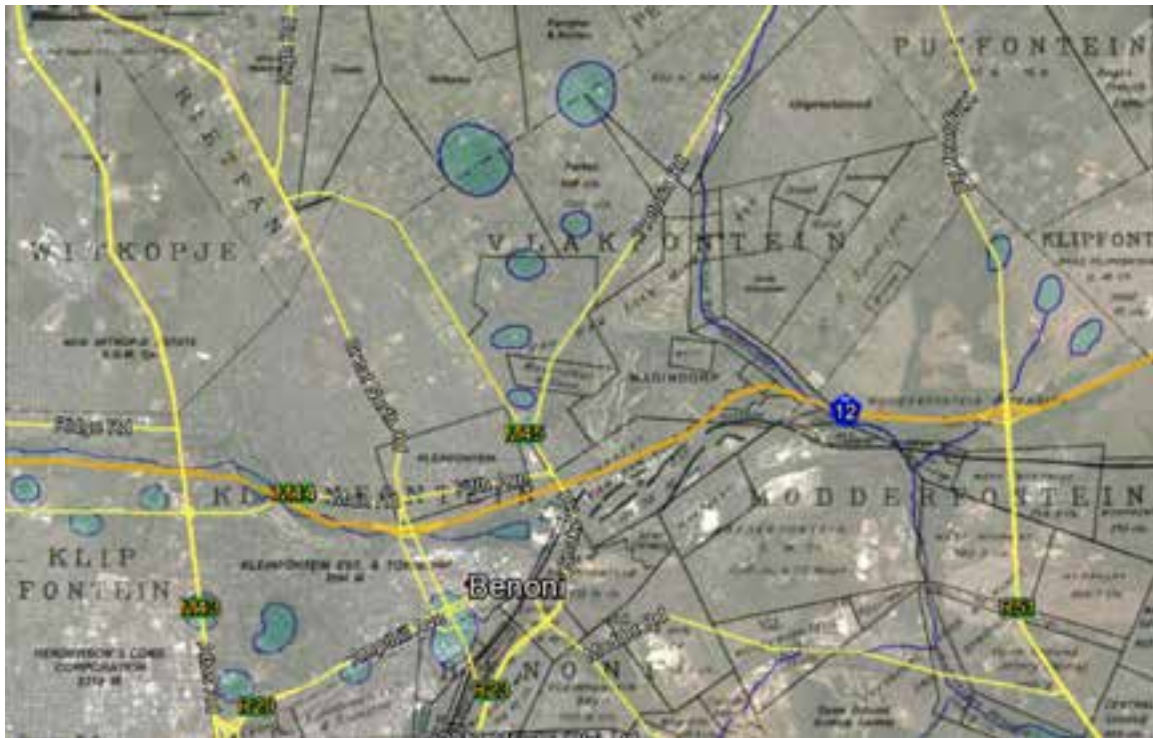
The Phoenix Hotel built around 1895 in Cloverdene. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)

The Rand-Tram was opened from Boksburg to Johannesburg in March 1890 followed by the Boksburg to Springs extension in November 1890. The primary objective of this line was to provide coal to the mines in Johannesburg but there were certainly benefits for the Benoni settlement and the mines situated there although it was located several kilometres South of the Benoni settlement, a bit too far to use as transport say, to Boksburg. It was also notoriously slow!

Construction of the 'Witwatersrand Road' later to become 'Main Reef Road' was started at the instigation of the mines in around 1896 and was to run from Krugersdorp to Boksburg. Prior to this, travel was carried out on winding veld-tracks and this was a most tedious arrangement. Construction was started with only minor assistance from the government but halted during the hostilities of the Second Anglo-Boer war. Curiously, the road was initially declared to be a private road since no public road was allowed to cross a proclaimed Gold mining area but it was nevertheless used by all. After the war however things progressed, and with the new Transvaal Government's assistance, the road was completed and declared a national road and to be maintained at Government expense. Extensions were soon made to Benoni, Brakpan and Springs and this brought more wealth and efficiency to the lives of the East-Randers.

The lower Rynfield dam was built in the late 1880s and the newer, bigger dam upstream was built in 1896. They were originally referred to as the Van Ryn dams since they were built to provide water to that mine.

By the late 1890s, many mining companies had been floated, closed or became amalgamated with others and the population was growing rapidly.



Map 5: Benoni area, pre 1890 overlaid onto Google Earth. (Courtesy Peter Wood)

Notes

- 1) The area marked as Magindorp (proposed by the Van Ryn Estates Company) was (rather thankfully) later changed to Rynfield.
- 2) The township of Kleinfontein, shown here north of the Blesbokspruit was originally approved by the Transvaal Government upon its proposal by the Kleinfontein Estates & Township Company to be the town of the future. It is situated where Northmead now stands but George Farrar's influenced the relocation to the present City site immediately north of the Benoni/Kleinfontein farms boundary and is of course not shown. (See Chapter 18)
- 3) The Willowmoore park pan above the B in Benoni and the one to its left are no longer there. (See Chapter 1.) Willowmoore was drained in 1909 although following rain, it became swampy for many years and the mosquitoes plagued the schoolchildren in the school erected there at the time.
- 4) Westdene (Korsmans), Dunswart and Herti's pans are shown to the left of the above although Herti's pan has largely disappeared beneath Atlas road.
- 5) Only Homestead and Kleinfontein Dams existed back then, (See Chapter 18) and neither of the Rynfield dams had been built. The lower Rynfield dam was built in the late 1880s and the newer, bigger one upstream was built in 1896.
- 6) Note the heavy black lines denoting the gold reefs that had already been discovered at that time.
- 7) Gold was first discovered on the Benoni farm in 1887 around about where the 'C' of 'Chimes West' mine is shown. (Behind the Fruit & Veg Market at the Eastern end of Princes Ave/Main Reef Rd.)
- 8) The Rand Tram to Apex, Brakpan and Springs collieries had not yet been built. (Built in 1890)

1899-1902

This period was primarily taken up by the Second Anglo Boer War.

Amongst the reasons mentioned earlier in *The discovery of gold*, sinister undercurrents had been bubbling away for some time: the 'Uitlander' versus Kruger debacle which was essentially the battle for British Imperialism versus the Transvaal Burgher and Boer who wished to remain independent from the perceived vices of advancement and British control over the bountiful and thus most coveted riches of the gold-reefs. Sadly, the Second Anglo-Boer War was provoked. {See on Wiki} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War



From the left, Cecil John Rhodes, Lord Alfred Milner, Joseph Chamberlain and Transvaal President Paul Kruger were at odds over the future of the Republic.

ED: The incredibly dynamic but very Imperialist Rhodes, together with Lord Milner (British High Commissioner for South Africa) and the British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain sought a Federation of South African states under British rule that would include the Boer countries, (the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Republic) together with the Natal and Cape Colonies.

The Boer's 'promised land' aspired to, identified and settled upon by the leaders of the Great Trek days was becoming overwhelmed by 'Uitlanders' seeking their fortunes in gold and trade and although President Kruger welcomed the wealth they were bringing his country, he nevertheless wished to retain the Boer identity and control over their own destiny. This obviously led to oppressive taxations and no voting rights (the Franchise) amongst other grievances for the 'Uitlanders' whilst corruption, nepotism and monopolistic policies from the Boer side added further fuel to their fire of discontent. Kruger understandably reasoned that if he gave the vote to the 'Uitlanders' who now outnumbered the Boer, he would lose his country to the British. Milner forced the issue against an ever-resentful and stubborn Kruger and war was declared.

Rhodes died in 1901 whilst Kruger died in exile in Switzerland in 1904.

Three interminable years prevailed amidst much loss of life from both sides, the destruction of both property and national pride, the dissolution of the two Boer states, (Transvaal and Orange Free State) and of many close-knit Boer families. The mines were forced to close during this time and both Black and White Mine workers dispersed themselves homewards or to war. Amongst the Whites, those who sided with the Boer went off to commando, many of them 'Uitlanders' incidentally, while those on the British side either re-located to Natal, the Cape, back to their home-countries or else had joined up with the invading British forces. All women and children had been packed off to safer lands and the Reef towns, mines and settlements, including the Benoni settlement, had become ghost towns with only mine-caretakers in evidence.

Benoni saw little activity early on with the exception that staff's personal effects that had been hidden in a stope of the Kleinfontein Mine were removed by the Boers.

Once the British had control of the Witwatersrand by May 1900, the Chimes West headgear was fortified and this certainly helped to protect Benoni from Boer commandos as it was never captured despite several Boer artillery attacks.

The Boers raided a mine compound in early December however and escaped with many horses. On the 26th December they returned with a Commando of around 500 men under General Piet Viljoen and the headgear, stamp-mills and other equipment on the New Kleinfontein, Van Ryn and Chimes mines were extensively damaged. They took Mr. E. J. Way, the manager of the Kleinfontein Mine prisoner and led him off to Randklip, about seven kilometres East of Benoni and where he was later released.



In June 1901, the Boers attacked again but Mr Way, upon his release earlier had carefully measured out landmarks and this allowed the British guns to easily range-in on their attackers and they were repelled. No further action was seen.

With almost zero productivity, the cost to the mine owners, let alone the citizens and the economy, ran into the millions. On the brighter side, it did eventually pave the way for the Cape

Colony, Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State to form the much stronger Union, but more of that later.

In 1902, a branch line joining the Boksburg–Springs line (old Rand-Tram line) was extended Northwards from behind Leeuwpan to service the Benoni mines. The route closely followed the modern Range-view- Snake road roads with spurs going off to serve the various mines here and there but it never crossed the Blesbokspruit.

1903-1907:

Political:

After the torrid dispute, the immediate concern to the victorious British and their newly assigned civil administration under Lord Milner was that the now war-crippled economy of the defunct Transvaal Republic had to be reconstructed and, as part of its efforts to resurrect the Gold mining industry on the Rand, he reluctantly sought and secured cheap indentured labour from China. The mine-owners and Chamber of Mines had been the chief protagonists of this strategy since they saw it as the only way to immediately re-constitute the mines and get the wealth rolling in again. The Black mine workers had been somewhat loathe to return to the mines after the “White-man’s” war and the Chinese labour force had now also enabled the mines to lower wages across the board.

The earliest of these Chinese labourers arrived in May 1904 and within a year there were 34 000 and the number quickly increased to around 62 000 with thousands being deployed in Benoni.

While the Chinese workers certainly helped in the efforts to get the mines back into production again, they became a political disaster and a nightmare for Milner and the new administration for, although the Chinese were severely reigned in and were not allowed to perform any skilled labour, buy land, trade, or pay rent for land, an increasing number of white workers and towns-folk reacted angrily to the continued presence of them and they were accused of introducing vices to corrupt the local population, being disease ridden, murderers and rapists and so-on.

Although carried out only by a small percentage of them, the situation was not helped when some of the Chinese started to desert from the mines to live a life on the run. Several grouped into outlaw gangs which threatened the local farming communities and indeed, several White miners and family members were murdered during robberies. This spread yet more alarm and threat to the Transvaal communities and the new government. The HOB and B.SOMS books relate tales of some of these assaults.

The Mine-owners needed them but most citizens didn't.

Also, from the opposite point of view, sentimental campaigns, both in South Africa and Britain were opposed to the use of Chinese 'slave' labour and were so successful that the new Transvaal Administration was ordered by the new British Liberal Government to stop all further Chinese labour contracts.

As the years passed, Black labourers were gradually encouraged to return to the mines and in 1907 the newly elected Botha Government of the Transvaal started to repatriate the Chinese in line with the wishes of the populace and by March 1910 the repatriation was completed.



On a lighter note, the Chinese were free and easy spenders and had filled many a traders' coffers with their pay and gambling habits and had provided added colour to the weekends when they went out and about all garbed in their traditional dress during their times off. Some Chinese gravestones are to be found near the Benoni Country Club.

Chinese and Black mine labourers circa 1905.

In the meantime, after the war, Sir George planned and laid out the town in 1903/4 and the first plots were sold off by The Kleinfontein Estates and Township Company and Benoni Township was born. *{See Sir George Farrar} The Father of Benoni, Sir George Farrar, DSO, Baronet*

The development of the mining industry and the Anglo-Boer War had severely damaged the ideal of farming as a way of life. It had also altered the patterns of trade and had produced both a new economy and a new political system, but much travail nevertheless awaited the new country.

During the period and even for some time after Union in 1910, Britain and internationally-based companies held great influence over the way the new country was governed, even under the Afrikaner-led Botha Transvaal Government (1907) and the Benoni area remained very much a British community long after the Boer farmers turned to the mines to survive. Many British soldiers had also decided to stay after the war, hoping for a better life here and many settled in Benoni.

The Milner administration was taking things to the extreme and was encouraging English as the sole language medium to be taught at schools which naturally caused further insults to the ideals of the Boer way of life. Many of the Boers had been unable to rehabilitate their farms devastated during Kitchener's 'Scorched-earth' policy (carried out during the Anglo-Boer war guerrilla campaign period) despite the post-war compensations that had been provided, and still, the 'Poor Burgher' problem described earlier-on prevailed so the Afrikaner miners were slowly becoming more ubiquitous in Benoni.

During 1905, the British Liberal Government decided to allow the Transvaal to vote on self-government and in the elections in 1907, the 'Het Volk' party under Louis Botha became the majority, mitigating to Lord Milner's fears of too-early an election and losing British power. Interestingly, Sir Percy Fitzpatrick who played an important part in politics in those days stated that during the lead up to the 1907 elections, a census carried out showed that the Uitlander population outnumbered those of the Boer but, due to splitting of the Uitlander vote, the 'Het Volk' party won the majority.

In Benoni, George Farrar was duly elected to parliament for the Progressive Association, defeating Walter Madely of Labour, a staunch union-man yet a man who was later to represent Benoni and the Labour Party in parliament for a staggering 32 years until his death in 1947!

And, of course, during this period, and for many, many years to follow, the Blacks, Indians (despite the efforts of Mahatma Ghandi) and Coloureds had no say whatsoever and the seeds of the Separate Development policies were slowly being sown!

General:

The New Kleinfontein Mine hospital was opened 1906, on New Kleinfontein land near Snake Road and a new ward was added in 1914. This was largely funded by the mine-worker's Medical scheme and very little money came from the mines themselves.



*The New Kleinfontein Hospital opened in 1906.
(Courtesy Peter Wood)*

ED: This photo was no doubt taken much later after the additions, probably in the 1930's.

The New Kleinfontein Mine became the heart of social life in the area for some time after it built a recreation hall and sports grounds for Tennis, Cricket, and Football. A golf club was laid out in 1903 and was only closed once the Van Ryn Club (now the Benoni Country Club) opened its doors in 1911.

Citizens were becoming concerned over health matters and a Vigilance Committee was formed and agitated for a municipality to take care of such matters. Thus it was decided by the Government that local government would be granted to the Benoni area, in extent of 130 sq Kilometres and encompassing several farms in the area and the Benoni Health Board was established in 1906 and took up residence in a cottage in Cranbourne Ave. This was shortly followed by the establishment of 4 voting wards followed by elections for the first Town Council of Benoni on the 30th November, 1907.

Benoni had become a Municipality!

Firsts

First Church services was conducted by Rev. George Robey in 1889 at the mines

First private school was opened at Kleinfontein Boarding House by Miss Evans in 1903.

Jacob Nestadt was the first saddle-maker in Benoni 1903 and father of Morris Nestadt who later became a Councillor and several-times Mayor. He was a notoriously energetic man and his efforts brought many benefits to Benoni.

The first Government school was opened in Lake Avenue in 1904.

A HISTORY OF BENONI SCHOOLS:

The first Masonic Lodge was opened under Provisional Warrant on the 18th November, 1905. See *Brief History of Benoni Lodge No. 3157*

The New Hotel was built on the corner of Voortrekker and Market (Princes) and was leased to G. W. Eaton of Chimes Tavern fame by Castle Breweries. It seems that it was rebuilt in art-deco style at some time, probably in the '30's and it still exists, though no longer as a hotel, on the North-western corner of Princes and Voortrekker!



The New Hotel built around 1904 North-western corner of Princes Ave. & Voortrekker Str. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)

ED: This was later rebuilt in Art-deco style, the structure of which still exists today, as depicted below.



Voortrekker Street from the corner of Amphill Avenue, looking North, circa 1906.

ED: The tower on the right is John Orrs (totally rebuilt, and now Bradlows) whilst the gabled building on the left facing the horse & cart is the New Hotel. The latter was rebuilt in art-deco style, probably in the '30's and still exists, though no longer as a Hotel.

The tower on Fines building on the opposite corner to John Orrs was only built in 1919 yet the 8 verandah supports shown here still exist as do the 8 nearer to Amphill Avenue.

Note the absence of buildings and trees on the hill straight ahead, now Northmead.



Map 6: Benoni area, circa 1903 overlaid onto Google Earth. (Courtesy Peter Wood)

Notes

- 1) Benoni Township has been mapped. Note that originally the township borders were defined by, from left to right, clockwise, Russel Str, Eastwards into Mowbray Ave, Southwards into Tom Jones Str, Eastwards into Newlands Ave, (that part no longer existent now, being beneath the Lakeside complex) Southwards into Rothsay Str, Eastwards into Kempston Ave, Southwards into Wilstead Str and Westwards into Harpur Ave.
- 2) Benoni West, Western Extension, Westedene, The Stewards and the area Northwest of Mowbray Ave. that was originally called Cranbourne do not yet exist.
- 3) The Rand Tram lines from Dunswart to Brakpan Collieries and spurs to Leeuwpan and the mines are mapped here. The Dunswart to Range-View station portion, behind Apex, and the spur lines are now dismantled. (2010)
- 4) Willowmoore pan (marked 'W') not yet drained, this only being carried out in 1909. The council at this time did not exist and had therefore not yet gained surface rights to the farm Benoni.
- 5) The original Benoni Township had been entirely laid out on Kleinfontein land.

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18: The Father of Benoni, Sir George Farrar, DSO, Baronet

{Return to Index} 18:

{Return to pre-municipality years} See [Sir George Farrar](#)

{Follow more detail on the biography of Sir George} [Sir George Herbert Farrar Bart, DSO.](#)

During the spring of 1902, Sir George Farrar was inspecting the Homestead and Kleinfontein dams which he had ordered to be built before the Second Boer-War in the 1890's in order to supply water to the thirsty E.R.P.M. (Boksburg) and New Kleinfontein mines respectively, and where he held significant financial interests: the war had put a halt to gold-mining activities for three years and Sir George had in fact taken a commission in the Imperial Forces during this time and had thus been unable to manage these valuable assets for a while.

Some of the Benoni mines' head-gear and stamp-batteries had been burnt down during those tragic days but he was nevertheless impressed with the way the dams had been transformed from unattractive earthworks with sterile shorelines into lush, green oases of rushes, young willows and sparkling clear waters. It was said to have reminded him of the pretty river Ouse in his home town of Bedford in the UK. *(Thankfully, he declined to re-name our little Blesbokspruit in honour of that river!)*

Thus it was that in September, he met with the Kleinfontein Estates and Township Company, who also administrated the Benoni farm, and proposed that the town be laid out on the North-facing slopes of the Blesbokspruit valley, alongside the now-beautiful Kleinfontein dam, and to the West of the then-existing mining shanty-town.

It should be noted that prior to the war, the Kruger government had approved a Farrar-driven Kleinfontein Estates and Township Company's proposal for a township called Kleinfontein to be built on the South-facing slopes of the valley, slightly North-east of the current Middle-Lake (and now encompassing Northmead,) but the board were swayed by Sir Georges' inspirational ideas and duly appointed him the town-planner of the new Benoni Township in the new location to the South of the Blesbokspruit. Some, including George Rennie (of later estate-agent fame) had also pointed out that the ex-Rand Tram/CSAR railway would have been far too far away from the more Northerly Kleinfontein site as well as from the main road to Boksburg, the nearest established town. Mr. H. T. Elliot who had been appointed to the Rand Water Board by the new government apparently was of the same opinion and also helped sway the matter! He was later appointed Chairman of the Kleinfontein Estates and Township Company by Farrar and he became a noted character in Benoni's beginnings.

ED: The Kleinfontein Township mentioned above is also shown on the 'Jeppe's Map of the Transvaal' dated 1899. This was the one he drew up together with Rissik mentioned in the chapter 14 [Origins of the name Benoni.](#)

Farrar had in fact wanted to name the new township Bedford but there already existed a Bedford in the Eastern Cape (ironically also named in honour of the Duke of Bedford of his home-town) so he went along with the biblical name of Benoni that had been bequeathed to the Benoni farm as related earlier.

Curiously, the new township was laid out entirely on the Kleinfontein farm, to the North of the Kleinfontein/Benoni boundary! The fact that the first gold was found on the Benoni farm and that the developing settlement was generally referred to as Benoni no doubt had something to do with it's naming too!

Of particular merit was that the new town was situated on the main road from the old settlement to Boksburg!

And so it was that he named many of the Streets, which run North-South, and Avenues, which run East-West in honour of places and peoples of his fondest memories back in England.

Bedford Street, of course, came from the name of his home town. (It was renamed Tom Jones street in 1919 after the then leader of the Labour party in the Town Council.)

Howard Avenue was named after his grandfather who lived at **Kempston** Grange (spelt **Kemston Avenue** in Benoni) and who had taken him on horse-rides around the historical **Bunyan** countryside. They rode to **Ampthill**, a hill with fine views and then on to Elstow (curiously spelt **Elston** here), then dismounted at the **Swan Hotel** for lunch.

Russell Street almost certainly came from the family name of the Dukes of **Bedford** who happily resided at **Woburn** Abbey.

Cranbourne Avenue was named after Lord Cranbourne, the Colonial Secretary of this country at the time and a good friend of Sir George's.

Wooton, (spelt Wootton in England) **Turvey**, **Rothsay** and **Wilstead** are all place names from around **Bedford**.

The area between **Taylor** and **Horsefall** Streets (origins unknown) he declared a public open market but **Market** Avenue was re-named **Princes** Avenue after the visit of H.R.H. Edward, Prince of Wales in 1925. The market square is now occupied by the Benoni Plaza complex.

The original **Fort Street** was renamed **Voortrekker Street** in 1938 in honour of the Centenary of the Great Trek.

Harpur Avenue is named in memory of the founder (Sir William Harper) of his old school, The Bedford Modern which is still in existence today and indeed makes mention of Sir George on its war-memorial - Sir George was killed in SWA in 1915 in a train accident whilst again on active army duty. He presently rests-in-peace off a small road behind his magnificent Herbert Baker designed manor-house, **Bedford** Court, (now St. Andrews Girls School) in local Bedfordview.

The Benoni coat of arms designed in 1937 further continued the connection with **Bedford** by incorporating, in the centre shield, the triple-castle coat-of-arms of the town of Bedford and in the border, three escallops taken from the coats-of-arms of the Dukes of Bedford.

The township provided 1708 stands of 60ft x 100ft, 150ft x 300ft and 150ft x 240ft dimensions each, a market square, community space (present day swimming pool,

tennis courts and bowling greens) and a park. (Curtis Park, now the Benoni City Hall site.) Farrar later promised free double stands to any religious group wishing to build a place of worship and this quickly encouraged the building of many.

Thus it was the discovery of gold in 1887 on Benoni farm that brought about the transformation from the vast rolling veld of then to the city, industry and suburbia we know today. Travel East of Benoni along the N12, take away the trees and buildings and you will picture, almost, what it was like before!

Sir George Farrar's Benoni Township laid out in 1904 became a Municipality in 1907.

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19: The TIMELINE

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A Time-line should be included under Chapter 19 that highlights major incidents such as:

- *Town established*
- *Town granted municipality status*
- *Epidemics*
- *Storms*
- *Reticulation of water, sewerage and electricity*
- *Strikes 1 and 2*
- *World War 1 and 2*

etc.

1

1907 to 1916

1907 to 1916 {Return to Index} Chapter 1,

This decade was one of great development of the newly laid out Township of Benoni.

The Town council was elected in 1907 and Clr. R. Dobson was elected mayor and they went to work with much vigour, sorting out the sewerage problems, laying on water (from the Rand Water Board, 1908) electricity (from the New Kleinfontein Power Company, 1911) and planting trees on a large scale. Mr. J.B. Whitehouse, author of "History of Benoni" was elected secretary. Benonians will recognize many of the members now perpetuated in street names.



BENONI'S FIRST TOWN COUNCIL.

Top Row (Left to Right) : J. B. Whitehouse, C. J. E. Hartshorne, S. W. Hesking, J. R. Thom, J. W. Forster and Jas. Stevenson.
Bottom Row (Left to Right) : C. S. Bertram, G. E. Milburn, H. T. Elliott, R. Dobson, F. C. Fegan, C. B. Brodigan, and M. Ginsberg

New Gold-mining developments at Brakpan (1903) Van Ryn (1902) and Modder B (1908) brought a flood of labour to the area with many settling with their families and bringing new trade and commercial opportunities to the new town.

A fire-station and Town hall were built around 1912 on the corner of Cranbourne Ave. and Tom Jones Str. The municipal office had previously been located in a wood and iron cottage in Cranbourne Ave. and had become far too small to cope with proceedings.

The Health board established earlier in 1906 were at work trying to eradicate the diseases such as enteric fever that were rife in the slums and locations on mine-properties.

Western Extension was planned, although with some opposition from the council who were resentful of the fact that they would be responsible for its maintenance.

The Council had difficulty in obtaining lands for use for industrial, municipal and native locations but they finally attained 'surface rights' to a portion of the Benoni farm that now forms part of the Actonville and Benoni South areas.

With the Chinese now gone, (by 1910) the Mine-owners and the Chamber of Mines naturally wished to run the mines at a profit and they proposed greater use of Black labourers at cheaper wages than they paid the Whites and this caused ongoing strife between the White workers Unions and the Administration.

The Labour movement in Benoni, mainly made up of British stock led by a staunch Union-man, W. B. Madely was becoming stronger by the day but they were increasingly being supported by the Afrikaner Boer for White-workers rights.

The Boer, ever resentful of what was deemed by him to be the 'Swart Gevaar' policies of the predominantly more liberal-minded British Mine-owners and the very real image of being replaced by cheaper labour, joined ranks with the Unions, a situation that provoked White-led strikes in 1907, 1913 and 1914. These strikes heralded the new-found power of the Unions and the deep divides that existed between the workers and the mine-owners.

1907 Strike: the first of many.

The strike seems to have originated right here on the Kleinfontein mine although some sources claim it was at Knights Deep in Germiston, and the main grievances of the unions, beneath the umbrella of newly formed Trade and Labour council (formed in 1902) were, the extension of supervision from 2 to 3 rock drilling teams, the fear of being replaced by Black labour, of course, and the spread of miners' phthisis. This lung disease was the curse of the underground worker, not recognised by the Chamber of Mines as being caused by underground work at that time and for which no compensation was paid.

The strike fizzled out as not all workers laid down their tools and the mines easily filled the strikers' positions with Chinese or Afrikaners.

Problems, problems, problems! But there were many more to come!

1907 Water supplied to Benoni from Rand Water Board in 1907 due to drought. The residential wells had dried up and water was retailed from carts as household reticulation had not yet taken place.

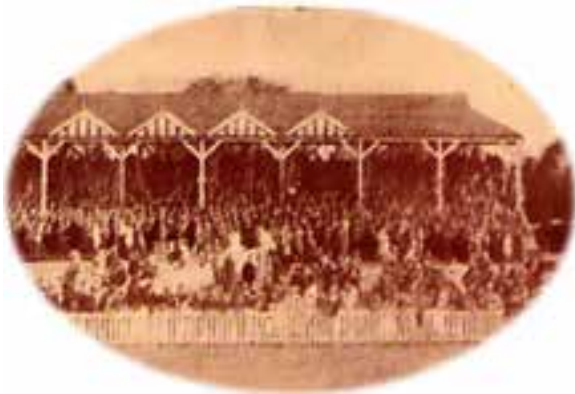
Town council elected, 1907, Dobson Mayor.



Benoni's First Municipal Elections, 1907. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay, B. SOMS)

ED: This is taken in front of the Post Office and Standard Bank in Taylor Street adjoining Market Square. Buildings were being built rapidly indeed!

1907 Farrar elected over Madeley to Boksburg East constituency. (including Benoni)



1907 The Gymkhana club was established at Dunswart on the 14 Dec 1907 and enjoyed huge popularity with a racecourse being built around the pan and boasting graceful period grandstands.

The horse racecourse at Dunswart in the early years. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)

1908 Water reticulated to homes, sourced from the Rand Water Board from barrages on the Vaal River.

Dingler tobacco was established.

1909 The first school was opened in Cranbourne Avenue.

A HISTORY OF BENONI SCHOOLS:

A huge Snowstorm occurred (the greatest in the history of the Rand) much to the delight of the residents and the slums were transformed into a beautiful white wonderland.

Willowmoore Pan was drained with a pipe-cutting excavated in Bedford Street (now Tom Jones Str.) draining into Middle lake.

The Dominican Convent was built.

Market (Princes) Avenue was macadamized.

- 1910** The Transvaal becomes part of the Union of South Africa under Jan Smuts.
The Benoni Club was established in Cranbourne Ave and open to men only.
The last of the Chinese mine-labourers were repatriated.



The Post office (left) and Standard Bank in Taylor Street, pre 1910. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)

Ed: Taylor Street became a pedestrian walkway upon the building of the modern Benoni Plaza.

The post-office and adjoining site was replaced by the Goch Building and was the site of the infamous Wimpy bombing in July 1988.

In-between the two buildings one can see the rear of the New Hotel on the corner of Voortrekker Str. and Princes Ave.

- 1911** The Imperial Hotel in Ampthill Avenue opened its doors and it became one of the towns leading establishments. It was situated on the corner of Cranbourne Ave. and Tom Jones Str. where ABSA now stands. [The Imperial Hotel](#)

Dunswart Iron and Steel was established. [THE STORY OF DUNSWART IRON AND STEEL](#).

Van Ryn Golf Club established, later to become the [BENONI COUNTRY CLUB](#)

A cemetery was laid out on Modder Deep mine lands, with the first internment of Andrew Sunny on 18th Oct 1911.

Western Extension was laid out with 200 stands.

The Benoni Power station was built by the New Kleinfontein GMC and provided electricity to the township at last.



The Benoni Power Station built in 1911 alongside Kleinfontein Dam and abutting Wilstead Street. (Courtesy Peter Wood.)

Notes

- 1) The site was situated alongside Kleinfontein Dam North of the present day Pioneer drive, and now the Kleinfontein Lake Office Park.
- 2) A huge slag-heap developed East of Wilstead Street, stretching from the Kleinfontein Dam to Cranbourne Ave. (See photo B.SOMS P83/84)
- 3) The nearby coalfields in Brakpan and Apex provided the fuel by rail.

1912 After much lobbying by the Municipality, a railway line was constructed that included a station named Cranbourne in the area now covered by the Lakeside Mall/Traffic Department complex. *See [The second line](#)*

The first Fire Brigade Station was opened alongside the Municipal Offices and was initially a volunteer brigade. The fire-engine was horse-drawn and the horses were trained to take station beneath their harnesses upon the ringing of a bell!



Benoni Fire Brigade Station with the First Municipal Offices in the background, corner Cranbourne Ave & Tom Jones Str. (Previously Bedford Str.) Circa 1912. Neither exists today. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)



Benoni's First Municipal offices, 1912. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)



The building later housed the offices of the Benoni City Times before being demolished. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)



21 Princes Avenue, built in 1912 shown here in the 1930's when it was Harper & Tanner Outfitters. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)



21 Princes Avenue in 2013, no longer so grand anymore and missing a few finials but essentially still complete!



21 Princes Avenue built 1912.

1913 Strike. After five men were retrenched after a management change on the New Kleinfontein mine, a strike was called and much scab-beating, destruction of property and looting was carried out on private enterprise and the railways

goods yard. The fire brigade was kept very busy despite being hindered by acts of sabotage. The strike had its effects upon building progress and a period of depression ensued, more so after the next strike in 1914.

Reminiscence — Isaac Fanaroff

(ED: Courtesy of "Latvia SIG" a Jewish newsletter and is reproduced courtesy of Isaac's son Bernie. Isaac's father escaped from the oppressions of Latvia to South Africa and then sent for his family. They lived at 88 Amphill Avenue.)

"Benoni was also the centre of a strike on the goldfields in July 1913. It all began on the New Kleinfontein Mine which dominated Benoni both physically, with its ever expanding mine dump, and economically and socially, because so many of the inhabitants of the town were either directly or indirectly dependent on it for their livelihood.

The immediate cause of the strike was a dispute between the mineworkers and the management, which later resolved itself into a struggle for the recognition of the mining unions. Soon the strike spread along the Reef, which in those days stretched from Randfontein on the West Rand to Springs and Nigel on the East Rand.

Smuts called upon the Imperial troops, then stationed in the country. Riots broke out. The Star newspaper's office was set on fire; an attempt was made to burn down Park Station, and the Rand Club, home of the "Randlords," was attacked. Scabs were attacked and their houses burnt down. In Benoni lorries carrying furniture belonging to some of the scabs were intersected and burned. In other cases, furniture was thrown out of the windows and set on fire.

For some reason the Benoni Produce Company's store and another store were set on fire and looted. I saw men and women carrying bags of sugar and other goods from the store. The name "scab" was the worst insult one could hurl at an opponent. I happened to be walking near the Kleinfontein Mine compound when a white miner was bayoneted by a British soldier. In the end I believe the miners won."

ED: 'Scab' was the name given to anybody who opposed the strikers' objectives and who refused to lay down their tools in accordance with Union directives. Many were beaten, had their goods destroyed or were executed.



*Benoni Produce & Coal
Company looted and burnt
down in the strike of 1913.
(Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)*

- 1913** The Standard Brass Foundry was founded in the town and later moved to Dunswart. It became a large scale operation and gained many overseas contracts as well as serving the local mining industry. It is still in operation!
- 1914** Strike. This one was provoked by a reduction in Railways employee wages and the Federation of Trade Unions, including the miners downed tools in support. This time however, the government under Smuts was ready and deployed 8000 defence force troops to Benoni, arrested nine British strike leaders and had them deported. These strong-arm tactics however empowered the Labour party and Unions and heralded more trouble for the future, both for Benoni and Smuts.



The Market Square circa 1915.

ED: The Market Square was later enveloped by the new Municipal offices, the Carnegie Public Library and Princes Gardens. Today, the Benoni Plaza complex covers this area.

Reminiscence — Isaac Fanaroff

(ED: Courtesy of "Latvia SIG" a Jewish newsletter and is reproduced courtesy of Isaac's son Bernie.)

"In that year, 1915, I had my first experience of an election when I assisted one of the candidates in the general election. The candidates were W.B. Madeley, who was the idol of Benoni Labour and who represented Benoni in the Union Parliament from its inception until his death during the Second World War; a member of the South African Party; Van Schonken (Nationalist) and Bill Andrews, one of a group of Labour members of Parliament who broke away and formed the War-on-War group. Madeley was elected with a large majority over his SAP opponent."

Benoni was probably Labour's greatest stronghold in the country and continued to be so until the death of Madeley. As an important centre of the mining industry it also had a strong and loyal trade union tradition based on the British immigrant workers in the gold industry.



Street corner meetings were held frequently during the long summer evenings and election meetings were enthusiastically supported.

Typical agitation scenes from the strikes of 1913/14

Excerpt from *THE STORY OF DUNSWART IRON AND STEEL*

*"Benoni was a 5 year old mining township with corrugated iron houses, a plentiful supply of pubs to attract miners from the encircling gold mines, one government school and a promise of a few public buildings and a regular water supply. It boasted only a bakery, two printing shops, a plumbers and *saddler's establishment, but no industrial undertakings whatsoever when two young engineers arrived to found what would eventually be the DI & S W (Dunswart Iron & Steel Works) and thus set Benoni on the way to becoming one of South Africa's most important manufacturing centres."*

*ED: *The saddler was Morris Nestadt's father, Jacob. Morris Nestadt held much influence in Benoni municipal affairs and was mayor several times and partnered with George Rennie in the estate-agent business. The book 'One Man and His Town' provides an interesting biography.*

1916 Market Hall built, P109 HOB



St Andrews Presbyterian Church, established 1910 (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay/Leslie Johnson)

Mayors

0907/08 R. Dobson

0908/09 R. Dobson

1909/10 J. M. Davidson. *ED: He was famous for building the first house in Benoni on the corner of Park Str. & Howard Ave, later the site of the Jewish Synagogue.*

1910/11 H. T. Elliot. *ED: He was the agent for the Kleinfontein Estates and Township Co. as well as a member of the Rand Water Board.*

1911/12 J. R. Thom

1912/13 J. R. Thom

1913/14 G. Rennie. *ED: He was famous as a pioneer estate agent and Morris Nestadt later became his partner.*

1914/15 G. Rennie

1915/16 E. Miles-Sharpe

1916/17 J. E. lapping

Firsts

Mr. H. T. Elliot of Kleinfontein Estates and Township Company and Benoni Councillor/Mayor fame became the first owner of Motor car in Benoni which arrived around about the Second Anglo-Boer War.

First game of golf to be played was in 1903 on the north side of the Kleinfontein Dam with the first club (The Van Ryn Club) being formed in 1905.

The first meeting of the Council was on 2 December 1907

First Cinema shows were in October 1909 by a café owner on his premises

The first council tree planting programme was started in 1909. Trees were free to house-owners if they planted them in front of their stands.

Snowfall was recorded on 17 August 1909 fell for 44 hours

First location was opened in February 1912. This has now become Actonville.

The Benoni abattoir was built North of Railway Avenue in 1913. *{See [The Benoni Abattoir.](#)}*



The Abattoir built in 1913. This was to the North of Railway Street and the ruins still remain. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)

ED: For many years after its closure as an abattoir, it was used as a boxing gym and was famously used by Benoni's World Bantamweight Champion Vic Toweel who was the first South African to hold a world title.



The ruins of the abattoir, north of Railway Avenue.

First municipal transport system was inaugurated in 1916 and used revolutionary electric-battery powered busses. The 9 buses were replaced by petrol units in 1922.



*The earliest buses powered by batteries were notoriously inefficient. 1916.
(Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)*

2

1917 to 1926



View from the North across Laundry Dam (now Civic Lake) in the 1920's. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)

1917 to 1926 [{Return to Index}](#) [Chapter 2,](#)

This decade was a notably turbulent period of Benoni's history what with the Great War claiming many of our forefathers and polarizing citizens into those siding with the Germans and those with the Allied forces. Many returning Allied soldiers found that their previous jobs on the mines had now been filled by Afrikaners and that they weren't to get them back again either!

The dreadful Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1918 had also taken its toll, then, somewhat ominously, in 1921, The Communist Party of South Africa was established followed by the savage 1922 strike when deadly civil unrest took place and transformed Benoni's streets and most of the Reef into a veritable battlefield.

Political:

In the general election of 1924, Hertzog's National Party defeated the South African Party of Jan Smuts and formed a coalition government with the South African Labour Party, which became known as the Pact Government. In 1934, the National Party and the South African Party then merged to form the United Party, with Hertzog as Prime Minister and leader of the new party. He remained in power until 1937.

As prime minister, Hertzog introduced a wide range of social and economic measures which did much to improve conditions for working-class whites but they did not benefit

the majority of South Africans, who found themselves the targets of discriminatory labour laws that entrenched white supremacy in South Africa. A Labour Policy was pursued to replace black workers with whites, typically impoverished Afrikaners, the so-called 'Poor Burghers'. The Industrial Conciliation Act No 11 of 1924 created job reservation for whites while excluding blacks from membership of registered trade unions. The Minimum Wages Act No. 27 of 1925 bestowed upon the Minister for Labour the power to force employers to give preference to whites when hiring workers while the Mines and Works Amendment Act No. 25 of 1926 reinforced a colour bar in the mining industry, while excluding Indian miners from skilled jobs. In a sense, therefore, the discriminatory social and economic policies pursued by the Pact Government helped pave the way for the eventual establishment of the Apartheid state.

Hertzog was indeed a staunch republican who believed strongly in promoting the independence of the Union of South Africa from the British Empire. His government approved the Statute of Westminster in 1931 that effectively marked the legislative independence of the Union from the British, replaced Dutch as the second official language with Afrikaans in 1925, as well as instating a new national flag in 1928.

His stance on severing all ties with the British worried many, especially the 'Britishness' of Benonians, many of whom saw themselves being ousted from their former positions of perceived prestige and power.

Progress:

Many more Afrikaners started moving into town following the War and towards the end of this decade Benoni started to flourish again.

A fine shopping area was developed mainly along Market Avenue, (Princes Avenue) and the immediate environs. Many of the elegant old buildings remain complete with classically styled wrought and cast-iron work imported from the UK at the time although much of the period architecture is hidden behind contemporary facades.



Market Avenue, (now Princes Ave.) looking East, pre-1920's. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)

ED: The National Bank on the right (built in 1911 as the Natal Bank) moved to new premises on the corner of Rothsay Street in 1928. The triple-gables of the New hotel are visible on the left whilst the area later occupied by Gunners Arcade and then the Standard Bank is the vacant lot in front of the Castle Café Restaurant.

Civic activities

More substantial building structures were noted in 1917 which marked a change from the more usual wood-and-iron buildings that had predominated before. Western Extension West of Russell Street saw much building activity and on a far more elegant and grander style than had been seen before. Sadly this activity was badly curtailed following the '22 strike that caused a three-year depression.

The original swimming pool was opened in 1917 with the sexes initially prohibited from swimming together though this rule was rescinded a year later.

After the Boer-War, Brakpan expanded rapidly and following much grumbling debate about being "tied to the apron-strings of Benoni" became independent from Benoni and formed its own municipality in 1919. It was felt by most that virtually all municipal services had to be duplicated in both towns and also that the two were so far apart as to warrant separation.

The Great War brought about much activity towards the support of the boys at the front by means clothing and comfort goods although it was noted that the fervour started to wane after a while as the fear of a German victory set in. Only when the

tide truly turned did the disillusionment dissolve away once more into patriotic zeal with ecstatic home-coming ceremonies once it was all over.



The Steam-driven Fire Engine carried the Caledonian Pipers upon the declaration of peace in 1918. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay, B.SOMS)

In October of 1920, General Smuts, then the Prime Minister visited Benoni and during a speech at the Hotel Cecil he stated: "I am encouraged beyond measure to see the spirit of Benoni. Some of the most difficult passages of my life have been due to the turbulent people of this little place." Little did he know what further "turbulence" awaited him!

The large Mineworkers Hall was opened in 1920 allowing large functions to take place in town at last. (The town hall had not yet been built) But, the place became a veritable stronghold of the Unions and the hall was totally destroyed by aerial bombing and then burnt by troops during the '22 strike when it was seen to be the headquarters of the strikers. This was replaced by the now-defunct Lido theatre which, in turn has become (during the 2000-2010 decade) a Christian religious centre.

The previous disparity of numbers between males and females of marriageable age now swung towards a dominance of the fairer sex.

Jazz burst onto the scene shortly after the war and Jazz Carnival Dances become popular.

And then came the strike.....

The 1922 Strike



The price of gold was falling and many Rand gold mines were becoming unprofitable to run so the government took the step of discontinuing the “status quo” agreement whereby the ratio of White to Black underground staff would not exceed 2 to 21. This would involve the laying off about 1,400 Whites followed by a further 400 later on.

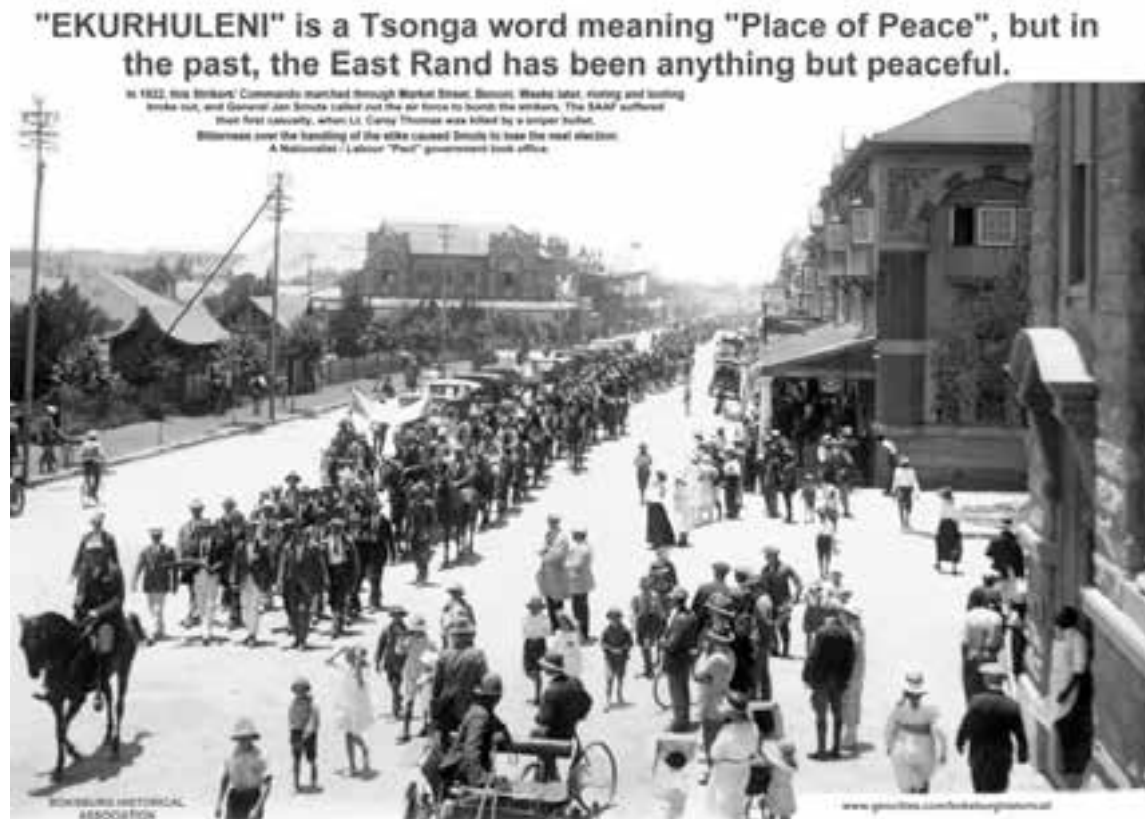
However, there was also the opinion amongst the White labourers that whilst they were reducing the staff on the mines and cutting salaries, the affluent Randlords were still living it up in their ostentatious clubs and magnificent houses that occupied the best areas of Johannesburg. These had become the very beacons of affluence and it became the familiar tale of “us, the poor and who actually do-the-work versus they, the ridiculously wealthy who feed off us, the worker.”

The predominantly White management labour force were very much following the British practices of forming trade-unions and unafraid of confrontation in order to gain what they considered to be fair labour practices. The trade unions had become exceedingly powerful over the years and once negotiations between the Chamber of Mines and these entities broke down, chaos resulted upon the declaration of another strike. Many took the opportunity to further their own political goals but the primary cause for the strike was one of sheer survival for the mineworkers. Gold-mining was the only reason that these people were living in Benoni so when their livelihoods were threatened they retaliated, in many cases, with a terrible and bitter vengeance.

Some claim that the strike was instigated by the Bolsheviks (later Communists) and indeed, throughout the strike, the ‘Red Flag’ was sung by strikers at any opportunity and red flags were enthusiastically waved! Some of the terrorist tactics employed, so they claimed, also originated from the ‘Reds’.

Despite their efforts, many strikers found themselves out of a job at the end of it all.

Several books have been written and chapters in 'Benoni. Son Of My Sorrow' are dedicated to the terrible strife, the savage beatings and assassinations of scabs, the shootings that took the lives of many and the wanton destruction of property that so badly affected the well-being of the peoples of Benoni and in fact the whole of the Reef so we will not go into great detail here but will instead insert several reminiscences of people who were there.



Strikers march in Market (Princes) Avenue in 1922, looking east (Courtesy The Boksburg Historical Association)

ED: To the immediate right is the still-existing Barclays Bank, originally the National Bank. The building partially obscuring the mine dump was the Gunners Arcade, later replaced by the Standard Bank. The 3-gabled building beyond it was the New Hotel.

Reminiscence — Mrs. Joan Aitken (nee Webster)

"When I was three years old my dad bought a plot on the Main Reef Road approximately 3 plots away from the Standard Brass Foundry. (Ed: Near Dunswart)

In 1922 there was a strike on the plots with the miners and we had a lot of Scottish soldiers fighting against the miners and we had to dive under the beds as bullets were flying across our plot and we had a lot of bullet holes in different parts of our house. My mother's very large pumpkins were blown to smithereens!"

{Link to The Oosrandse Nuus regarding this strike.} Excerpt from the Oosrandse Nuus, 1972 on [the 1922 Strike](#).

Reminiscence — The late Mrs. Paddy Antill. (1917-2013)

*“Born in 1917 at a nursing home in Market Avenue, (later re-named Princes Avenue following the Royal visit) Mrs Antill lived at number 19 Turvey Street. She recalls the slop carts that called two or three times a week there to pick up the used domestic water that was stored in a tank and when, following the 1922 strike, white men were paid two shillings and sixpence a day to dig trenches and carry out such labour as there were no other jobs. Mrs Antill recalls when *Northmead had but 4 houses and that she used to visit relatives who lived in one of them. The Aerodrome existed then in the adjacent Airfield and she remembers when Dr. Balton, a keen local aviator was tragically killed in an air-crash.*

She recalls fondly the locations of the old auctioneer shops, cinemas, (where, at the old Criterion, the movies were silent and a pianist added the necessary mood) the old fire station, (corner of Bedford, now Tom Jones street and Cranbourne Avenue) the ‘tin temple’ that was the original Benoni High school, (now where the Police station is situated) and still remembers the names of many of the shop owners and businessmen in town at the time.

In those days, all of the roads were un-tarred and had to be watered by water carts that were eagerly followed by adventurous kids getting their legs sprayed! In those early days there were eleven Hotels, namely the Cecil, White House, Regent, New, Bedford, Imperial, Benoni, Chimes (once also called the Transvaal,) Dunswart, Van Riebeeck, and the Rex hotels. The Benoni Club was for businessmen only.”

**ED: Northmead was laid out in 1912 but long remained an unpopular residential area due to it being considered too far away from town. At that time, the only access was from modern Snake Rd. or across the Middle Lake wall and later, when the railway was built, via Voortrekker & 7th Streets. The first house was only built in 1918.*

The Library was opened in 1923 overlooking Market Square with 3 000 books and 379 members in the first year. It was originally called the Carnegie Public Library in recognition to its sponsorship of 3000 Pounds by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

At the same time, the huge and almost palatial addition to the Municipal offices was opened fronting Market Avenue (Princes Ave.) and the Princes Gardens was laid out in the old Market Square.



The Municipal Offices in the 1920's taken from Rothsay Street. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)

ED: The site is now covered by the Benoni Plaza. On the left is the still-existing Barclays Bank and on the right, The Hotel Cecil, long since demolished.



*The Princes Gardens, old Market Square in the 1920's, now covered by the Benoni Plaza.
(Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)*

The 1918 Spanish Flu Epidemic.

This is presented in a detailed form in the link as it lists all of the helpers, medical staff, people who donated goods etc at the time and provides a fascinating glimpse of some of the Benoni residents of the time and in many cases, where they lived! It might tell you who used to live in your house!

{Ctrl Click to follow more detail on this subject} [THE 1918 SPANISH FLU EPIDEMIC.](#)

Reminiscence — Isaac Fanaroff

(ED: Courtesy of "Latvia SIG" a Jewish newsletter and is reproduced courtesy of Isaac's son Bernie. Isaac's father escaped from the oppressions of Latvia to South Africa and then sent for his family. They lived at 88 Amphill Avenue.)

Mr Fanaroff appears in the Spanish Flu epidemic list above, marked in red)

"1918. This year marked the end of the First World War on Armistice Day, 11 November at 11 a.m. It also marked the outbreak of the terrible epidemic of flu, which swept across the continents and killed millions. Benoni did not escape. Schools were closed and used as temporary hospitals. I went down with it and, I suspect the dyspepsia and indigestion I suffered from for many years was in large measure a legacy of that bout."

In 1926, the construction of the sports complex at Willowmoore Park was completed upon the pan area that used to exist there but which had been drained earlier in 1909.

In the late twenties Benoni took off again, becoming the most important town on the East Rand due to its rich gold mines. At the time, aside from Johannesburg, Benoni was the fastest and most dynamically developing Town in South Africa. Within a short 20 years, it had grown from a tin-town to a very desirable place to live!



Princes Avenue in the 1920's looking west. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)

Ed: The shop to the left of John Orr's was built in around 1905 by Harry Salter and Austin Childs and still stands today!(37 Princes Ave.)

Fines Building immediately beyond John Orr's has gained its tower (1919) and the building still exists today as shown below.



Fines Building today.



Victorian pillars in Princes Avenue.

Mining

The New Kleinfontein Gold Mining Company was nearing the end of its productive life (showing a loss in the strike year of '22) and closed in the following decade. It was later resurrected by George McKenzie (McKenzie Park fame) who bought it for a pittance but who realized considerable profits until closure in 1964.



The New Kleinfontein G.M.C. Offices in its heyday.

ED: This stood just South of Main Reef road, in an area now covered by modern McKenzie Park.

The Van Ryn Deep Gold mining Company however was in full stride and paying excellent dividends.

The New Modderfontein G.M.C. was also extremely rich in production and paid dividends up to 100% in 1921.

The Modderfontein B G.M.C. paid 110% that same year.

The pick of the lot however was Modderfontein Deep levels G.M.C. which paid dividends of 150% and rightly earned the title "The jewellery box of the Rand".

The Modderfontein East G.M.C. was born out of the union of the Rand Klip Mine and The Cloverfield Mine in 1917 but was never a great success (due to the low grade ore that it was producing) until the increase in the price of gold in the '30s saw it starting to make a profit.

Schools

Benoni West 1918. Modder B 1921. In 1917 the Hollands Medium School was opened in Harpur Ave (but changed in 1929 to Brandwag.)

Benoni Junior in 1918 at the Central School but moved in 1921 to wood and iron adjoining Willowmoore Park. St Dunstan's 1917.

*{Please also see:
A HISTORY OF BENONI SCHOOLS}*

Transport

Buses

During 1922, the 9 electric battery run buses that had been introduced in 1916 started to be phased out in favour of luxurious new petrol powered conveyances!



The new petrol powered bus, 1922. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)

Railways

On the 12th April 1923, the South African Railways line from Dunswart through the present Benoni station and on to Apex was opened and included a halt called New Kleinfontein located near the intersection of Lancaster and Range-view roads. The existing Kleinfontein Station that was located on the older Dunswart/Apex line (now closed) that wound further South through present day Actonville and Wattville was re-named Rangeview presumably to avoid confusion. The old Benoni station that used to exist on the corner of Mowbray Avenue and Bunyan Street near the modern Traffic Department was renamed from Benoni to Cranbourne. Of some interest was the fact that all labour was carried out by whites who had become unemployed following the strike.

Please also see [THE BENONI RAILWAY LINE & STATIONS](#)

1921: The Benoni City Times was established. See [THE HISTORY OF THE BENONI CITY TIMES](#)

1925: On the 22 June, H.R.H. The Prince of Wales paid a visit to Benoni, following which Market Square was renamed Prince's Square and Market Avenue renamed Prince's Avenue in his honour.

Trade and Industry

In the late 1920's the council, with great foresight, considering the impending demise of the Gold-mining industry undertook to encourage the development of industries and accordingly acquired land to the North of the railway line at Dunswart whilst the Railways themselves laid down sidings. One mistake they did make however was not to cater for Black townships to supply the labour and this oversight was to haunt them in later years!

The first concern to open was the 'East Reef Founders', subsequently changed to the 'Vulcan Engineering Company'. This was followed by the 'Eclipse Tube Mill Liners' concern. Both concerns essentially exist today.

Further development in the area brought employment to many and paved the way so that Benoni's continued growth become less dependant on gold-mining.

Sport

Willowmoore Park was opened in 1922 and named in honour of Councillor Arthur Moore who had taken a keen interest in its development. The willow trees planted years earlier added the prefix to the enchanting name!

Mayors

1917/18 J. E Lapping

1917/18 I. Kuper. He was notably the first Jewish Mayor to be elected.

1918/19 T. Jones

1919/20 R. B. Waterson

1920/21 W. T O'Reilly-Merry

1921/22 W. H. Balfour.

1922/23 C. A. Rickard

1923/24 J. W. B Craggs

1924/25 G. Rennie

1925/26 E. Miles-Sharpe.

Need to Elaborate on Madely, Waterson, Rennie, Nestadt.



George Rennie & Co. (Courtesy Paul Botes)

Postal Services

Post offices established

Putfontein 1923

Petit 1922

Brentwood 1926

Firsts

First municipal transport system was inaugurated in 1916 and used revolutionary electric buses. These were replaced by petrol-engined buses in 1922.

First Abattoir was expanded in 1917.

First revolt by rate payers was in 1917 when the community of Brakpan presented a petition of 400 names demanding to be freed from the Benoni Municipality. This was granted in 1919.

First House built in Northmead was in 1918

First death recorded in the Benoni City Times was of Mr. James Smith who collided violently with a horse and cart while riding his motor-bicycle in 1921.

First wedding recorded in the Benoni City Times was between Mr. H. Perry & Miss Florence Archibald in 1921.

First Library was opened in 1923 with 3 000 books and 379 members in the first year.

First croquet club was formed in 1924 and first court opened in 1925 at the Walmesly Park complex.

3

1927 to 1936

1927 to 1936:

A period of decided downs and ups!

Political:

Following the First World War, the Great Depression had a pronounced economic and political effect on South Africa, as it did on most nations at the time. As world trade slumped, demand for South African agricultural and mineral exports fell drastically and also led to political upheavals.

The sudden lack of demand destroyed prices on produce that was profitable to many Afrikaner farmers. A large portion of the agricultural industry was unable to repay mortgages on their over-capitalized farms and the National Party found itself losing favour with one of its largest constituencies—conservative, rural Boers.

South Africa was saved from a complete collapse by the gold mining industry as the price of gold rose rapidly. Growing gold exports compensated somewhat for the loss of other trade revenue; however, like the situation with the Boers, the National party lost support as the weak economy forced the gold corporations to replace white labourers with lower-paid blacks.

In 1933, the coalition government between Jan Smuts and Hertzog floated the South African pound and removed it from the Gold standard thus making exports more attractive and enabling a reduction in taxation.

Things were looking up again in Golden Benoni!



*Kempston Avenue house,
1927. (Courtesy Paul Botes)*

*Ed: The building still stands
opposite the Benoni Central
Swimming Pool with the roof
now painted green.*



The Kleinfontein mine-dump beyond Kleinfontein Dam in the late 1920's.

Progress:

Windsor Mansions, the first block of flats in Benoni was built in Princes Avenue, west of Bunyan street in 1928.

In 1930, water-borne sewerage was being reticulated throughout the town.

1932: The Great depression prevailed and building activities were very slow. Once off the Gold standard, things recovered.

1934: Prince George visited Benoni.

The new town hall proposed in Curtis Park was completed in 1937.

Traffic lights were erected at intersections in Voortrekker, Ampthill, Princes Russell, Park, Harpur, and Kimbolton.

Personalities

(22 May 1910 – 7 July 2001) Molly Lamont was born in Boksburg and attended St. Dustan's school in nearby Benoni. After winning a talent competition in the local 'Outspan' magazine, she began her career in British films in 1930 but for several years played small, often un-credited roles. Her roles began to improve by the mid-1930s, whilst resident in London but she later moved to Hollywood where she continued playing roles such as Cary Grant's fiancée in 'The Awful Truth' (1937). Her other appearances include such popular films as 'The White Cliffs of Dover' and 'Mr. Skeffington.' (both 1944).

She retired from acting in 1951 with more than fifty films to her credit. Molly died on 7 July 2001 in Brentwood, Los Angeles, California, USA.

Courtesy Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molly_Lamont



Middle dam in the 1930's (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)

Ed: This was long before the N12 was built in the late 60's right where the cows were grazing! The dam wall was lowered and reconstructed with a concrete slipway to allow construction of the highway and tons of rock was carted in to raise the road-level above the water. Many houses in old Farrarmere along Windermere drive lost their front lawns or were demolished due to the encroachment of the highway. It was Clr. Morrie Nestadts dream to have the highway running through Benoni in order to promote and allow easy access to the town instead of it bypassing it completely.

Note also that the railway line was not yet built near the far shore but ran to Cranbourne station situated approximately where the mast rises, behind and to the left of the dam wall.

**St Dunstan's,
Charlston,
Bioscope.**



Aerial view of Western Benoni in the 1930's. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)

Notes:

- 3) Taken from above South-east of the new station, looking North-west.
- 4) Homestead Dam and Middle lake (the latter, much larger then, until lowered to allow the building of the highway.) are visible, top-right.
- 5) To the left-top, within the square of trees is now part of the Benoni Lake Golf Club and Lakefield Avenue to its right is also bordered with trees.
- 6) To the top-right is the Kleinfontein farm alongside Homestead dam, surrounded by trees.
- 7) Farrarmere is yet to be established.
- 8) The road running lower to top right is Turvey Street whilst that behind the railway line which is curving to the right is Harpur Avenue.



Princes Building on the corner of Tom Jones Street and Princes Avenue, restored in 2013, originally built in 1929.



*Princes Avenue in the 1930's showing the gabled building built in 1916 on the right (still standing) followed by the National (Barclays) Bank (still standing) and the Hotel Cecil on the corner of Rothsay Street. In the far distance is the domed-tower of John Orrs.
(Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)*



*Taken from the old Municipal building looking east down Princes Avenue.
(Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay.)*

Ed: Gunners arcade with its imposing fascade is on the left, later to be demolished and replaced by the Standard Bank.

4

1937 to 1946

1937 to 1946: [{Return to Index}](#) **Chapter 4,**

A very volatile decade awaited Benonians during this time. The Second World War, although not held on the doorstep of The Union of South Africa insinuated far-reaching moral and political consequences had the Germans won! There were bubblings of support for the Hitler regime within the stalwart Boers, many of whom saw this war as a way to finally rid themselves of the hated British. The Germans had long supported their opposition to British Colonialism after all!

The SAAF established the 4 Air School in Benoni in November 1940, using mainly Tiger-Moths to train the pilots. This was located to the North of Hospital Road in modern-day Northmead Extension 4 and it was then used as a civilian airfield after 1945 until Jan Smuts airport was built in around 1948. Some hangers are still used today by the SAPS Technical College as are many of the old air-force trainee-quarters in Government Village. (Now Farrarmere Gardens)

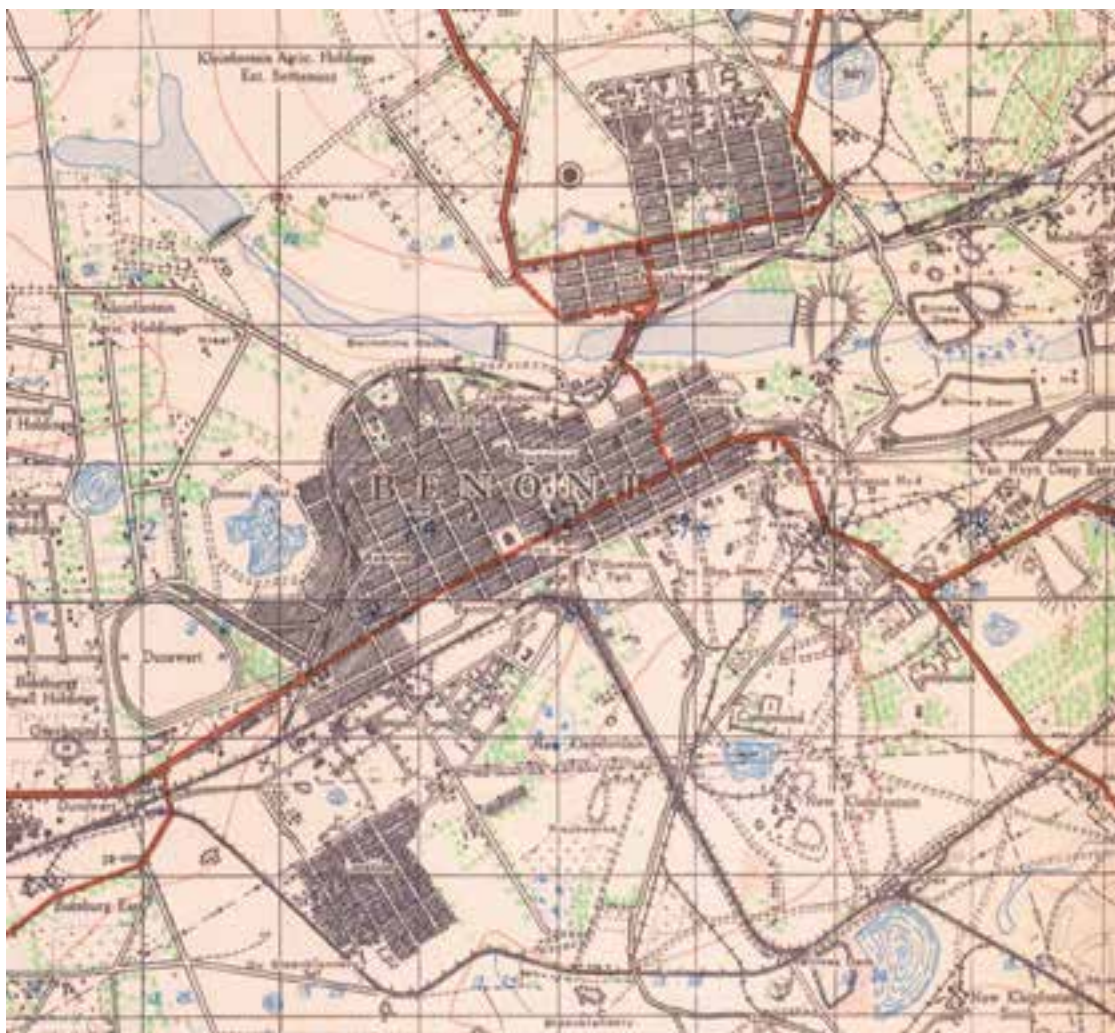
Political:

During September, 1939, Hertzog, the leader of the Nationalist Party, and then current Prime Minister put his case to the National Assembly for South Africa to remain neutral in the Second World War against Jan Smuts who supported a commonwealth alliance, however Smuts was shortly thereafter elected Prime Minister for a second time and quickly put the vote to The National Assembly on the disputed motion. Smuts won and on the 6th of September, the Union of South Africa declared war on Germany.

This had obvious affects on the citizens of Benoni who once again waved goodbye to loved ones going off to war: many who wouldn't return.

Progress:

Farrarmere was laid out to the West of Northmead and along the northern shores of Middle lake in about 1940. The first house built here was reportedly at number 72 Derwent Avenue.



Map 7: Benoni by the late 1930s (Courtesy Peter Wood)

Notes:

- 1) Cranbourne station still exists and the railway line has not yet been diverted across to the northern shore of Civic Lake. Here it still crosses the Blesbokspruit at Voortrekker Road.
- 2) Amongst others, neither Farrarmere suburb nor the Benoni Lake Golf Club had yet been laid out.
- 3) The Airfield is clearly shown where Airfield suburb now exists, the latter developed circa 1948.
- 4) The Kleinfontein Homestead is shown adjacent to the Homestead Lake wall.
- 5) The Willowmoore Pan has gone, drained in 1909 and Willowmoore Park has been built. (1926)
- 6) Tom Jones and Bunyan streets not yet extended across the Blesbokspruit nor does the N12 exist.
- 7) The Benoni Power Station Ash heap at the Eastern end of Wilstead Ave is shown.
- 8) The Dunswart Horse Racing Circuit has been established. (1907) Notice how the circuit ran around the Dunswart pan, still existing there today.
- 9) The 'Location' (1912) towards the bottom left has now become Actonville. It was originally split into three to cater for Blacks, Indians and Coloureds. The Blacks later moved voluntarily en-masse to the Apex squatter camp.
- 10) The Benoni Country Club, shown top right was originally called the Van Ryn Golf Course. (Built 1911, renamed 1952.)
- 11) Atlas Rd skirts around Herti pan on the far left. Today it follows a direct route.



An unknown Hotel (right) and Hotel Cecil in Rothsay Street in the 1940's.

Progress:

1937: First female Mayor, Mrs Hills was elected.

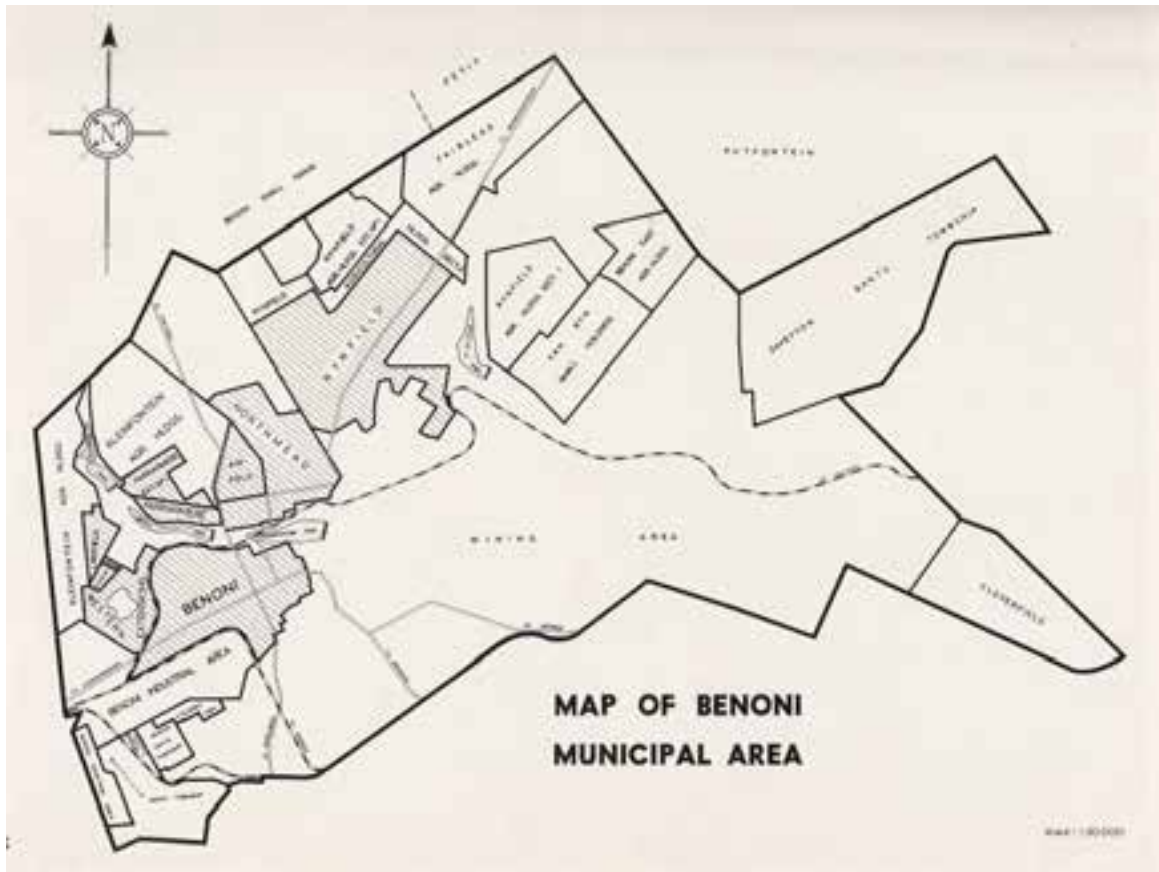


The old White House Hotel in Cranbourne Avenue today, beautifully renovated.

Ed: Although this building is similar in style to the unknown hotel shown in the previous photograph, they are in different streets so are not the same building.

5

1947 to 1956



Map 9: Benoni Municipal Area circa 1955. (Courtesy Peter Wood)

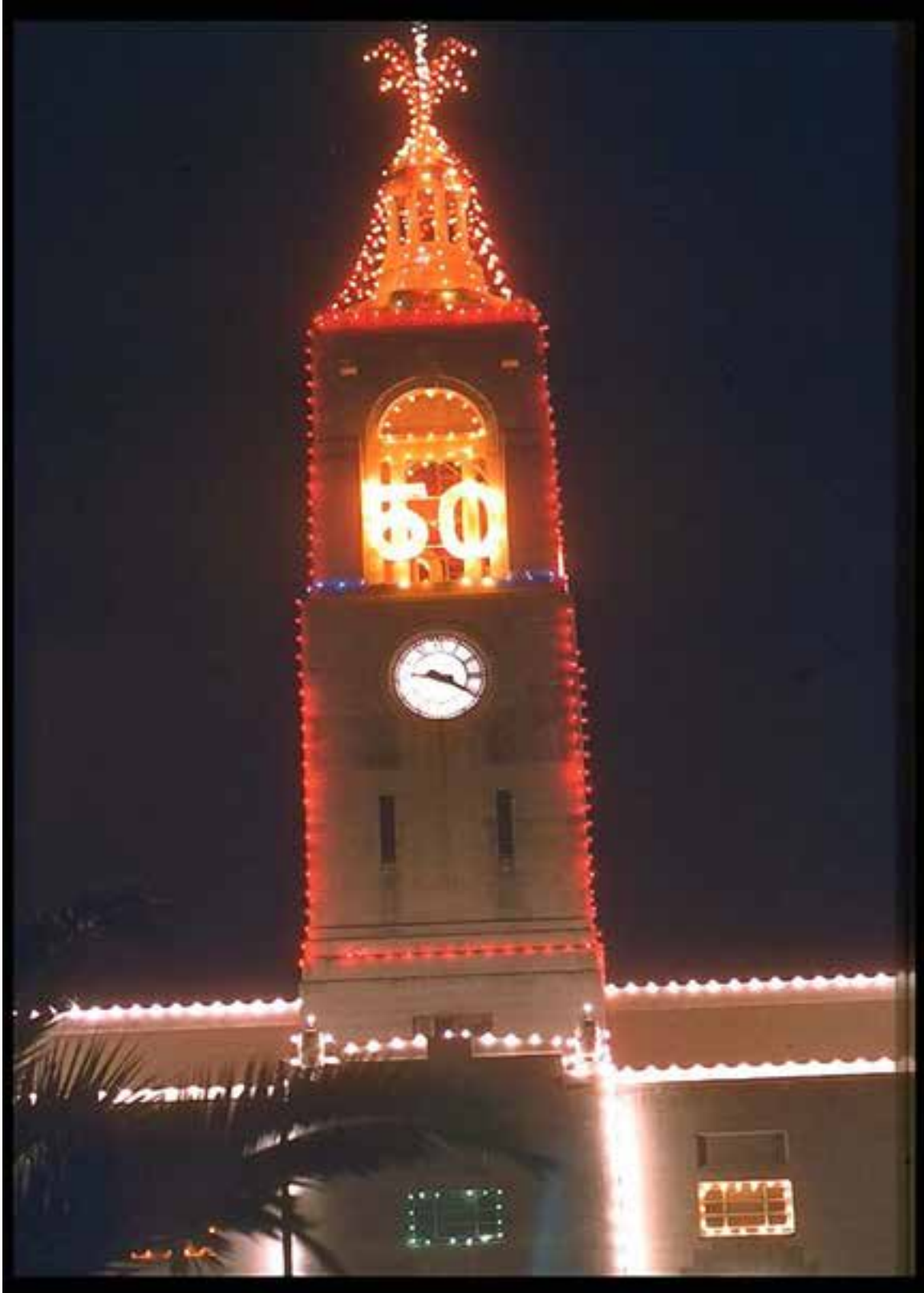
Notes:

- 1) Daveyton Township has been established. (1955)
- 2) The railway line heading East loops into where modern Morehill suburb stands. This was to serve the Van Ryn station, existent at the time.
- 3) Farrarmere and Northmead extension and McKenzie-park do not exist yet.



The Barclays bank circa 1950 was built here in 1918. It is still there on the corner of Princes Ave and Rothsay Str. It was originally the 'National Bank' but became Barclays in 1928.

ED: Note the building with the twin gables, built in 1916, still existing today and is currently under restoration. (2013)



*The Benoni Town Hall splendidly bedecked in lights for the 50th municipal anniversary 1957.
(Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)*

6

1957 to 1966



Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Names: Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus Mpilo Desmond

Born: 7 October 1931, Klerksdorp, Western Transvaal (now North West Province)

In summary: Outspoken critic of apartheid, teacher, author, lecturer, Nobel Prize winner, former Archbishop of Cape Town, Archbishop Emeritus of South Africa

He was ordained as a deacon in December 1960 at St Mary's Cathedral, Johannesburg and took up his first curacy at St Albans Church in Benoni location.

BATONS AND BARE HEADS: THE STRIKE AT AMATO TEXTILE, FEBRUARY 1958

MK Sabotage, 1962

This photograph was part of a sequence shot by a Rand Daily Mail photographer, two of which were published in the and Daily Mail of 29 September 1962 and captioned: "Twelve hours after saboteurs dynamited an Eskom pylon yesterday between Benoni and Bapsfontein, police were still checking at the scene of the explosion. Two explosive charges were placed near the concrete bases of the pylon".



7

1967 to 1976

1968: Three new townships were planned in Lakefield ext 12, and Benoni ext 20 & 21 and which would become the new part of Farrarmere.

The N12 Highway was under construction, and, with it running through Benoni, was expected to boost the town's development. Lakefield Ave, Tom Jones Str. and Voortrekker Str. were being modified to cater for access to the highway.

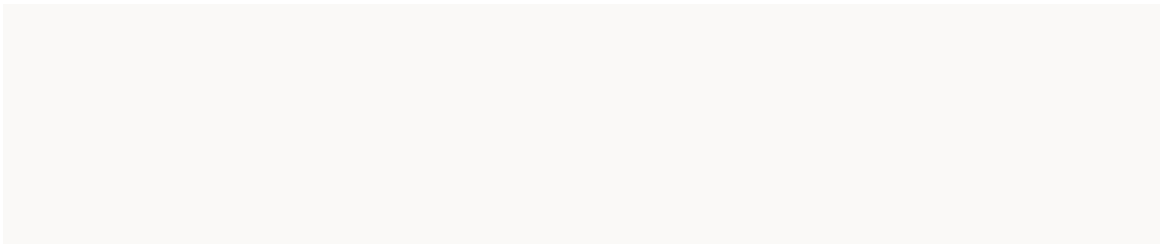
The New Benoni High School in Northmead was planned as well as new buildings for Baanbreker, Verkenner and Benoni South schools.

8

1977 to 1986

9

1987 to 1996



Bomb in Benoni Wimpy kills Mary

Date: 30 July, 1988

Mary-Anne D'Oliveira Netto Serrano (21) was killed in a bomb explosion in the Wimpy Bar at the Benoni Plaza, Benoni on the East-Rand. About sixty people were injured, of whom nine seriously. Four men, Tebogo Kebotlhale, Molwedi Mokoena, Phumzile Sigasa and Elgas Mabore Ndhlovu who declared themselves as ANC members, applied for amnesty to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for the bombing in Benoni and an ambush outside Lindela Hostel in Katlehong in 1988. They alleged that they had targeted the Wimpy, because they believed it was a regular meeting place of police officers. The four men were granted amnesty in 1999.

Sources

Wallis, F. (2000). Nuusdagboek: feite en fratse oor 1000 jaar, Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau. The Star, 30 July 2004. Milestones.

10

1997 to 2006

11

Photo Gallery by decade

12

Lists of community efforts.

Pans conservation: <http://www.sabirding.co.za/birdspot/050104.asp>

Bunny park:

Tales and Stories

THE BENONI RAILWAY LINE & STATIONS

The History of the 3 railway routes in Benoni are briefly as follows:

(Courtesy Peter Wood, written by his father D.G. Wood)

{Return to Main}

Railways

First Line

The extension of the Rand Tram from Boksburg to Springs was opened on 13 October 1890 and the first station towards Springs was the original Brakpan which was situated between present day APEX and ANZAC, near the north corner of the golf course.

In the early 1920s, Boksburg was renamed Boksburg East while Vogelfontein became BOKSBURG.

After the Anglo Boer War, a station was opened to the South of Benoni in order to serve the private sidings to the mines, to the north and the APEX stone quarry to the South in the Leeuwan. This station was called BENONI JUNCTION. (NOW KLEINFONTEIN)



A CSAR train, at Benoni Junction. This appears to be a Rand-Tram engine. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay/Benoni City Times)

The line is in its original position in the Benoni area. It was a single line then but is now doubled and electrified. *(ED: This line, between Dunswart and Apex is now closed.)*

The Rand Tram was a three foot six inch railway and not a tram and had nothing to do with the electric (battery) busses which the Benoni municipality rand very many years later.

On 26 December 1906 the Apex-Witbank line was opened but it is probable that the Apex-Geduld section was already in use by then. APEX was originally known as BRAKPAN JUNCTION and the first station beyond it was MODDER DEEP. This name was later changed to DEEP LEVELS because the mine labourers who used it in large numbers insisted on calling it that. BRAKPAN JUNCTION became APEX when the present-day Brakpan was opened.

In the mid-1900s a HALT was opened to the South of present-day Dunswart Iron Works where the platform for unloading racehorses still exists. This is referred to as 'RACE HALT' in the official programme for the inaugural meeting of the race club on page 57 of 'THE HISTORY OF BENONI.'

When it was decided to build a new line to the north side of Benoni, DUNSWART was made the JUNCTION for the line and the Race Halt became part of its layout.



A New Kleinfontein Mine train ferries workers to Kleinfontein Station on the Kleinfontein spur, here crossing the present day Benoni-Apex line near Lancaster/Range-view roads.(1965) (Courtesy Peter Wood)

All kinds of rumours continue to circulate as to the intentions of the C.S.A.R. with regard to providing railway accommodation for Benoni. We regret we can give nothing authentic. It is stated that the negotiations of the C.S.A.R. with the mines as to acquiring the branch line to New Kleinfontein have fallen through owing to the C.S.A.R. refusing to pay the price asked by the mines for the siding already constructed. The idea was that, should the siding be acquired, a motor train would be periodically run to near the New Kleinfontein offices, with one or two halts in proximity to the township. Then another report is to the effect that the present Benoni Junction Station and Brakpan Station are to be abolished altogether, and a new station made at the junction of the Springs and Witbank lines. This again lacks authentication, as does also the report that Race Halt is to be made into a station and a branch line run across the veld to the township. Yet the need of a railway was never more pressing.

The whole question is encompassed with difficulties. Whatever the C.S.A.R. eventually contemplate doing we trust they will first take the Town Council into their confidence. A false move may prove fatal to the future of the township. One scheme which finds favour with the inhabitants is that the Witbank line be diverted to pass by the township and join the main line at Race Halt. It is said the scheme has the approval of the railway authorities, but we cannot learn that the Railway Committee have ever seriously considered the suggestion. The drawback from the standpoint of Benoni to a new junction further east, where the Witbank line joins the main eastern line, is that a township at the point would probably follow. Seeing that population always gravitates towards a station, this might very well mean the ruin of the present township and the loss of thousands of pounds to those who have purchased stands in the belief that no more townships will be sold in the area. We think the Council might very well appoint a Standing Committee to keep an eye on the matter, and, if possible, formulate some scheme to lay before the C.S.A.R. It may be too late if matters are delayed until the C.S.A.R. propound their own scheme.

The second line {Return to [The Benoni Power Station](#)}.}

(Courtesy Peter Wood.)

The second line was started from Dunswart in the late 1900s and was opened to a new Benoni Line on 4 July 1910. This station was just north of the Traffic Departments test ground and the goods yard was on the east side of Tom Jones Street where the Municipal Offices are. The burnt Goods railway shacks shows on page 227 of Benoni Son of My Sorrow, are in this goods yard. (I think the date is 1913 and not 1922 as stated).

(ED: Mr Wood is correct because on P160 of B.SOMS, it states that "the mob burned the goods section of the railway station...", this during the 1913 strike and only Cranbourne station existed at that time.)



The original 'Benoni Station' in Cranbourne opened in 1910, later renamed 'Cranbourne Station' when the new Benoni Station was opened in Harpur Ave in 1923. The former was later demolished and the site is now covered by the Lakeside Mall/ Traffic Department/Library complex.

There was a halt near the footbridge in Victoria Avenue known as "Avenue Halt"

A line was opened from Welgedachts to Modder B (Known then as New Modderfontein) on 2 July 1911 and the report made by Sir R.T. PRICE quoted on page 85 of the '**HISTORY OF BENONI**' refers to the closing of the gap between Modder B and the New Benoni Station.

The line closing this gap was opened on 25 May 1914. There were three stations on it:

- *Northmead Station*

- *Van Ryn Station*
- *Cloverdene Station*

The date of 30 March 1912 given in the 'HISTORY OF BENONI' appears to be wrong because the dates I quote are from the 1960-61 Report of the General Manager of the SA Railways.

When the new BENONI STATION was opened, BENONI JUNCTION was renamed KLEINFONTEIN JUNCTION.

The Third line

The third railway was built from Dunswart to the present BENONI and onto APEX with a halt called NEW KLEINFONTEIN, between the latter stations. It was opened on 12 April 1923 and as a schoolboy I rode in the first train, which smashed a bottle of wine hanging under the footbridge as it arrived from Dunswart and back to BENONI.



*Built in 1922 but opened in 1923, the New Benoni Station in Harpur Ave. which still exists.
(Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)*



A Steam engine at the new Benoni station, probably in the 1960's because this line was electrified in 1957 and the overhead cables are shown here. (Courtesy Glynis Millett-Clay)

With the opening of this line, the Kleinfontein Station was renamed RANGEVIEW STATION. This was closed down when the mine siding was closed in 1970.

At the same time, in 1923 the Benoni Station near the TRAFFIC GROUND was renamed CRANBOURNE STATION.

The present DUNSWART-BENONI-APEX line has not been altered except that in 1933 the section from Benoni to Apex was doubled. The DUNSWART-MODDER B has been altered by being re-graded from the OLD RACE HALT to near CRANBOURNE STATION from where it was deviated to the present NORTHMEAD STATION. This was done to eliminate level-crossings on the Main Reef Road, Woburn Avenue, Lanyon Road and Tom Jones Street.

In the process, CRANBOURNE STATION disappeared as did the road subway at VOORTREKKER STREET. The latter was replaced by **BUXTON STREET BRIDGE**.

While this work was on the go, it was decided to double and electrify the line to ALLIANCE HALT (a halt beyond MODDER B) and as a result the line was straightened out at two places and shortened by 1 ¼ miles.

In the early 1950s the mixed passenger service from DUNSWART to ALLIANCE HALT had been suspended and the various halts and stations were not in use except that VAN RYN STATION was opened as a **TRAINS WORKING** station and MODDER B (opened for that purpose in 1929) still operated.

The other halts were demolished by the doubling work and the present NORTHMEAD STATION took the place of the original halt of that name which was about 1km towards VAN RYN STATION

The photo of the old station could be BENONI JUNCTION, but the buildings is of wood and iron and is a type which was used by the C.SAR at a number of places, for e.g. between APEX AND WITBANK and also between SPRINGS and BREYTON.

A number of these old buildings are still in use. That at KINROSS is one that is although it has had some additions.

In the last 30 or so years, the building at RANGEVIEW STATION was a small brick building.

The locomotive in the picture is either a 40 or 46t Z.A.S.M. type. The New Kleinfontein Gold Mining Company was using one on the Sidings No 10 from RANGEVIEW STATION when it closed down in Benoni.

I think, Beatrice O CALLIHAN is wrong in her belief that the photo is of the OLD BENONI STATION (renamed CRANBOURNE STATION) because the station building at CRANBOURNE STATION was always a stone building on a platform (the photo is a building at formation level as well as being wood and iron).

It was not originally intended to have a line from ALLIANCE HALT to DAVEYTON because of the very shallow undermining to the north of the through line. However, I had to call on Mr. JEWEL, last manager of the MODDER B Gold Mining Company and saw his plan of the undermining and noted that there was a volcanic dyke from ALLIANCE HALT to the north and so submitted a report recommending that a line could be provided and this was accepted.

The line was then agreed to and built as a double electrified line. It was opened on 1 April 1957 and I took an 8mm at the joint inspection before the opening was arranged. Trains had been running for some time from DUNSWART to ALLIANCE HALT using steam to start with, before this date.

I also suggested at one of the joint meetings with the BENONI MUNICIPALITY that a halt be provided near DUNSWART Iron Works because there were then 6 000 to 8 000 blacks working in the area. When this was agreed, it was given the name AVENUE HALT although it is some distance from the original halt of that name.

By D. G. Wood

Benoni City Times dated 12 September 1980.

Note

D. G. Wood was Peter Wood's father. Peter Wood has kindly submitted substantial material towards this project.

SOME NOTES ON EAST RAND RAILWAYS

- Notes compiled by George Mills, Benoni, after interview with G.D. Wood on 1/03/1994

PREPARED BY G. D. WOOD

Retired inspecting engineer (civil) SAR.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THESE NOTES, THE EAST RAND IS TAKEN AS THE AREA FROM THE EAST SIDE OF GERMISTON TO SPRINGS AND RAILWAYS INCLUDE PRIVATE SIDINGS AND SIMILAR TRACKS.

The first railways were established by private companies in the cape from cape town to wellington (1863); at Port Alfred (mid 1850s) and in natal (in 1863) and were all laid to the British standard rail gauge of 4 ft. 8 1/2 inches and the moving structure gauge (which limits the maximum size of vehicles on the track) was also that of the British railways.

The cape and natal governments retained the rights to take over the railways. The cape government exercised this right in 1876 and the natal government followed suit.

It is interesting to note that the first railways were built using labourers imported from the UK and as late as 1872 a shipload of 2 000 white men arrived in the cape at a cost of £26 000. This gives the lie to the story that all the labour work was done by blacks.

With the discovery of diamonds in the cape and coal in natal, the need to extend the railways arose but generally speaking there was very little development inland to sustain a rail network. In addition the governments were unable to afford the work so ways were investigated to find a method of reducing costs.

This led to the suggestion that the rail gauge (the width apart of the inner edges of the rails forming the track) be reduced. After a parliamentary enquiry in the cape it was decided to adopt a gauge of 3 feet 6 inches and the natal government also adopted this gauge.

In the cape a third rail was laid from cape town to wellington to permit the running of both broad and narrow gauge trains which was done until 1881 when the broad gauge was done away with. In natal there was very little broad gauge track and this was also done away with.

The original 4ft 8½in gauge locomotives used in the cape and natal are on display at Cape Town and Durban stations.

The original rails were a "v" type on pot sleepers with metal spacing bars but in due course the present log rails were introduced and modified to give the "oak tree" cross section of the present day SAR type (designed to resist the force in the rib and with a larger crown to give longer wear to extend the period between re-railing of the track. This design was later copied by the U.S.A. and other overseas countries.

In the period of the extension of the rail network inland not only was traffic light but the cost of earthworks was relatively expensive as compared with the cost of the track components - especially the steel. This led to track layouts being designed to reduce earthworks to the minimum even at the expense of longer track routes. This gave rise to the popular belief that contractors were paid by the mile of track they built and so they took a longer route.

This method of track layout also gave a quicker building programme as cutting particularly the time with hand drilling of explosive holes and the use of gunpowder. Speed was required to get to the diamond fields or gold fields as quickly as possible.

When gold was found on the Witwatersrand {return to main} **There were no railways in the S.A. Republic (Transvaal)** and there was resistance to the building of railways by the local inhabitants. However, the welfare of the gold mines established first around Johannesburg and to the west depended on a reliable source of fuel for the boilers and in the reduction plants and for hoisting from underground.

Coal had been discovered between present day Boksburg east and Dunswart stations and between Anzac and springs at about the same time as gold was discovered on the reef.

The Transvaal republic government gave a concession to the Nederlands Zuid-Afrikaanse Spoorweg Maatskappy (NZASM, usually called the ZASM) to build railways in the Transvaal and the first to be completed was from Braamfontein to Boksburg (now Boksburg East) on 17th March, 1890 and to Springs on 13th October, 1890, built to the 3 feet 6 inches gauge and was called the rand tram to cope with the opposition.

The first private siding (a private railway connected to a public railway) was opened at the original Brakpan station (between present day apex and Anzac stations) in December, 1890 for the **s.a. coal corporation**. Third party rights were granted on this private siding in 1896 to the **central electrical works** who built the first power station on a coal field in that area to the east of the rand tram.

The first railway was a single line from Germiston (then called Elandsfontein) to springs and a double line between Germiston and Braamfontein.

It is on record that the price of coal dropped by £2 per ton when the rand tram started operating to Johannesburg (one can see why there was opposition to a railway from transport riders) and it was necessary at times to cancel passenger trains in order to run extra coal trains from the East Rand. The Germiston - Springs section of the rand tram was doubled to apex in 1895 and to springs in 1905. The latter extension was done with white labourers.

A third track was opened as follows:

- *Germiston - Angelo in 1936*
- *East Rand - Boksburg East in 1912*
- *Boksburg East - Dunswart in 1936*

A fourth track was opened as follows:

East Rand - Boksburg East in 1938. At a later date (?) it was extended to Dunswart.

The tracks were electrified to Dunswart (all via Benoni - New Kleinfontein Apex) in 1937 and via Rangeview to apex later.

When the rand tram was first built it followed a minimum earthworks route and there were fewer stations than were provided later. A number of the stations also had other names. The new names generally arose after the Boer war and in many cases were to suit altered conditions in the surrounding area. The rail layouts were also different at that stage.

In addition Benoni and Brakpan as towns or municipalities did not exist. When they came into being in the late 1910s the area was under one municipal control (Boksburg) until first Benoni became a municipality in 1907, then later Brakpan become independent of Benoni in 1919.

On the East Rand the rand tram originally ran to the north after leaving Germiston area in an arc up to about present day Knights station on the Pretoria line and came back to the present route at Delmore. It passed over what later became a shaft and dump of the Wits Deep gold mine.

Then east of present day Boksburg east station the line ran towards the south in an arc to miss the coal mines and came back to the present layout near Dunswart station (which then did not exist). This track passed over where the large grain stores are situated in Lever Brothers factory today.

In 1905 the track between Germiston and Delmore was deviated over the present day high embankment and in 1896 when the coal mines had closed the ZASM straightened out the tracks towards Dunswart east of Boksburg east station. In doing so they passed over an area where a 20 feet thick coal seam had been mined out 60 feet below the surface to the top of the coal. In the 1950s it was necessary for the SAR (South African Railways) to re-claim this area to make the track safe at a cost of over r100,000 - a sum I think more than that paid for all the coal mined at Boksburg.

The tracks at Schapensrust station had to be deviated in 1909 in order to move them away from an undermined coal area.

The East Rand stations on the rand tram at the time of opening the line were:-

Halfweg / Halfway - now Delmore

Heidelberg road - Angelo (the Heidelberg -Pretoria Road crossed the track at the station. Angelo was a gold mine)

East Rand - the same (or Oosrand)

Vogelfontein - now Boksburg (nearest station to Boksburg Lake -a very popular holiday place in the early days. Visitors took the train to Boksburg station and found they had a long walk back to the lake. In 1924 the SAR changed the name of Vogelfontein to Boksburg and then changed the name of **Boksburg** to **Boksburg East**.

Boksburg – re-named Boksburg East in 1924.

Dunswart did not exist. It arose because of the need for a connection for the Benoni race track in the early 1900s and later as a take off point for the new line to the station in Benoni (the second Benoni station which later became Cranbourne)

Benoni junction - the first Benoni, later called Kleinfontein and lastly Rangeview - now closed. This was required to serve private sidings for new Kleinfontein and other gold

mines to the north and apex quarry to the south. Did not exist on Rand Tram Line at opening.

Apex - did not exist at opening. Later needed as junction to serve the line to Witbank.

Brakpan - the original site was about halfway between present apex and Anzac stations. In 1912 when the town of Brakpan was built the present day Brakpan station was built. **Old Brakpan** had served as the first passenger station for Benoni town. There was a store and hotel near the station. In the 1920s the old station building and quarters were used by the platelayer (a Scot named McLeod) and his gang of white labourers.

Schapensrust - it served a coal mine.

New era - did not then exist. Later provided to serve a gold mine.

Pollock Park - did not then exist. Provided later to serve a gold mine and part of springs.

Springs - provided to serve a coal mine run by the ZASM. This coal mine had to be reclaimed in part in 1939 to permit the building of the present day springs station and goods yard.

In December??? A single railway line was opened from apex to Witbank. It was doubled from apex - Geduld in 1931 and to Welgedachts in 1936. It was electrified from apex Welgedachts in June 1937.

In 1905 a single railway was built from Springs to Breyten.

A single line was opened from Dunswart to Benoni (second station with that name) in July 1910 and from there to Modderbee in May 1914 and from Welgedachts to Modderbee in July 1911.

A double line was opened from Dunswart to Benoni (third and present day station) in April 1923 and a single line from there via **new Kleinfontein** to **apex** on the same date. On that date Kleinfontein (originally Benoni junction then Benoni) on the rand tram line became Rangeview and the second Benoni station became Cranbourne. The resident engineer on this contract was jimmy Bateman and white labourers were used.

(ED: Jimmy Bateman was an uncle by marriage of G. D. Wood – Bateman was married to one of the sisters of G. D. Wood's mother.)

In 1935 the section Benoni - new Kleinfontein - apex on to Springs line was doubled and it was electrified in May 1937.

On the apex - Welgedachts railway there were stations:-

Modder deep (to serve that mine) which later was changed to **deep levels** the name given to it by the mine labourers (from the mine name **Modderfontein deep levels** gold mine).

Modrea - to serve private sidings for state mines and the V.F.P. (Victoria Falls) power station. The mining company paid part of the cost of providing it.

North shaft - a halt to serve the northern area of state mines and adjacent mines; a shaft known by that name.

Dersley - a halt provided to serve the quarters of the Geduld gold mine.

Geduld - a station to serve originally the Geduld gold mine and the Welgedachts coal mine and afterwards the Modder East gold mine, east Geduld gold mine and then SAPPI (South African pulp and paper industries) paper mill and the union corporation platinum refinery.

Welgedachts - a station provided to serve the large coal mine which provided coal to the VFP power station.

In October 1935 a single line was opened from springs to?? On the natal main line via Nigel.

In December 1938 the Pretoria line from Germiston was deviated away from the original route through parts of Germiston town to its present day route to present day Elandsfontein (near Delmore -the original Elandsfontein was where the present Germiston goods sheds are) as a double line. A new knights station was opened on this line and from knights a single line was built to Angelo past Delmore.

In 1943 a line was built from springs to Welgedachts.

In the 1950s a line was built from Springs to **Rooikop**. There was one station - **Vogelfontein** - near no. 5 shaft of the Van Dyk Gold Mine and a passing loop - **Auram** - between it and springs and another passing loop between Vogelfontein and Rooikop called **Rondebult** after the adjacent sewerage works for Boksburg Germiston. This line went on to join the Vereeniging -Germiston line at Natalspruit.

When I went on pension in 1975 a new central marshalling yard – Sentrarand - was being built at Bapsfontein to serve the southern Transvaal and various new connecting tracks were planned to connect this to the various main lines to Pretoria, Witbank, natal, the cape and free state. I am not 100% familiar with these lines but portions of them pass between this yard and Welgedachts, Auram, springs, etc.

In the 1950s the Benoni town council approached the SAR to eliminate four dangerous level crossings in the original Benoni Township. This was before the government introduced a planned programme to eliminate level crossings throughout South Africa.

At that stage there was a scheme whereby a crossing could be eliminated on a joint cost basis, i.e. SAR and the local authority and possibly the provincial roads department would jointly bear the cost of elimination. On this basis the cost was shared between the SAR and the Benoni municipality with a contribution from provincial roads for the Dunswart crossing because the main reef road was their responsibility. It was also agreed that the large area of land of the original Benoni Township which had been used for the goods yard and station (second Benoni station - later Cranbourne) in 1910 would be transferred to the municipality. N.B. Cranbourne station was approx. Where the present day Benoni motor vehicle testing centre is situated and the goods office was on the corner of tom Jones Street and Elston Avenue. A picture of this area is shown on the

page following page 226 of "Benoni - son of my sorrow" (history of Benoni) where it is titled "railway goods station burnt by strikers 1922", i.e. Before the present Benoni goods sheds were built in 1923 on the present site. This was about where the present day municipal offices are.

When these level crossings were eliminated the line was diverted from just west of Cranbourne station to present day Northmead station. This also eliminated the subway where Voortrekker Street passed under the railway. It also freed the area given to the municipality of tracks and provided the old railway embankment across the Kleinfontein dam for development into the present road past Northmead station into Northmead Township.

While this was in progress the municipality established **Daveyton** to re-house the squatters on the land bought to provide Apex Industrial Township. This gave rise in turn to provide an electric passenger service from Dunswart to Daveyton.

Some time earlier the steam train service between **Dunswart - Alliance** which served the gold mines was closed partly because the closing of the mines removed most of the passengers but mainly to use the line for the increase in coal traffic from the Witbank area.

To provide the electric passenger service the line was doubled between **Dunswart** and **Alliance** and 3 deviations to improve the location of the line were provided between existing **Northmead** and **Cloverdene** stations. This shortened the distance by one and a quarter miles - the main saving came from eliminating the large loop to the north between van Ryn and Cloverdene where the track ran through parts of what is now Morehill.

It was originally considered impossible to provide a line from Alliance into Daveyton because of shallow undermining but I had to call on the mine manager (Mr. Jewel – the last manager of Modder B and of Modder East gold mines) to tell him that it would be necessary to close the mine's private siding because of the new train service (which also included colour light signals controlled from alliance or Dunswart). He showed me a map of the undermining and I noted a volcanic dyke between alliance and Daveyton so I realised there was not undermining in that area. I then put in a report covering this and recommended that a line be built to Daveyton. This was done.

As a result of the doubling etc., the original stations at **Modderbee, Cloverdene, Northmead** and **avenue** were closed and new stations - the existing **Northmead** and **avenue** were provided. At a later stage I made a recommendation that a few "white" stations be built to serve the west and north sides of Benoni and "white" trains be run stopping off at these stations and continuing to Johannesburg in the peak hours but this recommendation was rejected.

Private sidings are private railway lines which are connected to a SAR line at all stations these days. They are of two types, viz:

1. Those used to receive and dispatch goods and

2. Those provided as a connecting link between the first type and the SAR where the first type is at remote from the SAR.

These private sidings (PSs) are either operated by SAR locomotives or by SAR locomotives to an "exchange yard" beyond which the PS owner operates the siding with his own locomotives.

If a private line is not connected to the SAR it is then not a private siding (which is defined in the railway act).

There were many PSs on the East Rand and of both types and of both methods of operation.

There was also at one time at least one 3ft 6in gauge private railway. On the New Modder gold mine there was such a line (it was also electrified and was probably the first such line in the Transvaal) – it ran between the northern and Southern reduction works of the mine, past the east side of the mine township of New Modder. There was a sub-station more or less opposite the mine manager's house (now a riding school) and a level crossing over the Benoni – Modder B road, and an electric running shed near the South side of this road.

The Van Ryn Estate gold mine had a narrow gauge (possibly 18in or 2ft) private line, electrified, which operated around the area South of Van Ryn station and which crossed over the SAR by a bridge west of this station to service some areas to the north of the present recreation club.

All the gold mines except Modder Deep gold mine had private sidings and these were extensive in layout and were operated by means of steam locomotives owned by the mines. One of these locomotives is preserved in C.R. Swart Park, Benoni. (*ED: Now outside the Benoni Museum.*)

The mines also had a few short sidings operated by the SAR only.

The C.SAR (Central South African Railways; successor to the ZASM and the Imperial Military Railways, and predecessor to the South African Railways) introduced the numbering of private sidings until 1908, and as a result many of the East Rand mining sidings had low numbers (e.g. New Kleinfontein group siding no. 10, which served New Kleinfontein, the Van Ryn Deep gold mine, Kleinfontein power station and – after the opening up of the Apex area in the 1930s – a direct connection to Apex gold (coal??) mine at Anzac to provide coal for their power station.)

Most of the sidings owned by the mines were closed and up-lifted when the mines closed but Brakpan Mines siding was taken over by the Brakpan municipality and used to serve their industrial township. That at Geduld for East Geduld gold mine was similarly taken over by S.A.P.P.I. paper mill and the platinum refinery in East Geduld area.

All the East Rand municipalities have one or more of the second type of private siding (also called feeder line layouts) to serve industrial townships.

The first such feeder line layout in South Africa was built by the SAR for Germiston Municipality in 1923 and the second one was built by the SAR to serve the Benoni Municipality's industrial township to the South-West of Benoni station (private siding no. 1006) The Benoni and Boksburg municipalities have a joint feeder line to serve their two industrial townships South of Dunswart station.

These industrial townships have numerous private sidings of the first type to service individual industries in the townships. These are connected to the municipal feeder lines, all of which on the East Rand are SAR operated.

Most of the mines on the East Rand had narrow gauge tracks to serve their sand dumps (usually called coco pan tracks) and for taking materials to their shafts and also underground (where, of course, there were extensive underground narrow gauge tracks.) It is strange, but there was no standard for such underground track gauge or track components. When I worked for a firm of consulting engineers (after retiring from South African Railways) we were employed by one mining group to investigate this. We made recommendations for standardising underground gauge and standard type turn outs etc. but I do not know if these were adopted. One of the other mining houses did have standards for turn outs but not for other matters.

On the surface all 3 foot 6 inch gauge tracks were / are built to SAR standards and to SAR approval if connected to SAR tracks. I understand that the government engineers also lay down standards. The latter did not apply to SAR which laid down its own standards.

In preparing these notes I hope I have not overlooked anything of importance.

G.D. Wood. 1/3/1994

REFERENCES

1. "Benoni – Son of my sorrow" – D. Humphries.
2. "SAR & H – South African Railways & Harbours – Annual Report of the General Manager, 1960-61" – for tables of details of opening of lines.
3. "The South African Railways – the history, scope and organisation" – published by SAR June 1947.
4. "Chronicles of a contractor." – George Pauling, Rhodesian reprint library, Vol 4. (Original – Constable & Co. London, 1926)
5. The "SAR & H" magazine had many articles dealing with railways. Bound copies were held in SAR Library and SAR museum, Johannesburg.
6. The "Proceedings of the South African Institution of Civil Engineers" and its predecessor, the "South African Society of Civil Engineers" had many papers over the years dealing with SAR contractors and railway construction.
7. Original ZASM plans were held in the Chief Civil Engineer's (as he was called) plan room in old SAR Head office building (this building is on the corner of Rissik street & De Villiers streets, Johannesburg.)

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[Railways](#)

Sir George Herbert Farrar Bart, DSO.

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17:

Col. Sir George Herbert Farrar was born 17 June 1859, and died 19 May 1915 in Kuibis South West Africa. He married Ella Mabel Waylen on 3 June 1893 in Johannesburg, daughter of Charles William Waylen. She died 29 December 1922.



Knighted 1902, made Baronet 2 July 1911.

(Taken from Wheatcroft, Geoffrey, 1985, *The Randlords. The men who made South Africa*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London.)

63: "Anthony Trollope travelled from Pietermaritzburg to the Transvaal in 1877 with 'a gentleman about one third of my own age, who had been sent out by a great agricultural-implement-making firm with the object of spreading the use of ploughs and reaping machines". This was Geo Farrar, 18, sent from East Anglia as a rep of the family engineering firm Howard, Farrar & co. He stayed on and was among the early pioneers of Witwatersrand.

158: moved to the Rand. First business venture was selling machinery but soon turned to mine promotion. By 1891 on the board of 9 Rand companies and MD of the Anglo-French Co. Formed a partnership with Carl Hanau and in 1892 formed HF Syndicate. The Syndicate supplied 90, 000 pounds in working capital to 5 mines. In 1893 Farrar floated East Rand Proprietary Mines (ERPM) which was a shaky operation but controlled the largest single block of mining ground on the Rand.

159: part of a small group with Rhodes and Beit to oust Kruger as president

170: helped create the Johannesburg Bubble by floating rubbishy stock. Burst Sept 1895

174: one of the signatories, the "Reformers", on a letter presented to Jameson from the British command in Cape Town asking for their support, and offering to fund it, for a rising against Kruger govt on 28 Dec 1895. The letter engendered the ill conceived Jameson's Raid but the rising fizzled out.

183: sentenced to death for conspiracy and treason by Kruger and placed in Pretoria prison. Released in June upon a payment of a £25 000 fine - paid by Rhodes.

(ED: Via Farrar's Brother, Percy.)

210: At onset of war Oct 1899, moved to Cape Town. Contributed, largely from ERPM funds, to raising an Irregular corps. Commissioned and served at a major on staff of Cape Colonial Div, seeing a great deal of fighting. Present at siege of Wepener where his brother, Capt Percy Farrar was among those besieged. Both received DSO.

226: In 1905 his London address was 54 Old Bond St, Chichely Hall, Buckinghamshire.

245: A considerable scandal over ERPM inefficiency and falsifying gold returns. Farrar was eased out of the company but felt obliged to resign his parliamentary seat after exposure in Jonannesburg press.

The Eagle - publication of Bedford Modern School which in its Roll of Honour provided a biography of each OBM killed. Farrar is commemorated in the Bedford Modern School WWI Memorial - 167 incised stone tablets originally unveiled 1923. "Farrar (DSO, Bart) George Herbert (Sir), Colonel, Assistant QMG to Centre Division of the Safe Forces. DoW 18-5-1915, age 56, motor trolley collided with a train at Kuibis, near Gibeon, German SW Africa, on 17-5-1915. Third son (born 17-6-1859 at Chatteris) of the late Charles Farrar MD, of Chatteris, and Mrs Helen Farrar, of Bedford.

An engineer, he went to SA in 1879 and lived in the Transvaal. Founder and chairman of East Rand Proprietary Mines Ltd.

Took part in the Jameson Raid of 1895 and sentenced to death for treason by the Afrikaners, but remitted on payment of 25K pound fine. Awarded DSO (London Gazette 19-4-01) for services during the Boer War.

Knighthed in 1902. MP for Georgetown in the first parliament of Union of SA in 1910-11. Created Baronet on 2-2-11. Married Ella Mabel Waylen on 3-6-1893, had six daughters, Bedford Farm Cemetery, Gauteng, SA."

From Andy Pay's research into the Marquis de Ruvigny's Roll of Honour:

Vol 1, Pt 1 p 129 FARRAR, Sir George Hergert 1st Bart DSO Col and ass QM General - Central Force, Union Defence Forces, Late Hon. Col S A Light Horse, Son of the late Charles F, of Chatteris, co Camb, MD, by his wife Helen, (The Crescent Lodge, Bedford), sister of Sir Fred Howard and daughter of John Howard. Born Chatteris 17-6-1859, educated Bedford Modern School and on leaving there entered the engineering business of his Uncle Sir Fred Howard going in 1879 to SA to the Port Elizabeth and East London branches. Eight years later he and his brothers established themselves in Johannesburg, where in a few years he became one of the leading men in the mining industry in Witwatersrand. His chief enterprise was the formation of ERPM, of which he was chairman from its inception to the day of his death. He was for some time a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Transvaal and Leader of the opposition. For his share in the Jameson Raid he was tried for treason and sentenced to death, but the sentence was remitted on payment of a fine of 25k pounds.

When the SA War broke out he raised two regiments of SA Horse and was appointed major, Kaffrarian Rifles, 1-12-1900 and served in this campaign as major on the staff of the Colonial Div 1899-1900. He took part in the operations in the Orange Free State,

including the defence of Wepener, operations in the Transvaal, west of Pretoria, Aug to Sep 1900, operations in the Orange River Colony 1900 incl actions at Wittebergen 1-29 July, and in Cape Colony, South of the Orange River. His services were mentioned in dispatches (Lon Gaz 16 April 1901) and he was awarded the Queens medal with 4 clasps and the DSO (1900).

After the conclusion of peace in 1902 he took an active part in the work of re-organisation, and when responsible govt was granted to the Transvaal, he was unanimously elected leader of the progressive party in the house of assembly, in opposition to the ministry of Gen Botha. In 1903 he was elected pres of the Witwatersrand Chamber of mines, and took a leading part in the negotiations which led to The Union of SA.

He had been knighted in 1902 and on 2-2-1911 was created a Baronet for his services on this occasion. He was MP for Georgetown in the first parliament of the Union of SA 1910-11 but in Dec 1911 business demands in connection to EPPM co compelled him to retire from political work in order to devote his whole energies to the reorganization of that enterprise.

When European war broke out he was in England on a visit and was about to join Gen Sir Hubert Hamilton's staff with the army in Belgium, but the day before he was to have left he was ordered by authorities to SA. On arrival he was appointed to Gen Mackenzie's Force with the rank of Col and despatched to German SWA as ass QM general.

Proceeding to Luderitz Bay in advance of the main force he was engaged in the organisation of the base camp, and subsequently had charge of the restoration of the railway and of providing the water supply to the force, an operation of primary importance in that country.

On 19 May 1915, he was returning from a tour of inspection when the motor trolley in which he was travelling collided with a construction train at Kuibis, near Gidson, GSWA, and Sir George succumbed to his injuries early next morning.

Sir George Farrar was one of the best known men in SA to whose advancement he had, by legislative work, by attention to mining process, and to practical sympathy with agriculture, powerfully contributed.

He married at Johannesburg 2-6-1893, Ella Mabel (Chichely Hall, Newport Pagnell, Bucks & Bedford farm, nr Johannesburg, Transvaal) daughter of late Charles William Waylen, IMS and had six daughters.

Shipping Reports

SA Magazine 4 Dec 1909 - depart RMS Norman x Southampton 18 Dec 1909 Sir G & Mrs

24 July 1909 - arrive RWS Carisbrook Castle Sir G

Natal Witness - arrival 13 Feb 1886 Danube SS Southampton, Morton Pass ex Trojan from Eng Messrs Farrar?? - depart 13 Oct 1889 Grantully Castle CSS

Post Boer War founded Transvaal Progressive Assoc which won 21 seats in Transvaal first election.

Rhodes, Beit and Farrar controlled 75 per cent of gold production on the Rand.

Chair of Transvaal labour Commission in Johannesburg questioning Botha on native policy.

44 Bedford Farm SA now part of St Andrew's girls school, Bedford View 8 miles from Johannesburg

"The Old Boy who created a town" Deryck Humphriss in The Eagle. Commemorative edition 1834-1974. Vol 39 No

283: 424-5

The town of Benoni SA was founded by GHF who drew the plans, designed the centre of the town with a market square, and named the streets from memories of his boyhood days in Bedfordshire: Bunyan, Elstow, Kempston, Wilstead and Howard (after his grandfather) Russell (the family name of the Dukes of Bedford), Cranbourne, Harpur after people from Bedford.

Named Benoni - son of my sorrow - as he was a biblical scholar.

Broke SA record for mile in Queenstown while working in family engineering works there.

Town of Benoni sited on the South bank of the artificial lake Farrar had built to supply gold mines. A new suburb Farrarmere on north bank. (From The Eagle 1962)

"Sir George Farrar, BART, DSO, MLA" The Eagle, July 1911, XI, III: 101-3

From an article in "Illustrated Star" of Johannesburg of June 3

Apprenticed to Uncle Sir Frederick Howard. Worked in engineering house in London, travelling daily from

Bedford. To SA 1879 settling first in Cape Colony and working with bro Sydney for Howard, Farrar & Co in Port Elizabeth, Queenstown, East London and in the Eastern Province generally. For 20 years held Mile record + prizes in cross-country riding and rowing.

1903 elected Pres Chamber of Mines, c1902-3 accepted membership of the nominated Government of the Transvaal, also membership of the Inter-Colonial Council (Transvaal and Orange Free State)

1907 with Responsible Govt GHF unanimously chosen as Leader of the Opposition an office he held until Transvaal merged into the Union.

1908, Oct 12 at Durban delegate to Convention. Member for Georgetown in Union Parliament.

The Eagle, July 1915, XII, viii: 286

July 1914 spoke at Bedford Modern Speech Day

1897 chaired Old Boys' Dinner

Benoni. Son of my sorrow. The social, political and economic history of a SAF gold mining town. Humphriss, Deryck and David Thomas. Ed s Audrey M Cowley & James Edward Mathewson. Jan 1968. Town Council of Benoni

271: GHF made the development of the township his own personal hobby.

An agricultural show brought him to the Reef in 1886 to demonstrate his firms' products. He quickly realised the value of his water-boring machine for the gold-mining industry.

Caricatured in the national press as "Foxy Farrar" for his shrewd business deals and long pointed nose.

More about COL. SIR GEORGE HERBERT FARRAR:

Burial: 16 June 1915, Bedford Farm Cemetery SA + memorial service Chichley

Education: Bedford Modern School, left 1875

Military service: 1899, South Africa Campaign

Occupation: Rand mining magnate

Notes for ELLA MABEL WAYLEN:

Obituary Bedford & County Record Jan 2, 1923

More About ELLA MABEL WAYLEN:

Burial: Chichley

Cause of Death: As result of operation necessitated from internal injury from moving furniture

Children of GEORGE FARRAR and ELLA WAYLEN are:

45

133. i. HELEN MABEL¹⁶ FARRAR, b. 2 October 1894; d. Aft. 1968.

ii. MURIEL FRANCES FARRAR, b. 6 April 1896; m. ANTHONY EDWARD LOWTHER, 1 February 1922.

iii. GWENDOLINE FARRAR, b. 14 July 1897; d. 25 December 1944

ED: Sir George is buried in a plot of land behind the St Andrews Girls School in Bedfordview which used to be his 'Randlord' house. This he called Bedford Manor and the cornerstone was laid by Lord Milner.

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17:

THE 1918 SPANISH FLU EPIDEMIC.

{Return to main} [The 1918 Spanish Flu Epidemic.](#)

The Spanish Flu first appeared in the Benoni area among the Bantu on the mines in late September 1918. It spread rapidly in the town by early October.

Due to the seriousness of the outbreak, emergency hospitals for whites and non-whites were required”.

“In view of the spread of the Influenza, the Benoni Town Council had appointed a sub-committee with full power to take steps to combat the disease. This Committee decided to establish a European and a Native Emergency Hospital. A wing of the Central School in Benoni Township was utilized for the treatment of European patients and a building in the vicinity of the Municipal Compound was obtained for the treatment of native patients. These emergency hospitals were equipped within 48 hours of their being taken over by the Municipality. The European Emergency Hospital was placed in charge of the Council's District Nurse, the administrative duties being carried out by Mr. Van Heerden and Mrs. Mullineux – both voluntary workers.

An appeal was made for helpers and this was responded to liberally. Throughout the whole period of the epidemic, the voluntary workers gave their services freely. Their self-sacrifice and devotion to the duties they had undertaken earned the appreciation and gratitude of the community. Soup kitchens were established in the Benoni and Brakpan Townships as well as in the Native Location.

Voluntary workers visited the houses and administered to the needs of those who, were suffering from the disease but were not so serious to go to the hospital. The cost of equipping and maintaining the hospitals were heavy, the total expenditure involved being approximately 2 720,00 pounds.

One hundred and fifty-two cases were treated at the European Hospital and 111 at the Native hospital. There were 12 deaths at the European hospital and twenty seven at the Native hospital.

The following resolutions were passed at a Special Council Meeting held:

1. That the influenza be made a notifiable disease until further notice.
2. That the Government be asked to close all bioscopes and Churches until further notice and that all public meetings and gatherings be abandoned until the present danger is over.

In addition to the above steps, a telegram had been dispatched by the Magistrate to the Secretary in Pretoria which read as follows:

“The Benoni Municipal Council strongly recommends that the Government at once close all Churches, Theatres, Music Halls and bioscopes during the continuance of the prevailing epidemic, also that no public

meetings be allowed until further notice". The Council drew the attention of the Government to the number of advertisements of "quick remedies" appearing in the daily press to combat the Spanish Influenza and which in the opinion of the Council will more likely encourage than retard the disease. I recommend that Government take action as suggested by the Council".

It was also decided to issue notices to the effect that disinfectants could be obtained FREE OF CHARGE and in serious cases, medicines as well. Applications at the office of the Public Health Department, Benoni was to be made.

Circulars had been issued to bioscopes, Churches, public and other bodies requesting them to abandon services, public meetings etc and a warning had been issued to the public accordingly.

A letter from the South African Institute for Medical Research addressed to all local Municipalities read as follows:

"Dear Sir,

Compound Influenza Vaccine.

With reference to the supply of Compound Influenza Vaccine © forwarded

To you for use in connection with the epidemic of "Spanish" Influenza, it

May be mentioned that the composition of the vaccine is as follows : -

Bacillus Influenza	100 million per c.c.
Micrococcus Catarrhalis	500 million per c.c.
Pneumococcus (Lister's 8 group)	8 000 million per c.c.

It is not necessary, therefore, when this vaccine is used, to use a Pneumococcal Vaccine in addition where pneumonic symptoms supervene.

Yours faithfully,

W. Watkins-Pitchford.

DIRECTOR "

The SA Institute for Medical Research issued a circular requesting that records be kept on the results of the use of the vaccine for those treated for prevention and those treated who already had the epidemic.

Investigating Committee.

Mrs. Ridley	85 Married Quarters, Modderfontein
Miss Pridgeon	85 Married Quarters, Modderfontein
Mrs. De Villiers	31 Howard Avenue\
Mrs. Nixon	75 Woburn Avenue
Miss Stewart	No 6 Kleinfontein
Mrs. Sacre	145 Cranbourne Avenue
Mrs. Lewis Roberts	Amphthill Avenue

Mrs. Welsh	205 Kempston Avenue
Mrs. Osler	120 Howard Avenue
Mrs. Curtis	Hotel Cecil.
Mrs. Lavery	Howard Avenue
Miss Saunders	New Modderfontein
Mrs. Krause	Hotel Cecil
Miss Jones	c/o Henderson Dentist
Mrs. E.M. Louw	88 Market Avenue
Mrs. Nankerval	Kleinfontein Boarding House.
Mrs. Kent	Tel. 47, Kleinfontein
Mrs. Tregonning	92 Bedford Avenue
Miss Mac Dougall	23 Ampthill Avenue
Miss Fyfe	New Modderfontein
Miss Potgieter	Perry's Store
Miss Viljoen	
Mrs. A. Horn	144 Kempston Avenue
Mrs. J. Horn	146 Kempston Avenue
Mrs. Pope	Ford's Boarding House
Mrs. Bertram	131 Woburn Avenue
Miss Hind	126 Howard Avenue
Miss Bignaut	126 Howard Avenue
Miss C. Evens	123 Kempston Avenue
Mrs. Sladon	121 Kempston Avenue
Mrs. Barr	Ampthill Avenue
Mrs. Granston	
Mrs. Jackson	172 Howard Avenue
Mrs. Attwell	63 Ampthill Avenue
Mrs. Steyn	85 Bedford Avenue
Miss Davis	195 Elston Avenue
Mrs. Viljoen	16a Newlands Avenue
Mrs. Baird	34 Elston Avenue
Miss Corbett	Van Ryn.

Nursing Committee.

Miss Thain	44a Bedford Avenue
Mrs. Meyer	35 Railway Avenue
Miss J. Haaroff	117 Ampthill Avenue
Miss A. Haarhoff	117 Ampthill Avenue
Mrs. Pretorius	73 Bedford Avenue
Nurse Clarke	73 Bedford Avenue
Mrs. Cottrill	73 Bedford Avenue
Nurse Childe	Kleinfontein
Nurse Kent	Kleinfontein

Miss Angus	16a Turvey Street
Miss Botha	16a Lake Avenue
Mrs. Crichton	143 Cranbourne Avenue
Miss Traveirs	c/o Mearns Dentist
Miss Riley	c/o Mearns Dentist
Miss Hawken	29 Amphill Avenue
Mrs. Lamb	161 Elston Avenue
Miss Behr	Mineral Water Factory
Miss Shapiro	7 Benoni Arcade
Mrs. Steyn	36a Fort Street
Mrs. Curran	91 Cranbourne Avenue
Miss E. Mills	59 Kemston Avenue
Miss Hoffman	
Mrs. Woolley	32b Harpur Avenue
Mrs. Graham	Municipal Compound
Mrs. Gilchrist	New Modder
Mrs. Katz	18 Market Avenue
Mrs. Shames	28 Cranbourne Avenue
Mrs. Mates	
Mrs. Hatton	106 Kemston Avenue
Miss O'Connor	138 Howard Avenue
Miss Fennell	138 Howard Avenue
Miss Duff	Modderfontein
Miss Paice	34 Bedford Avenue
Mrs. Gamble	Apex.
Mrs. Barr	56 Amphill Avenue
Miss Pearce	Modderfontein
Mrs. Krynauw	143 Kemston Avenue
Misses Paxton	13 Lake Avenue
Miss Graham	Modderfontein
Mrs. Mitchell	Hotel Cecil
Mrs. Whiting	144 Woburn Avenue
Mrs. M. Snyman	122 Elston Avenue
Miss Knobel	122 Elston Avenue
Miss Mabel Sharp	
Miss O. Maderingalt	Amphill Avenue
Miss G. Birkett	71a Elston Avenue
Mrs. Brooks	Kemston Avenue

Staff down with Flu.

Miss Thaine	Miss Blignaut
Mrs. Attwell	Nurse Mann
Mrs. Curtis	Mrs. Sacre

Mrs. Lamb
Mrs. Hutt
Mr. Holden
Miss Archibald
Miss Batiss
Mrs. Krause
Miss Saunders
Miss MacDougall
Miss Engela
R.C. Sister
Miss J. Haaroff
Miss Paice

Mrs. Sladen
Miss Evens
Miss Neylan
Mrs Jackson
Mr. Hayes
Mrs. Nankerval
Mr. Owen
Nurse Clarke
Miss Spencer
Miss A. Haarhoff
Mrs. Paice
Mrs Ridley

Professional Staff.

Mrs. Drever
Mrs. Potgieter
Sister Williams
Sister Winter
Nurse Tregonning
Nurse Mann
Nurse Childe
Nurse Attwill
Nurse Kent
Nurse Welsh

Kleinfontein
Rand Collieries
c/o Bunyan & Howard
Tyne Side
9 Bedford Avenue (Maternity)
139 Ampthill Avenue
Kleinfontein
Ampthill Avenue
Kleinfontein (2 years Military)
203 Kemston (Maternity)

Salaried Orderlies.

I. Sagar
P.J. Hayes

F.L. Levy
I.M. Chaimovitz

Men Volunteers (Night Duty).

Mr. Potgieter
Mr. Van der Vijver
Mr Engela
Mr. Bradbury
Mr. Barry
Mr. Simpson
Mr. Fraser
Mr. Dovey
Mr. D.J. Engela
Mr. Holden
Mr. Ratcliffe
Mr. J.B. Ward
Mr. Swanepoel

110 Kemston Avenue
98 Bedford Avenue
98 Bedford Avenue
156 Howard Avenue
147 Newlands Avenue
156 Howard Avenue
156 Howard Avenue
34a Rothsay Street
89 Bedford Avenue
Market Avenue (Holden & Payne)
30 Park Street
88 Elston Avenue
124 Harpur Avenue

Mr. A. Shein	14 Market Avenue
Mr. N. Shapiro	11c Market Avenue
Mr. D. Jameson	50 Kemston Avenue
Mr. A. Williams	94a Bedford Avenue
Mr. Glass	76 Bedford Avenue
Mr. Aaronsohn	c/o Kuper & Reid
Mr. Sanders	Court House.
Mr. Tucker	
Mr. Owen	c/o Hooden & Payne
Mr. Lipscomb	c/o Langfords, Market Avenue

Domestic Services.

Mrs. Paice	34 Bedford Avenue
Mrs. Stewart	Kleinfontein
Mrs. Birkett	71a Elston Avenue
Mrs. Jackson	
Miss Rademeyer	44a Bedford Avenue
Mrs. Pearce	New Modderfontein
Mrs. Meyer	135 Railway Avenue
Mrs. Mitchell	Hotel Cecil
Mrs. Meyer	Hotel Cecil
Miss Alexander	135 Woburn Avenue
Mrs. Whitehouse	Woburn Avenue
Miss Jones	c/o Henderson Dentist
Mrs. K. Harris	43 Wooten Avenue
Mrs. Jackson	172 Howard Avenue
Mr.s Mc Dougall	23 Ampthill Avenue
Miss C. Ellis	123 Kemston Avenue
Miss Maclaren	182 Kemston Avenue
Mrs. Holdcroft	74 Harpur Avenue
Misses Zeeman	Cr of Russell Street & Kemston Avenue
Mrs. Whiting	144 Woburn Avenue
Mrs. Soutter	37 Woburn Avenue
Mrs. Maclean	144 Woburn Avenue
Miss L. Brooks	Kemston Avenue
Mrs. Farrand	66 Woburn Avenue
Mrs. Harris	43 Wooten Avenue
Mr & Mrs Martin	
Mrs. Inglethorpe	33 Victoria Avenue
Mrs. Salton	105 Kemston Avenue
Mrs. Shames	26 Cranborne Avenue
Mrs. Myburgh	Howard Avenue

DONATIONS – EMERGENCY HOSPITAL

Mr. Buchanan	Bovril, 1 doz eggs.
Burman Brothers	1 doz oranges
Mrs. T. Bertram	9 bottles Eau de Cologne
Mrs. Faucett	Jellies
Mrs. Kuper	Large bottle champagne
Mrs. Brand	Jellies
Mrs. Mills	Lemons
Mrs. Alexander	Bottle Brandy
Mrs. Inglethorpe	1 ½ doz eggs
Mrs. Garner	Soup Meat
Mr. Snowden	1 ½ doz eggs
Mrs. Perry	Eggs and flowers
Mrs. Lamb	Eggs
Mrs. Anderson	Oranges
Mrs. Bertram	1 doz toilet powders
Mr. Favish	Basket salads
Mr & Mrs. Lairy	Groceries
Mrs Garner	Lemons
Mrs S. Levitas	Basket oranges
Mrs. Surtus	Toys
Jim Welsh	Books
Mrs. Starr	Flowers
Mrs. Mainon	Flowers
Messrs Harris & Haimoff	Shaving patients
Mr. Russell	1 ½ doz eggs
Mrs. Ross	Lemons
Mrs. Sturton	Tea, Milk, Eggs
Mrs. Smallen	Milk
Mrs. Van Niekers	Milk, pea flower, preserved fruit
Mrs. M. Attwell	Flowers
Lindey & Pirie	10 pound worth of goods
Mrs. Milne	Cake and lemons
Mr. Waddell	Eggs
Fire Station	Eggs
Mrs. J. Shapiro	Flowers
Mrs. D. Levy	Flowers
Mrs. Perry	Flowers
Mr. Tate	Beef
Mr. Langley	4 doz eggs
Mrs. Lamb	Eggs
Mrs. Stewart	Eggs, cakes
Mrs. Barton	Eggs, cakes

Mrs. Brandling	Cakes
Mrs. Saunders	Scones
Mrs. Watson	Cakes
Mrs. Ward	Bread
Miss Mulcaster	Eggs
Mr. Lomainsky	Milk, eggs, fowls
Mrs. Duncan	Eggs
Mrs. Levitas	Eggs
Miss Rosewarre	3 doz eggs
Mrs. T. Bertram	1 gall. Milk

Collected by Mr. Favish:

Mr. Favish	10 Market Avenue	8 pints milk daily
Mr. O. Epstein	7b Market Avenue	2 pints milk daily
Mr. Sakolosky	7 Market Avenue	1 pint milk daily
Mr Roberts	7 Market Avenue	2 pints milk daily
Mr. Goldstein	7 Market Avenue	2 pints milk daily
Mr. Silverman	Cranbourne Avenue	4 pints milk daily
Mr. Shames	Cranbourne Avenue	2 pints milk daily
Mr. S. Friedman	Cranbourne Avenue	2 pints milk daily
Mr. Katz	Market Avenue	4 pints milk daily
Mr. S. Peltz	Amphill Avenue	2 pints milk daily
Mr. Falk	Cranbourne Avenue	3 pints milk daily
Mr. Sacks	Market Avenue	Vegetables & Groceries
Mr. Berman	Market Avenue	Vegetables & Groceries
Mr. Meyers		3 pints milk daily
Mr. Mervis	Cranbourne Avenue	1 pint milk daily
Mrs. Hrshowitzz		3 pints milk daily
Mr. Finkelstein		4 pints milk daily
Mr. A.B. Levy	136 Howard Avenue	Case of Brandy
Mr. Lipman	23b Amphill Avenue	½ gallon milk daily
Mr. Sandler	27 Amphill Avenue	½ gallon milk daily
Mr. Trundell	55 Lake Avenue	3 pints milk daily
Mr. Kahanowitz	150 Howard Avenue	7 pints milk daily
Mr. B. Ginsberg	131 Howard Avenue	5 pints milk daily
Mr. Potash	Kleinfontein Store	4 pints milk daily
Mr. Thomas	Dairyman	4 pints milk daily
Mr. Van Schaffling		6 pints milk daily
Mr. H. Levy		2 pints milk daily
Mr. Hewitt	Market Avenue	4 pints milk daily
Mr. Groenewald	12 Harpur Avenue	8 pints milk daily

Collected by Mr. Lewis Cohen, 20 Bedford Street.

Mrs. Samuels	14 pints, 1 fowl	Mr. Salkinder	16 pints
Mr. Fanaroff	10 pints	Mr. B. Ginsberg	28 pints
Mr. Richlin	13 pints	Mr. R. Swanepoel	32 pints, eggs, fowl
Mr. Shifrin	24 pints	Mr. Oates	8 pints, eggs
Mr. Marks	18 pints	Mr. Smith	32 pints
Mr. Noon	28 pints	Mr Metzger	10 pints
Mr. Braun	12 pints	Mr. Starfield	6 pints, fruit, 3 doz eggs
Mr. Kaminsky	28 pints	Mr. Kirshner	30 pints, fowl, 4 doz eggs
Mr. J. Tucker	8 pints	Mr. Ginsberg	16 pints, 1 doz eggs
Mr. Perry	12 pints	Mrs. Glass	16 pints
Mr. S. Gordon	2 doz eggs	Katzen Brothers	30 pints
Mr. P. Gordon	12 pints, 2 doz eggs	Mrs. Shapiro	10 pints
Mr. J.J. Fine	16 pints, 1 doz eggs	Mrs. Reed	½ doz eggs
Mr. I. Badfer	16 pints	Mr. Cameron	
Mr. H. Balon	10 pints	Mr. M. Levy	28 pints, 1 doz eggs.

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THE STORY OF DUNSWART IRON AND STEEL.

{Return to main} **THE STORY OF DUNSWART IRON AND STEEL.**

Quote: " Fifty years ago, the first practical steps towards the creation of the South African steel industry were taken by the establishment of the "Union Iron and Steel Works," later to become known as the "Dunswart Iron and Steel Works, Limited".

This followed post Anglo-Boer War plans and experimental attempts to create a steel industry in the Transvaal.

Named in honor of the formation of the Union of South Africa, Union Iron and Steel Works was launched in Johannesburg on 6 May 1911, with a works site at Dunswart junction, near the small mining settlement of Benoni. A year later, on 15 April 1912, the company executed its first order for rolled sections for the Village Deep Gold Mine. This historic sales document, still in the possession of the company, marks the start of an era fundamental to the sustenance and growth of industrial South Africa.

On 26 June 1914, the name of the company was changed to the "Dunswart Iron and Steel Works, Limited".

It goes on to say " Since the start of operations Dunswart Iron and Steel has progressed from its original workshop on the veld, a corrugated iron shed with steel frame, fitted out mostly with second-hand machinery, to the massive steel works of today" Then "Benoni was a 5 year old mining township with corrugated iron houses, a plentiful supply of pubs to attract miners from the encircling gold mines, one government school and a promise of a few public buildings and a regular water supply. It boasted only a bakery, two printing shops, a plumbers and saddler's establishment,

but no industrial undertakings whatsoever when two young engineers arrived to found what would eventually be the DI & S W and thus set Benoni on the way to becoming one of South Africa's most important manufacturing centers.

John Keyer Eaton, who had gained his engineering experience in the manufacturing shops that mushroomed on the Australian gold fields and Frederick L. Cartwright, from Kent, England had met and joined forces on the Witwatersrand as machinery merchants and brokers. However, encouraged by the mines growing demand for plant and equipment, they embarked on their courageous and far-seeing venture to produce some of the iron and steel requirements of the province. Later they were to supply all four provinces as well as markets across the Limpopo".

Source: The book on Dunswart

Typed by Glynis Millett-Clay



The Rolling Mills at the Dunswart Works

A GREAT INDUSTRY WHICH HAS ADVANCED WITH RAPID STRIDES

THE Coronation on May 12, marks another epoch in the history of the British Empire -- an Empire great and powerful -- built by the wisdom of its rulers on the foundations of industrial progress and stability.

An example of this progressive policy is the Dunswart Iron and Steel Works, founded in 1911. From a small concern it has, in the face of many difficulties, grown into the largest iron and steel industry on the Reef.

● Situated as it is amongst the flourishing mines of East and Far-East Rand, the bulk of Dunswart products are adapted to mining needs. This local iron and steel industry has also been instrumental in bringing about a reduction in cost to the consumer, in many cases amounting to as much as 50%. A testimony to the quality of DUNSWART products is found in the corresponding reduction made by importers of similar foreign and overseas goods.

● The steel made is the product of Heroult Electric Furnaces and can be made to conform with customers' analysis requirements, and is guaranteed to conform with British standard specification.

● All products are subject to careful scrutiny before despatch and nothing is allowed to leave the works that is not up to standard. The outcome is that the products are making their

contribution increasingly well to industrial undertakings of every description throughout South Africa and Southern and Northern Rhodesia.

● The works cover an area of over thirty acres, the equipment is modern in every detail and nearly two hundred Europeans are employed.

● Some of the products are: Bars of different alloy steels such as Tyle Mill Bars and Crinley Bars, Forged Chrome Steel Balls, Special Alloy Ribs and Truck Wheels, Gear Wheels of all descriptions, Casts, Battery Hoods, Tappets, Crusher Jaws, Mantles and Cones for gyratory crushers, Mortar Box Liners, Screens and Excavator Teeth, and also Steam, Water and Air Pipe Fittings are manufactured in large numbers.

DUNSWART

IRON AND STEEL WORKS · LTD.

703 - 706 SHELL HOUSE - BASSON STREET

JOHANNESBURG

P.O. BOX 3921

PHONE 21-1187

TELEGRAMS: DUNSWART

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CHIMES TAVERN

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The Chimes Tavern got its name from the “Bell Syndicate” who started prospecting for gold on the Reef in 1885 which they eventually found near where the CHIMES TAVERN is situated today. They called their mine “The Chimes Gold Mine” which was situated West of the New Modderfontein and below the Kleinfontein Mine.

In 1888, the site occupied by the town was first proclaimed as a gold-bearing reef on the farm Benoni when 24 claims were pegged. The stand on which the Chimes Tavern was built, was originally a prospector’s claim No. 335 held by the first owner George William (Bill) Eaton. As the law at that time prohibited the holding of a liquor license in respect to ground forming a prospector’s claim, Bill Eaton got round this by converting claim No. 335 to a Diggers Claim.

The Chimes was built of wood and iron as most of the buildings were at that time. Part of the original wall still remains behind a wooden partition in the foyer today. Even though there were other hotels in the area, the Chimes was regarded as the best known establishment.

Bill Eaton not only started the Chimes, but also Greyhound racing. These races were held where the Greyhound drive-in used to stand – which we know today as the Dunswart inter-section. He was married to a coloured lady from St. Helena who was known to all as Mother Eaton. Mother Eaton was a fine, respected and very generous woman. People remember her riding into town in her black carriage drawn by two white horses, sitting very erect and wearing a high hat with lots of feathers. Her journey most times would be taking her to the market to buy food for the poor. She was a religious person and did a lot of charity work through the church.

The Chimes did very good business up until the Anglo Boer War between 1899 and 1902 when Bill Eaton who was a burgher, was enlisted in the Army. He reopened the Chimes on his return from the war, but business did not pick up for many months. He never renewed his license and sold his business to a man called Pessen who rebuilt the Chimes in fired brick and mortar.

The Eatons children - two daughters and a son where adopted. The two girls went to the Benoni Central School in Howard Avenue. Bill Eaton died in August 1939 and was laid to rest in the Benoni Cemetery by his wife who as records show ordered a double grave hoping one day to join her husband. She never did and no trace can be found of her or their children. They have simply disappeared.

Morris Lasser Pessen was a Russian Jew, born Messad, Korna in Russia. He arrived in South Africa in 1895 and was naturalized as British in September 1906. He owned the Chimes for a considerable length of time. He then sold it to Mr. & Mrs. Hosiassohn (also Jewish) who did not even stay a year at the Chimes. In 1928 the new owners were the Knopf’s and Mr. M. Koensgsfest - who only lasted a couple of months.

Mr. Knopf came from to South Africa from Germany in 1901 with his wife who was Polish and their seven children. In 1931 the Knopf's sold the Chimes to Mr. Jack Silbert.

Jack & Ester Silbert owned the Chimes for many years from 1931 to 1963 and in the 32 years that they had ownership, they changed the name from the Chimes to the Transvaal Hotel.

Major Howie and his wife took over the hotel in 1963 and once again changed the name back to the Chimes Tavern. Asked why the name change, Mrs Howie said "both my husband and myself feel the name the Chimes is more appropriate to the area on which the hotel stands and as also it was the original name. While still owning the Chimes, Mrs. Howie became Benoni Lady Mayoress from 1968 to 1969.

In 1977 the Chimes owners became a company called Chimleek Pty Ltd and in 1978 Mr. R.J. Eurelle took over.

Extracts from:

Chimes Tavern Centenary Souvenir Brochure

Benoni Gala Celebrations booklet.

Typed & compiled by: Glynis Millett-Clay

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These people were all previously involved with the management of the Chimes Tavern, dating as far back as 1931 up to the present time. From left: Mr Ted Reid, Mrs Lillian Ipp, Mr Laurence Reichenberg, Mrs Jeanne Reichenberg, Mrs Ester Silbert, Mrs Mary du Toit, Mrs A Howie, Mrs Maureen Eurelle and her husband Randy.

The Chimes looks back on 100 nostalgic years

On March 3 1889, almost 100 years ago, the doors of the Chimes Tavern -- then known as the Trans-

vaal Hotel -- were opened and with it a new chapter in the history of Benoni.

basic structure had remained the same, with many of its old characteristics still visible.



Today this building has become an historic landmark in Benoni and older people can look back with some nostalgia to good times gone by in a place that was at one time the focal point of the town.

Today, almost 100 years later preparations for its centenary celebration has started.

It was like a trip down memory lane on Sunday, when previous owners of the Chimes Tavern, dating back to as far as 1931, gathered for a luncheon at the building they once owned.

People who had not seen each other for 47 years, met to talk about old times, while others made their first trip back to the building in 55 years.

Present at the gathering were previous owners Mrs Ester Silbert (1931 to 1963), Mrs A Howie (1963-1978) and the present owner Mr Randy Eurelle. Also present were Mrs Lillian Ipp and Jeanne Reichenberg, the daughters of Mr A Knopf, who owned the Chimes Tavern from 1928 to 1931.

After lunch they were all taken on a tour of the Tavern and everybody agreed that although the building had changed through the years, its

One of the interesting tales that were told, was that of the very first owner of the Chimes Tavern, Mr Bill Eaton, who also started Greyhound Racing, a stadium where dog races were held in those days. This later became the Greyhound drive-in.

Mr Eaton was rumoured to have lived at the Chimes Tavern with his wife, a black woman from St Helena. What happened to her and their adopted children after his death, is still unknown.

The purpose of the reunion, which was organised by a committee under the chairmanship of Mrs Jackie Goddard, was to get all the ex owners of the Chimes Tavern together and also to gather as much information about it as possible in view of the Chimes' forthcoming centenary celebration.

A centenary booklet containing the history of the Chimes Tavern is currently being drawn up.

Anybody who might be able to provide any further information, photos or gossip about the Chimes Tavern, are invited to contact Mrs Jackie Goddard (tel 849-0767).



Posing for a picture in 1933, Mrs Jeanne Reichenberg (right) and Mrs Lillian Ipp, daughters of Mr A Knopf, owner of the Chimes Tavern from 1928 to 1931.



Pictured with his horse in the bar of the Chimes Tavern, is Mr Clancy, manager of the Chimes in 1908.

PORTFOLIO ON BENONI COUNTRY CLUB

{Return to main} **1911**

The Van Ryn Gold Mines Estate, Limited sponsored by the Late George Albu was registered in June 1894 as a reconstruction of the Van Ryn Estate Gold Mining Company. The property is situated on the farm Vlakfontein and was 7 500 acres in extent.

Farming operations were carried on around the homestead and the farm manager also a German named Hahn Supervised the planting of trees on a large scale. This became the beautiful setting for the Van Ryn Golf Course.

Recreation grounds were provided and soon there was a cricket, football and later a golf club. As with Benoni, we too are celebrating our century. The Golf Course at Van Ryn was laid out in 1911. The club was inaugurated by a few enthusiasts under the leadership of Gilbert Thompson and Bertie Windfield who each contributed 5 shillings per month for construction of sand greens.

Previously known as the Van Ryn Golf Club, it then became Benoni Country Club in 1952 and has always prided itself as the finest recreation centre in Benoni.

By Keith Bloom

Typed by Glynis Millett-Clay

Ref: [benoni/people/benonicountryclub](#) *{Return to main}* **Error! Reference source not found.**

A HISTORY OF BENONI SCHOOLS:

{Return to main} Chapter 1:**1909**

{Return to main} Chapter 2: *Schools*

In the early days, English was the sole teaching medium in Benoni with Dutch (Afrikaans) only being introduced in the town in 1917.

The first government school was established in a wood and iron building in Lake Avenue in 1904 under Mrs. Davis and five years later, in 1909, a more substantial brick building was opened in Howard Avenue to house the Central Government School.

The Benoni Junior School was established as a separate school with its own principal in 1919 and for 20 years thereafter battled with the authorities for their own premises.

The Dutch Reform Church Hall "Onze Zaal" was rented to accommodate two more classes when the number of pupils exceeded 400 and in 1921 the school moved into a hired wood and iron building in the middle of a vlei to the South of the town.

This site proved totally inadequate, however, as the area flooded and sanitation became un-usual. Four years later, the site was partially drained by the municipality and brick classrooms were erected.

In 1935, the newly appointed principal, Miss A. H. Maynier and the parents campaigned for a better site and in 1938 a school was built in /Derby Avenue, Western Extension, to house 350 pupils.

In 1948, Miss E.A. Mansel became principal and in response to her enthusiasm the school won the South African Thrift Campaign prize. Three years later the children bought the record number of 1 902 Union Loan Certificates.

The Roman Catholic Convent, established in 1909 by the Third order of St. Dominic, was the only school in the town to offer English education from grade one to standard 10. In 1918, the school entered its first animation and in the same year erected a brick building.

The school expanded to much that, in 1948, the adjoining property was bought from the Jewish community to provide space for additional classrooms and a hall.

Up to 1963 the convent was a boarding school but it is now only a primary school having transferred the boarders and high school pupils to Boksburg.

Benoni West School was opened in 1918 with 233 pupils. The first principal, Mr. P. Graham, believed schools should always be "open" and even applied this rule during the 1922 strikes.

However, during a lull on March 10th, the school was occupied by strikers and only re-opened on March 14th.

St. Dunstan's Diocesan Memorial School was founded at the end of World War 1 when Rev. Edward Paget, Captain W. Loftus, head of the police and George Hills decided to establish a living memorial to those who had died in the war.

A house was rented in Woburn Avenue for the School. Lawrence Lake and one assistant teacher offered their services and the school opened with a staff of two to teach the one pupil. However this state of affairs did not last long.

The Northmead English Medium School was opened in January 1951 with 556 pupils. The name was changed to Tom Newby in honour of the principal of the old Central School. Congestion at Tom Newby was relieved in April 1957 when the Rynfield English Medium School opened.

In 1917 the TPA decided to establish separate high schools. Four years later, Mr. Newby was allowed to establish a secondary department and two years later the school moved to near the railway station. Lack of ground prevented the erection of a permanent

building until the Rev. Mr. Paget donated the ground on which Willomoore High School now stands.

The foundation stone for the new school was laid by J.H. Hofmeyr in 1926 and the first classrooms were completed in 1933 with the new buildings being opened officially in April 1937.

By 1961 there were over 1000 children in the school and in 1967 plans were initiated for the present Benoni High School.

The first Dutch Medium School (later Called Brandwag) was established in 1917 under Mr. J.A.S. van Heerden with 215 children. Two years later Mr. Johan Greijbe (later to be known as the father of Afrikaans Education in the Transvaal) was appointed principal.

The 1922 strike resulted in a rapid decline in the number of pupils but increased again when the nation wide depression brought large numbers of un-educated Afrikaans speaking labourers to the Reef.

By 1936 there were 1000 pupils from grade one to standard eight and standard nine and 10 were introduced in the next two years. At the same time the school spread to the Hebrew Hall and two stores in Swan Street were used as classrooms

In 1935 a new building was opened and 405 pupils were transferred to the Brandwag Junior School (renamed Saamwerk School the following year).

Three years later, the overflow from Brandwag was moved to the "Tin Tabernacle" which had been vacated by Benoni High School. They were joined by an overflow from Saamwerk and the English Medium Junior School and L.H. van Dijn was made acting principal.

At the end of 1939 children living in the northern suburbs were moved to the new Northmead Afrikaans Medium Primary School leaving Brandwag with pupils from standard six to 10.

Shortly after the school was renamed Benoni Afrikaans Medium School which was later changed to Die Verkenerskool. The name Brandwag was given to Mr. Greijbe's school in 1929.

Twenty years later, as Mr. Greijbe retired, Brandwag became a high school. The foundation stone was laid for an Afrikaans girls school in Northmead in 1951, but the building was redesigned for a mixed school and opened in 1953.

The Northmead Afrikaans Medium School had an enrolment of 1115 children by 1959 and was relieved the following year by the removal of 337 children to a new school in Rynfield.

The Hoerskool Noord-Oosrand was opened in 1954 in temporary buildings in the grounds of the Sesfontein school and permanent buildings were built in 1967.

In 1905 the Vlakfontein 168 Government School was opened to serve the Van ryn and Modder mines. The name was changed to the Van Ryn Government School in 1910 but confusion with a Van Ryn private school caused the authorities to rename it Modder B Road Government School.

After the private school closed it reverted back to the name of Van Ryn and remained dual medium until it became Afrikaans in 1964.

In 1921 89 children were transferred from the Van Ryn school to an English medium Modder B Government School. In 1951 it became parallel medium and in 1960 converted to an Afrikaans school.

A school similar to the one at Vlakfontein was opened in Putfontein in 1908. The school was closed due to lack of attendance but reopened in July 1912 with 11 pupils. Education in Dutch was introduced in 1914.

During the time the school was closed, pupils were sent to the English Medium Norton Vlakfontein School which opened in July 1908 north of the Benoni municipal boundary. In 1911 the school moved to a small brick building and Dutch was introduced the following year.

The former Minister of Education Mr. Jan de Klerk (later to be Minister of Education) was appointed head master of the school in October 1932, with two helpers to teach 66 children. The number of pupils grew in leaps and bounds until it moved to permanent buildings, changed to Afrikaans medium and was renamed Bredellse Laerskool after Col. H.C. Bredell, the original owner of the farm Rietfontein.

The Sesfontein English Medium school was opened in 1923 under Mr. A.C. Coetzee. Many of the children who had come from the Putfontein School, did not speak English well enough to understand the classes and the school became parallel-medium in 1925.

The school moved to a wood and corrugated iron building a year later and in 1931 to a brick building. The name was changed to the Excelsior School in 1951 and in 1966 was converted to Afrikaans.

The Brentwood Park Primary school was opened in 1926 remaining a parallel medium school until 1947, when the English speaking children and teachers were moved to Government Village.

Typed by Glynis Millett-Clay [{Return to main}](#) [Chapter 1:1909](#) [{Return to main}](#) [Chapter 2: Schools](#)

THE HISTORY OF THE BENONI CITY TIMES

*{Return to Main} BCT 1921: **THE HISTORY OF THE BENONI CITY TIMES***

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The history of the Benoni City Times en Oosrandse Nuus plays an integral part of BENONI since it first appeared in 1921. It was founded on the faith and hard work of the late William H. Hills with a strong desire to bring the truth to the people. It grew and prospered under the guidance of his elder son, the late William Haigh (Billy) Hills.

William H. Hills arrived in South Africa from the England in 1895. He worked as a journalist in Port Elizabeth, and later took up an appointment as sub-editor of the Port Elizabeth Advertiser. In later years he served on newspapers in Pretoria where he helped found the Pretoria News. Other places he worked at was in Krugersdorp, Durban and Johannesburg.

From 1898 to 1920 he edited the East Rand Express from Boksburg and thus became to know the Benoni area intimately.

It was definitely his knowledge of the area, his complete craftsmanship in journalism, his feeling for local news and his courage to state his mind openly in his editorials that carried the Benoni City Times over the danger of being overwhelmed by the inclement economic times in which it was born.

Tough times could not halt his optimism and confidence not only in Benoni but in the rest of the Reef areas.

In 1920 he founded the Amalgamated Press which included the BENONI CITY TIMES, in 1923 the GERMISTON ADVOCATE, in 1934 the West Rand Times and in 1936 the BOKSBURG Advertiser all of which were owned by the firm and printed and published in Benoni at their old Cranbourne Avenue works.

He remained editor in chief until his death in 1959.

The first editorial written by William H. Hills for the 1st edition of the Benoni City Times travelled the streets of Benoni on bicycle handlebars on 10 September 1921. It said: -

"Today we publish the first number of the "Benoni City Times" and "Benoni Volksblad". It may be urged that the time is not opportune, but if everyone waited until the economic barometer indicated "set fair", nothing would be started".

By the 27th edition, it claimed "The largest Local Sale Of Any East Rand Newspaper".

Looking forward to an even greater future of the BENONI CITY TIMES, was a third generation, William Edward Haigh (Billy) Hills who was a director and executive of the firm and demonstrated the same devotion and determination that have characterized the careers of his late grandfather and late father.

The three generation connection - represented by this trio of "William Hills" would be more than enough to emphasize the family aspect. However a further vital factor in the

success of the firm lay in the fact that three other children of William H. Hills were also actively and closely connected with the establishment and growth of the organization.

Dennis the younger son who later entered law became manager of the property division of a very large Johannesburg financial institution. Mary married Jack Wright and their son Alan was on the board. Kathleen married Cecil Gore and whose son Richard was Managing Director of Vereeniging News (Pty) Ltd, one of Amalgamated Presses subsidiary companies.

Under the Chairmanship of the late Billy Hills Snr, they controlled the destinies of six newspapers and two extensive printing establishments.

People who remember him personally will recall his devotion to journalism, his sincerity and his bulldog like refusal to let go of any project he undertook.

When William H. Hills died at the age of 89 in 1959, he was still actively reporting up to six weeks before his final illness, the firm took over the Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark News and published a monthly newspaper to serve Kempton Park.

The late William Hills was an expert journalist. His son, the late Billy Hills snr was an expert printer and publisher and also an astute businessman in his own particular area of newspaper production. This was recognized by national authorities to that he held a number of important offices in the printing and publishing field.

He was chairman of the Provincial Press Division of the Newspaper Press Union, Chairman of Capro, a member of the National Industrial Council of the Newspaper and Printing Industry and also the National Printing Apprenticeship Committee.

His son Billy Hills jnr is a Chartered accountant who controlled the financial aspects of the firm at the time. He was also involved in the direction of advertising and other aspects of administration. Before joining his father and grandfather he did his articles with a local firm of accountants and was an accountant for a major engineering firm in Benoni.

Sidney Gill who was General Manager and Group Editor of Amalgamated Press, first joined the Benoni City Times in 1952 as a reporter.

He was a merchant seaman for some years after leaving school and before entering journalism in England. In 1952 he and his wife and young son came to South Africa and Benoni and later that year he was promoted news editor of the Benoni City Times. In 1956 he left to join Sapa-Reuter where he became chief sub-editor and then moved into public relations.

Shortly after the death of Mr. William Hills, Sydney rejoined the BCT as group editor.

The longest service member of the Benoni City Times was W.A.D. Turner, works manager who has seen the firm grow from small beginnings. Formerly a linotype operator, he branched off to the mechanical side of printing in Scotland and England in

now situated was opened in 1898, closed again in 1899 due to the war and reopened on 1 August 1901.

This office was situated adjacent to the Benoni Hotel of which some buildings are still remaining near the intersection of the new Snake Road and the New Modder Road.

Four years after the opening of the first post office, it was moved to a wood-and-iron cottage close to the underground manager's house of the New Kleinfontein Mining company.

In 1904 the first stands in Benoni were offered for sale to the public and between 1904 and the end of 1906 the first Post Office in this township was built.

The Town Council of Benoni came into being in 1908 and a postcard, cancelled in 1910 and showing the post office at that time, forms part of this collection.

Over the years the Benoni Post Office was moved to various new positions and a number of branch offices were opened. Also a mobile Post Office was brought into use.

The following Post Offices were opened.

Actonville opened on 14th March 1985

Wattville opened in 1952

Jatniel opened in 1969

Farrarmere opened in the shopping centre in Bayley Street in 1972

Benoryn & telephone exchange building in O'Reilly Merry Street opened in 1971

Rynfield was opened along Pretoria Road in 1961

Daveyton was opened in 1958

Airex was opened in 1955 in a small shopping centre along Aerodrome Drive. It closed again in 1973.

Benoni-West situated in Elston Avenue opened in 1954

Benoni South in 1953

Northmead opened in 1939 and moved to 3 different positions. From 1939 – 1972 it was situated in 6th Avenue. From 1972 – 1984 in two positions in the Northmead Mall .

Putfontein opened in 1923

Petit opened 1922, one week before Christmas

Brentwood Park opened in 1920 under the name Brentwood, then the name changed to Brentwood Park in 1926.

Dunswart opened in 1911

Kleinfontein was opened in 1910, the year of the declaration of the Union of South Africa. On 13 March 1967 it was closed.

Van Ryn opened in 1907 and was in use until 1974.

Benoni Station was first known as Benoni Junction Rail and was renamed Benoni Rail on 1 June 1905.

Benoni Mobile Post Office was inaugurated on 23 March 1982.

Benoni Post office in Taylor Street in 1909. Taylor Street is “no more”

Ref: Benoni/chapters of book/post office

Typed by Glynis Millett-Clay

{return to main} [A Post office](#)

Excerpt from the Oosrandse Nuus, 1972 on the 1922 Strike. *{Return to Main} [kins were](#) blown to smithereens!”*

{Link to The Oosrandse Nuus

1922 STRIKE IS RECALLED

Strikers ruled Benoni for three days and boxes became coffins

THIS WEEKEND marks the 50th anniversary of the most violent era in the history of Benoni. On March 10, 1922, the small mining town was rudely awakened by the sound of gunfire and the whine of bullets.

Revolution had broken out in the town and well-organised armed strikers, defying the Government, pinned down the police, defeated a contingent of the Transvaal Scottish sent to suppress them, and took over the town for two days.

On the third day discipline collapsed, bottle stores were looted and drunken strikers fired indiscriminately up and down the streets. By Monday the excitement was over.

Many reasons for the outbreak were put forward, the most popular being that the strikers had been acting under Communist guidance, but events leading up to the outbreak of violence were like a steady moving river, brought to overflow by the reported shooting of three participants in the general Reef strike by the police.

Thus organised attacks were first centred on police camps in the town while sniping was carried out elsewhere. Strikers were placed in strategic positions and kept up a steady crossfire along Howard and Elston Avenues.

During the fighting, children at Benoni West School still attended school although the strikers warned a teacher later in the day to take them home.

Mr Deryck Humphriss, part author of "Benoni — Son of My Sorrows", said that on the Monday before the fighting broke out, members of the British trade union were in control and were against fighting, but by the end of the week the Afrikaners had taken control — the reason why is still not known — and were in favour of a shooting match.

"There were two groups involved in the fighting, British ex-Servicemen and Irish and Afrikaans miners from the well-armed Puffontein Command. A significant factor is that much

of the fighting was around Benoni West School with the children in the classrooms while at Brentwood Park School, an Afrikaans primary school, the children were told to remain at home that day.

"The shooting on the police in the centre of Benoni was largely by the British," said Mr Humphriss, who added that a British ex-Serviceman later revealed that he had lain in a storm drain from where he shot and killed several policemen.

Another fact which Mr Humphriss has unearthed was that during the fighting on the second day the British troops took prisoners — all Afrikaans-speaking.

Early on Friday morning three aeroplanes were sent from Pretoria and bombs were dropped on Benoni. It was speculated that their target was the Mine Workers' Hall where the Lido cinema is now.

Fighting also took place when a group of well-trained members of Puffontein Command manned a position near Dunswart Iron and Steel and fired on a Transvaal Scottish contingent as they disembarked from a train at a nearby level crossing.

On Saturday a force led by Colonel Burne was strengthened by the police and Transvaal Scottish, and advanced on the strikers' positions at Dunswart. Many lives were lost before the position was taken.

The force then entered Benoni along Main Reef Road and the retreating strikers took cover behind trees, in houses and on rooftops, from where they could fire on the advancing troops.

On Sunday they still held the greater part of Benoni, but discipline and morale had begun to collapse. Strikers began shooting at everything that moved and the death toll was so high

that undertakers ran out of coffins and white-painted boxes were used.

Strikers ran riot and looting began on Sunday. "Gangs of drunken brutes" staggered about the town looking for mining officials whom they planned to hang from lamp-posts. The revolution, as an organised undertaking, had collapsed.

Burghers from Standerton and the Eastern Transvaal, who had been called up by the Government, entered Benoni on horseback on Monday, later marching through the centre of the town, arresting every man they found. These were then put into a camp and Benoni was placed under military law.

During the day, however, influential men in the town came forward to speak for those who had been arrested and prisoners were gradually released.

The burghers themselves also fell to looting and when they eventually left Benoni they took with them new saddles, clothing and other items.

Benoni settled back to lick her wounds and to deal with those who had inflicted them. One of those charged with murder was Donald Snowden, the town chimney sweep, pest exterminator and an ardent Communist, said Mr Humphriss, who has a book of poems written by Mr Snowden while in jail.

Snowden has been accused of shooting on two policemen, but in a long poem to his dead friend, Paddy McLean, a rigger, tells how it was Paddy who fired the shots.

"Yes, he fired those shots, and they swore it was me.

Made out it was twelve when he only fired three.

The reason he missed them, I'm happy to say,

They kept well out of sight in Tonkin's doorway."

(ED: In his book "Benoni -The Golden Days" Ken McLuckie tells how an elderly lady called Jean used to tell him stories of yore and how, during the 1922 strike, she was sitting in their yard against a brick wall and her father had just walked past her when shots rang out and some bullets slammed into the brickwork above her. Jean put this down to stray bullets but later on, Ken found out that Jean's father had been a 'Scab' during the revolt and that the Strike Committee had decided to liquidate him. He was however well protected by the police so the marksman had climbed the mine-dump in order to shoot him when he went outside to use the toilet. Fortunately, Jean had obstructed the marksman's line of fire and he fired too high.

Jean's father was totally ostracized by his previous colleagues after the strike, even by the Mine-bosses and he was never promoted, they, the bosses knowing that nobody would want to work under his management. This seems to tie in with the last paragraph of the above: 'Scabs' and anti-strikers were deliberately targeted for assassination!

{Return to Main} kins were blown to smithereens!"

{Link to The Oosrandse Nuus

The Benoni Abattoir. *{Return to main} [The Benoni abattoir](#)*

In the early pioneer days of Benoni, the meat supply for the district was slaughtered on the surrounding farms and it was not until 1910 that a makeshift abattoir was erected, better known as a slaughter pole at the north-east shore of Westdene Pan.

In 1913 the Council built "The Benoni Abattoir" which was situated in Railway Avenue at the lower end of Kimbolton Street, and Mr. C.A. Boyce became superintendent. However as the population of the town increased, this amenity became outmoded.

Mr. William Daniel Maritz, who was the first loading contractor, started working at the abattoir at a very early age of about 15 years old in Railway Avenue.

Consequently the Council agreed to build an up-to-date abattoir at the Industrial Sites then a sparsely-occupied area. This project was completed in 1935 to the design of the then Abattoir Superintendent H.J. Davey.

Not only meat, but poultry, fish, eggs and at times fruit were also kept in the cold storage at the abattoir.

In terms of the Public Health Act, carcasses undergo regulation "cuts" – that is the carcass is cut and the body inspected in order to determine whether it is in a healthy state or not. Should the inspection reveal 10 or more cysts, more commonly known as "measles", the carcass is condemned. However should it possess less than 10 measles, it is detained in the cold storage (at the cost of the owner) for a period of 14 days before being released for consumption.

When Mr. William Maritz passed away in the late 1950's, his son Mr. Hendrik Maritz took over the loading contracting family business and worked there for 23 years. Mr.

Ronnie Hamilton, a fine gentleman was the superintendent at the time and Mr. Fanie Human the Senior Government Meat Board Representative.

Mr. Piet Griesel was head of the slaughter men and Mr. Louis Pieters was the foreman. Together with Mr. William Maritz these men made sure of the smooth running of the abattoir. At one stage, the Benoni abattoir was the 5th biggest slaughter abattoir in South Africa, killing 350 oxen, 2 000 sheep and 300 + pigs a day.

In Order to cope with the requests for increased space and facilities, there had been a number of additions to the building and as the abattoir became surrounded by many industries, the then Nationalist Government took over the complete running of the abattoirs. Although it was contested, the takeover was successful.

Extracts from Golden Jubilee Supplement Sept 24 1971 & Big Ben booklet dated 1942.

Info also sent in by Mr. Hendrik Maritz. (011) 965 0853.

Typed by Glynis Millett-Clay

Benonibook/100/gmc

Some further notes on Archeology:

Iron Age people started to settle in southern Africa c. AD 300, with one of the oldest known sites at Broederstroom south of Hartebeespoort Dam dating to AD 470. Having only had cereals (sorghum, millet) that need summer rainfall, Early Iron Age (EIA) people did not move outside this rainfall zone, and neither did they occupy the central interior highveld area.

The occupation of the larger geographical area (including the study area) did not start much before the 1500s. By the 16th century things changed, with the climate becoming warmer and wetter, creating condition that allowed Late Iron Age (UA) farmers to occupy areas previously unsuitable, for example the Witwatersrand in the region of Klipriviersberg. Here, a large number of settlements dating to the Later Iron Age occur and, according to Huffman et al (2006/2007) these sites can be related to the Bafokeng people.

Source: 9 Heritage Impact Assessment Rietfontein 1151R

CEMETERIES & GRAVES

One of the oldest possible cemeteries in Benoni is the one in Putfontein which dates back to the early 1800's.

According to one of the residents of Putfontein in 1889, her gt gt grandmother was buried there when the horse drawn postal carriage from Heidelberg used to rest their horses at a Mr. Henning's stop-over.

The oldest grave is that of a Mr L.J. NEL who was laid to rest in 1820 and the last grave was dated 1911. People with the surname MARAIS, HENNING, NEL, KRUGER and DE BEER are buried there. Most of the graves are ruined and the names are un-readable.

Another cemetery is in Dagenham Street, Benoni South which has about 80 graves and is located between factories without a sign to indicate it – even in a map book. This neglected graveyard on private property could have possibly started when the mines were active in the beginning of the 19 century.

Many of these types of cemeteries can be found around Benoni however the Ekurhuleni Metro do not have any records of the burials at private or mine cemeteries.

A "Chinese" cemetery is also located in the grounds of the Benoni Country Club. It is about 1HA in extent. In 1952 burials were still taking place, many years after the Chinese workers ceased to be employed on the gold mines. According to the names on the grave stones, and judging by the habit of blacks to pack large stones on the graves, it would appear that the majority of those buried there were black contract workers on the early mines

It is revealed that a total of about 100 graves are there of which 30 have grave stones. The unmarked graves could contain the remains of Chinese miners however cannot be positively established as stated by the Head of Parks and Recreation dated 1982.

The other cemetery in Benoni is the one near Rynsoord.

The grave of Oliver Tambo can be found in the new graveyard, Xaba Street, Tambonville.

Source: Snippets from Benoni City Times; write up from Town clerk dated 1982

Researched, written and typed by: Glynis Millett-Clay

Ed: * The Rynsoord cemetery, Benoni's main resting place, was laid out on Modder Deep mine lands, off Main Reef Road with the first interment on 18 Oct 1911.

The Imperial Hotel [{Return to The Imperial Hotel}](#)

TIME GENTLEMEN, PLEASE!

Favourite haunt closes its doors

The favorite Benoni haunt of such past sporting
pleas as Willie Smith, Sid Cane, Jim MacGregor and
Leo McLaughlin will cease to exist when the Imperial
Hotel closes down at the end of this month.

The hotel, owned by David
Blair, former South African
cricketer, has been
operating since 1911. It has
been a "sporting place" for
the last 40 years.

Mr and Mrs Blair have
been in the hotel since 1911
and 1912, a long time.

Developed in the past as one
of the leading South African
sporting and social centres,
the hotel has been a favourite
haunt of the past sporting
pleas. The major reason for
its closing is the low demand
for the hotel since the war.

Among the regulars in the
hotel are Willie Smith, Sid
Cane, Jim MacGregor and
Leo McLaughlin. The hotel
has been a favourite haunt
of the past sporting pleas
since 1911.

"The Blair family," a name
known to the public for many
years, has been the driving
force of the hotel since 1911.
The Blair family has been
in the hotel since 1911 and
1912, a long time.

Mr Blair, who has been in
the hotel since 1911, has
been a favourite haunt of
the past sporting pleas since
1911.

The Blair family has been
in the hotel since 1911 and
1912, a long time.

CITY TIMES ON COORANTHE NURS, FRIDAY, MAY 21, 1954



The Imperial Hotel in Benoni, South Africa, closed its doors last night for the last time.

The hotel, one of the oldest "sporting" hotels in Benoni, had opened its doors in 1911.

Regulars

Among the regulars of the hotel were Willie Smith, Sid Cane, Jim MacGregor and Leo McLaughlin. The hotel has been a favourite haunt of the past sporting pleas since 1911.

Long service

Members of the staff have been in the employ of the hotel for more than 20 years. Many of them will be working in the new hotel which will be built on the site of the old hotel.

"Although we are having an excellent time of it, we are sorry to see the hotel go," said Mr Blair. "The hotel has been a favourite haunt of the past sporting pleas since 1911."

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"Although we are having an excellent time of it, we are sorry to see the hotel go," said Mr Blair. "The hotel has been a favourite haunt of the past sporting pleas since 1911."

Brief History of Benoni Lodge No. 3157 [Return to: The first Masonic Lodge](#)

English Constitution

18th March 1905 to 21st February 2006

Extracted from the original Minute Books held in the Lodge Archives

A proposal to form a Lodge in what today is Benoni was submitted by eight (8) Masons employed by the local mining companies. All members were from various constitutions in Cumberland, Cornwall and Scotland (United Kingdom).

The eight (8) members held a meeting and after discussions agreed to apply for a constitution from the Grand Lodge of England. Application was submitted via the then District Grand Master C. Abarrow, who approved and granted a provisional warrant to form Benoni Lodge No. 3157, on the roll of the Grand Lodge Of England. The Lodge was opened on 18th November 1905, under the authority of Provisional Warrant, pending the arrival from London of the official Warrant.

The first meeting was quite a drain on the original founder members pockets.

Warrant from London required each of the eight (8) members to pay £5-5shillings. i.e. (5 Guineas). Today the Centenary Warrant cost £350.00 plus bank charges.

They also had to pay a further £1-2s-6p each towards the evening's festive board and a further 1shilling & 6 pence (1/6) towards printing of the Constitution.

The District Grand Master together with fourteen (14) Senior Officers and fiftyOne (51) other Masons traveled to Benoni for the first meeting. The founding Master, T.H. Salmon was installed and the remaining seven (7) members were the founders of the Lodge.

The first duty of founding Master was to apply for dispensation to hold extra meetings between 18th November 1905 and December 1905 to accommodate the large numbers of Masons and applicants wishing to join. Most of who came from the local staff of the Mining Companies together with boarding house management and the small businesses in Benoni.

Prior to the area being proclaimed a township, the Lodge received applications from the local Dental Surgeon, the Officer of 'The Salvation Army' and local Pharmacist, and by 1907 the local Doctor of Medicine and a further ordained Minister.

After the area had been proclaimed a township, and the local residents a settled community, more applications were being received from managements of local businesses to join the Lodge.

Today Benoni Lodge has to thank some of these early members, such as T. Bartram, the second Master with thirty-eight (38) years service, and their fourth Master R.J. Robinson with fifty-four (54) years service, who retired on his return to his home country.

Founder member T.W. MacAdam, who became Master of Nigel Lodge No. 847 (Scottish Constitution). The late Johnny Smith, Master 1962-63, who continued to serve until he was unable to drive after dark. Terrence Marsh, Master 1963-64, who today is Senior Past Master and still in the Lodge. Ken MacKay, Master 1993-94, 1970-71 & 2001-02.

In between his Masterships continued with the secretarial duties of the Lodge until he retired to Scotland.

A number of our past members have left the Lodge legacies and today the Lodge receives donations from all over the world, these are held in Trust funds and the Interest donated annually to various charities.

Benevolent Collection account was opened with £6-9s-6p, being donations from all the eight (8) members and visitors. Today the end of year charity donations is in the Thousands of Rand.

War Years 1914 –1918 & 1939 – 1945

The Lodge continued open through these years and although a large number of members were away on active service the Lodge passed a resolution to carry their annual subscriptions. Regrettably not all members returned at the end of these two world wars.

In our Centenary year the Lodge minutes reflected a membership of 643 men from the local area, who became members of Benoni Lodge. The majority is now deceased or has been transferred to other South African Lodges or overseas. Today we have three (3) members in the United Kingdom and two (2) in the Gulf States.

Anyone who may be a descendant of any one who may have been a member, and would like more information may contact the secretary: -

K.L. Rayne (Past Master)

Tel: 011 849 5134

Cell: 082 969 8846

Return to: [The first Masonic Lodge](#)

FRITH VAN DER MERWE - At the age of two, Frith van der Merwe moved from Johannesburg to Benoni. It was in Benoni that she spent the best years of her life.

She went to Tom Newby Primary School and then on to Willowmore High where her athletic talent was discovered. The highlight of her athletics at school was winning the 1500m at Interhigh.

Frith then went on to Wits University where she received her colours. She qualified as a teacher in 1986 and began teaching at Wordsworth High School. Frith then moved to Benoni High in 1988, joined Benoni Northerns Athletic Club and her running career took off.

The highlights of Frith's athletic career was winning the Comrades Marathon in 1988, 1989 and 1991. She still holds the Comrades Marathon down record with a time of 5 hours and 54 minutes.

The Russians still have not managed to break her record. She won the Two Oceans Marathon in 1989 and her record of 3 hours 30 minutes still stands. In 1989 and 1990 Frith won the SA Marathon Champs, set record of 2 hours 27 minutes and this record also still stands. In 1990 she received the SA Sportsman of the year.

Other Famous People from Benoni (See *'The Norval Family Website'*)

Bryan Habana, current Springboks rugby union

Mildred Mangxola, singer and member of the Mahotella Queens

Jessica Marais, actress

Brian Mitchell, boxing champion,

Koos Ras, singer, comedian, writer and businessman

Charlize Theron, Oscar-winning actress

Charlene, Princess of Monaco, (née Charlene Wittstock), swimmer, and consort of Prince Albert II of Monaco

Victor Vic Anthony Toweel, undisputed World bantamweight champion and South African boxing champion. He and his brothers were known as the 'Fighting Toweels' as they'd all won various regional boxing titles around the world and Willie Toweel won bronze medal at the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki.

Oliver Reginald Tambo, ANC, ANCYL and SACP hero during the Apartheid regime. He is one of the original co-signees (along with Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela et al.) to the ANC's Freedom Charter (signed in 1955), most of which formed the preamble to South Africa's

Constitution and many of the country's current policies.

Mark Stent, DJ/Producer, Record Label Owner

Themba Nkosi, better known as Euphonik

Karabo Gosebo