

our sincere love and loyalty to Her Gracious Majesty's Government, under which we enjoy perfect religious freedom and the benefits of European Civilization' (no.99). Of the four deacons who appear on this document with Tyamzashe, three could sign their names, while 'Zwartbooy Leo' could only make his mark.

The 'Native Christians (Kafirs and Fingoes)' of St Luke's mission, Newlands, in the East London district (no.32), assured Frere that 'At such times of political unrest as the present, it will be a source of satisfaction to Your Excellency and your advisers to know that the Christian portions of the Native tribes in this Colony are loyal to the British Crown, and that the interests of the Dominant race are felt to be one with their own' — the date of this document was 7 September 1877, the month in which the Cape Frontier Police pushed the Gcaleka back across the Mbashe, marking the beginning of the Ninth and last Frontier War. Among the signatures appended to this address were those of two men with surnames familiar in the annals of church and mission history, the assistant teacher and catechist Herman Tshatshu and the lay helper Jan Tutu, as well as that of one woman, Martia G. Bond, teacher. According to the accompanying statistical form, the total population of the station and district was estimated to be some 5000 blacks, of whom 325 were baptised.

The existence of groups of indigenous peoples not under the aegis of any church or mission is, however, also recorded: an address from the 'native inhabitants of Bultfontein...' (no.95) is a reminder of the fact that during the first decade or so after the discovery of diamonds, blacks were to some extent able to exist as independent diggers before being edged out by an increasingly colour-conscious white community. The text is brief and conventional, but the document bears 80 signatures: judging by the surnames, most of those who signed seem to have been black, with a few Griquas or coloured men among them.

Most interesting, perhaps, is the address of the Committee of the 'Native Agricultural Society in Emigrant Tembuland,' which was forwarded to Frere by the magistrate at Southeyville, who refers to them as 'the Native Farmers of this District' (no.80): the five members of the Committee all signed with their marks. 'As President of your Society,' he wrote in the draft reply attached to the address, 'I had hoped to have paid you a visit before leaving South Africa, assured that what I should see in Tembuland wd be in every way gratifying to one who for forty-five years of his official life has ever felt the deepest interest in the native races. I am now under the necessity of resigning the honorary office which specially connected me with your association, but I shall always hope to receive copies of the proceedings of your annual meetings; and be assured that if I can be of any service to your Society while I am in England, you may rely on my interest in all your proceedings being undiminished.'

THE VREDEHOEK TIN MINE, CAPE TOWN *

Peter Sparco

Although the Western Cape could not in any real sense be termed a mining area, nevertheless during its geological history the region has undergone some degree of mineralization and during the past three centuries a number of companies have been floated in order to exploit real or imaginary deposits of tin, manganese, tungsten, silver, gold and copper in the area.¹ One of the most fascinating of these early mining ventures is that concerned with the mining of tin on the lower slopes of Devil's Peak, above the suburb of Vredehoek, before the First World War — the only substantial mining operation which has taken place within the city of Cape Town.²

Around the turn of the century tin, in the form of alluvial deposits of the dense mineral cassiterite, was discovered near Cape Town and the mid-1900s saw the first commercial exploitation of the tin deposits of the then Cape Colony with the development of a number of tin mines in the Kuils River area some twenty-five kilometres to the east of the city. However, the prospecting net was clearly being cast wider, for on 17 September 1909 the well-known local prospector A.C. Ross applied to the Cape Town City Council for permission to 'prospect for, extract and remove' all minerals which might be found on the ground immediately above the farm Vrede Hoek on the slopes of what Ross called 'the Devil's Peak.'

After much debate the City Council approved Ross's application, at the same time adding a number of terms and conditions 'which have been carefully settled by the Committee.'³ During the next few months similar applications from Chiappini Brothers, a local firm of share, stock and real estate brokers, and a Mr S.S. Keyzer were both turned down by the Council, Ross's application being regarded as having precedence because of its prior date.⁴ In spite of these protracted negotiations between prospectors and the City Council, the great majority of the citizens of Cape Town were no doubt astonished when they read in the *Cape Argus* in June 1910 that tin had been discovered 'on the land lying between the foot of Devil's Peak and Upper Buitenkant Street.' There was even an element of human drama in the report, for it recounted that the discovery had been made by Mr Ross when he was sheltering under a boulder during a heavy rain storm.⁵ A later report

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presented an even more dramatic picture of the discovery, recounting how the deposit was found 'on a rainy day, when weary, foot-sore and wet, the prospector and his companion had taken refuge under some bushes at Vrede Hoek ...'⁶ Technical advice was sought from Dr P.D. Hahn, 'the eminent professor of metallurgy at the South African College,' and C.F. Hamilton, apparently a consulting mining engineer, both of whom were extremely positive about the future prospects of the discovery. The initial discovery had clearly been followed by fairly extensive proving of the deposit, for an account of March 1911 talks of the slope above the stream in which the original discovery had been made being 'opened up over a distance of 500 feet on a more or less horizontal line about 30 to 50 feet above the water stream.'⁷

Clearly much more than prospecting was going on behind the scenes, for towards the end of March 1911 the Cape Town newspapers announced the issuing of the prospectus of the Vredehoek Tin Developing Syndicate. This had a capital of £50 000 – a substantial sum for the time – in one-pound shares and boasted amongst its directors well-known Capetonians such as Senator Sir Meiring Beck, Mr Ludwig Wiener and Senator A.G. Viljoen.⁸ One of the most noteworthy of the subscribers to the company was Sammy Marks, described as 'Capitalist, Pretoria, Transvaal,' who purchased five hundred shares. The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the company was a somewhat grand affair, full of ambitious plans for the future



The spot where tin was first discovered

such as 'To carry on the business of a Tin Producing Company in all its branches, and to deal in all classes of minerals in any part of the world.'⁹

The company's shares first appeared on the Cape Town Stock Exchange on Saturday 1 April 1911. Although described as 'not officially quoted,' they nevertheless were 'wanted at 30s.'¹⁰ This was something of an act of faith on the part of investors for the company was only officially registered, under the Companies Act of 1902, on 6 April. The secretary of the company was Mr J.S. le Sueur and its offices were at 14 Keerom Street, Cape Town.¹¹

The price of the company's shares rose rapidly and by 29 April sellers were asking 80s. They continued to be actively traded, maintaining a price of about 50s. until October, when their price began to decline. In November the *Cape Argus* announced that the share registers of the company would be closed for a fortnight 'for purposes connected with applications for shares in the Prospect Hill Tin Prospecting and Developing Syndicate Limited.'¹² This latter company was incorporated in October 1911 with a nominal share capital of £16 000 and several directors in common with the Vredehoek company. The nature of the relations between the two companies is still not completely clear, but it would appear that the Prospect Hill company owned a piece of land adjoining that on which the Vredehoek company was mining. However, there is no evidence that any actual mining operations took place on this land and the two companies seem to have entered into some form of service agreement.¹³

Development of the mine was now rapid and by January 1912 the *Cape Argus* reported that a vertical shaft 180 ft. (55m) in depth had already been sunk into 'a highly mineralized zone' and that a five-stamp crushing battery had been erected. The stamp battery, which had 1050 lb. (475 kg.) stamps, and various other pieces of machinery, was operated by a 50 horsepower suction gas engine.¹⁴ As it is always more convenient, and cheaper, to tram ore out of a mine through a horizontal adit rather than hoisting it up a vertical shaft against gravity, an adit some 120m in length was driven from the base of the vertical shaft until it emerged from the side of the hill some distance above the stream. From the mouth of the adit the ore was fed by gravity to the crushing and concentrating plant immediately below. The ore was concentrated as follows. After crushing in the stamp mill in order to release the fine particles of tin-bearing cassiterite from the surrounding matrix of silica, the material was fed into the first of a set of concrete troughs, or flumes. Arranged so that they touched end-to-end, but with each trough slightly lower than the preceding one, a stream of water flowed along the line of troughs. The cassiterite particles, with a density of some 7 g/cm³, would sink through the water to the bottom of the troughs, while the particles of silica, with a density of only 2.2

g/cm³, would tend to be carried away by the stream of water, thereby effecting separation. From time to time the cassiterite – known as ‘concentrate’ – was removed from the troughs, bagged and sent to Britain for conversion into metallic tin.

Inside the mine itself a second shaft, now flooded, was sunk from near the base of the main shaft. This was presumably done in an attempt to intersect further tin-bearing ore and is strong evidence that the veins which had previously been worked had now petered out – as is clearly evident from an inspection of the mine today. Various other exploratory drives were also driven from near the base of the main shaft but none succeeded in intersecting further payable ore.

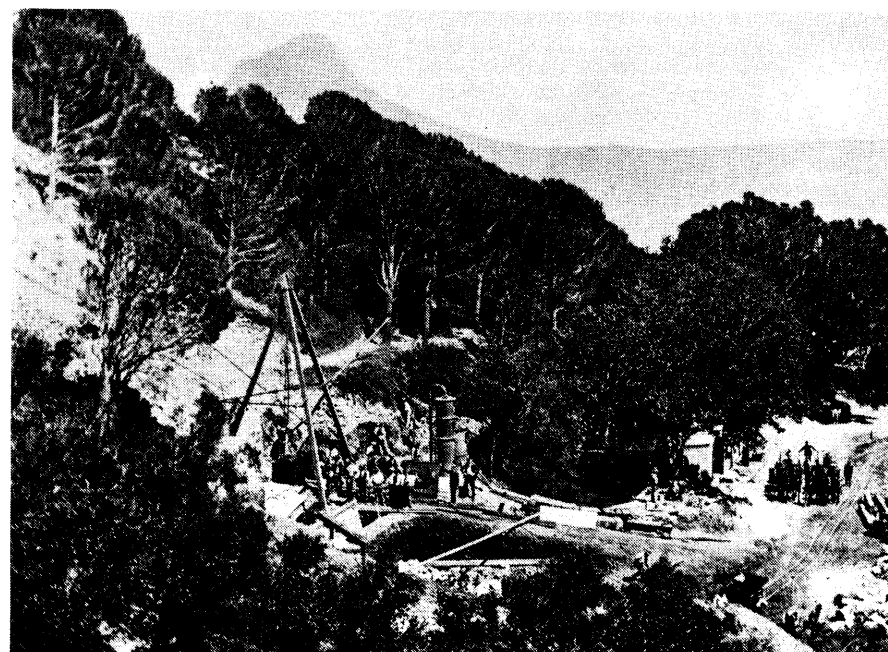
The labour force on the mine had meanwhile grown steadily and the *Government gazette* for January 1912 not only mentions the five-stamp battery, but also reports that there were eleven ‘Europeans’ employed on the site as well as forty-three ‘Coloured’ labourers underground and forty-two on the surface, giving a remarkable total of nearly a hundred men.¹⁵ It is also reported that the manager of the mine was the brother of A.C. Ross, the original prospector.

This period represents the high-water mark of the mine, for soon afterwards the number of men employed began to drop sharply. The official records show that by March 1912 only eleven ‘Whites’ and thirty ‘Coloureds’ were employed on the mine, while by May these figures had dropped to two and seven respectively. A report prepared by the Acting Statistical Clerk of the Office of the Government Mining Engineer shows all too clearly that by now the mine was in serious trouble, for while in November 1911 it had produced 430 tons of ore, by March 1912 this had fallen to 107 tons. Thereafter nothing further was produced and, as the report sadly states, ‘Syndicate ceased work 10 May 1912.’¹⁶

The company’s shares on the Cape Town Stock Exchange reflected its changing fortunes: having come on the market on 1 April 1911 at 30s. and risen rapidly to 80s. by 29 April 1911, thereafter they fell steadily until on 22 March 1912, a last, lonely seller was offering his ‘Vredehoeks’ at 10s. There were no takers.¹⁷

In August 1912, Messrs Farrar Bros. of Johannesburg entered into a prospecting contract with the Vredehoek Syndicate and further development work was carried out inside the mine. Farrar Bros., however, decided to abandon this option and this phase of the work ceased on 14 October 1912. Although the records are not perfectly clear, it would appear that in its working life the mine produced a little over 500 tons of ore for crushing and that from this, about 4 tons of crude concentrate resulted.

In August 1913 the Deputy Inspector of Mines, Kimberley District, visited the mine and reported that ‘work was stopped, the winze (ie. the vertical shaft inside the mine) from the adit was full of water, and the roof and walls of the workings



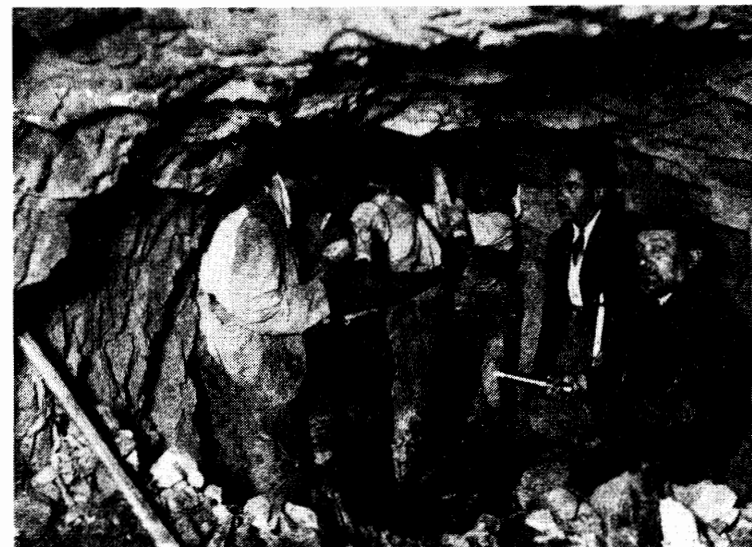
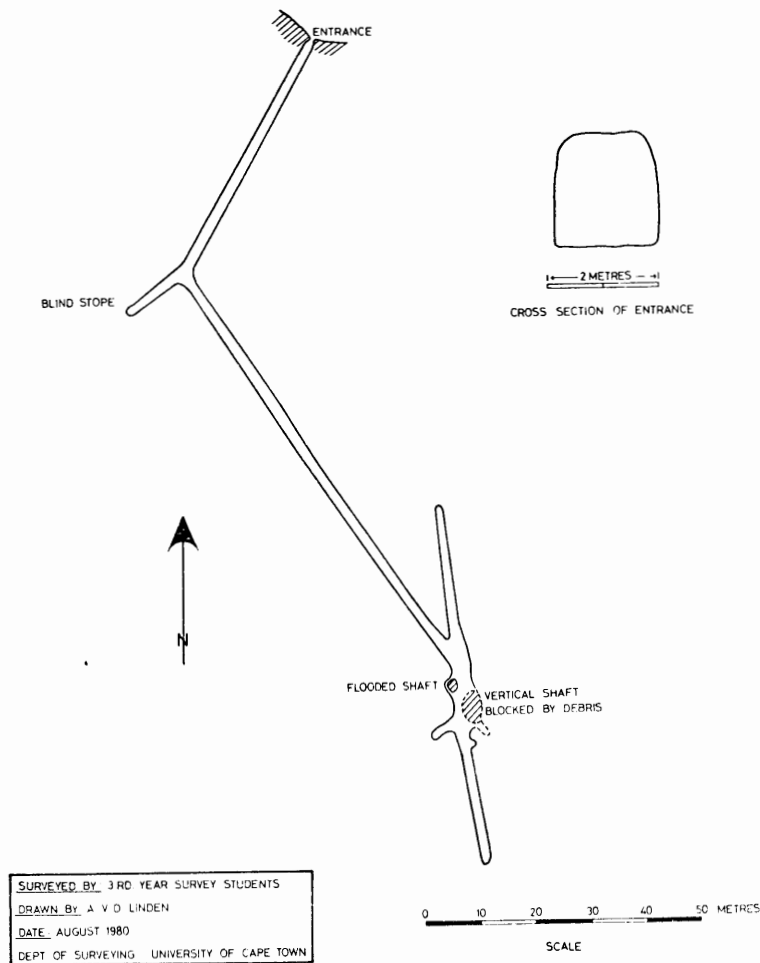
General view of the battery site showing machinery being erected for the 5-stamp battery.

mostly covered with dust ...’ However, hopes of restoring the mine to some form of operation had apparently not completely died, for in December it was reported that ‘At Cape Town work has again been resumed on the property of the Vredehoek Tin Mining Company on the slopes of Table Mountain; the present demand for men is, however, limited to coloured labourers for hammer and drill work.’¹⁸

Little now remained except to proceed with the formal winding up of the company. Thus on 29 December 1916, at an extraordinary general meeting of the Syndicate, a resolution was passed voluntarily winding up the company. On 29 December 1920 a general meeting of members of the company carried the final winding-up resolution. The liquidators, C.C. Silberbauer and F.K. Wiener, were discharged and the winding-up of the accounts was confirmed.¹⁹

Meanwhile, in October 1918, the Good Hope Tin Mine in Kuils River had succeeded in obtaining most of the plant from the Vredehoek mine ‘at a bargain price.’ Thus ended Cape Town’s only real mining venture. It had started with energy, enthusiasm and hope but had died with hardly a whimper and, one suspects, little if any profit for anyone.

VREDEHOEK TIN MINE PROJECT



At work in no. 2 adit, 203 feet in.

This brief history of the mine would be incomplete without some discussion as to why it failed. One possibility is of course that the price of tin plummeted during the life of the mine, thereby rendering it unprofitable. This, however, is not the case. When tin ore was discovered on the lower slopes of Devil's Peak by A.C. Ross in June 1910, the price of tin on the London Metal Exchange stood at £148 per ton. Two years later, when the mine ceased operating in May 1912, it had risen to £212 per ton. The reason must therefore be sought elsewhere. Although one cannot speak with absolute certainty, all the evidence points strongly to the fact that the positive surface indications with regard to the quality and quantity of ore were not maintained at depth and the mine simply ran out of ore. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that today it is extremely difficult to find even the slightest trace of ore in the mine – it has been totally mined out and nothing remains.

In 1989 the City Planner's Department of the City of Cape Town commissioned a report on the mine by the Science Education Unit of the University of Cape Town. This report, which was presented to the City Council in October 1990, contained numerous recommendations for action to preserve the mine.²⁰ None of these, however, has ever been put into effect by the City Council and over the years the condition of much of the mine has deteriorated. Thus the flumes have become steadily more undercut by erosion, the supply dam choked with rocks and the

entrance to the mine partly blocked. Fortunately on 1 May 1998 the land on which the mine is situated was incorporated into the Cape Peninsula National Park and one can only hope that the National Parks Board will prove to be a more responsible custodian of the mine than its predecessor. As the sole relic of a true mining venture within the city of Cape Town, the Vredehoek tin mine occupies a particularly precious place within the history of the city and thus deserves to take its place amongst other notable examples of early industry in the city such as Mostert's Mill and the Josephine Mill.

ENDNOTES

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FANNY, THE POLITICAL LION¹

V.C. Malherbe

September 1899: As South Africa plunged towards war, a lioness called Fanny provided a novel outlet for the overwrought patriotism of Boer and Briton. With feline insouciance she ranged the ridiculous side by side with solemn and tragic events.

Fanny belonged to Cecil Rhodes. She lived at Groote Schuur, a feature of the menagerie which Rhodes maintained as a 'pleasaunce' for the public to enjoy.² According to his architect, Sir Herbert Baker, it was Rhodes' intention to build a noble, colonnaded lion house, 'a Paestum temple ... where the king of beasts would be admired in his natural strength and dignity.'³ Nothing had come of this and Fanny and the other lions were housed in conventional enclosures. However, events were conspiring to give Fanny a change of scene.

In distant Pretoria, the recently appointed Director of the State Museum, Dr J.W.B. Gunning,⁴ was anxious to found a Zoological Garden. He and the museum's taxidermist had begun to collect live animals which they kept in the backyard, at their own expense. In September 1899, Gunning came to Cape Town with several aims in mind. He was to find someone to stand in for him while he attended the Paris Exhibition the following year. He was also to attend the Sixth Annual Congress of the South African Agricultural Union. And he made a point of visiting Groote Schuur in order to study the system of cages and enclosures in use at the zoo there. During one of these visits, Gunning learned from the senior keeper that Rhodes would be willing to part with a young lioness which he had recently been given. He was immediately interested because the Pretoria Zoo had as yet no lion.⁵

On 15 September, Dr Gunning together with other delegates to the Agricultural Union congress, went to lunch at Groote Schuur. Rhodes had heard of the doctor's interest in his superfluous lioness and he introduced the topic over lunch. What the two said was to become the subject of heated conjecture. The outcome of their transaction was that when Gunning left the next morning by train, Fanny went with him.

Somehow the news that Gunning was returning with a 'lion,' and that Rhodes had a hand in it, preceded their arrival in Pretoria. According to biographers who knew him best, Rhodes had kept so far out of the affairs of the South African Republic since the Jameson Raid that he was virtually the only person in the country who did not believe that war was imminent, and was innocent of any meddling.⁶ Be that as it may, a number of indignant Transvalers were on the