VISITING OUR URBAN PAST: THE KIMBERLEY MINE AND PILGRIMS REST MUSEUMS

Alan Mabin*

University of the Witwatersrand

Both Pilgrims Rest and the Kimberley Mine Museum represent remarkable achievements in the field of public presentation of the past. However, both of these open air, urban museums, fascinating as they are, could be subjected to criticism for their failure to capture the forces of social change. Some of the contrasts between the past portrayed in the more recent historiography and that offered by the museum versions are discussed in the paper. Possibilities for the further development of the museums to deal with the issues raised are then examined.

Most citizens can spend little time considering the intellectual products of urban historians. In South Africa, many people receive their impressions of the urban past from the few attempts which have been made in the country to portray the urban past in public terms. If it is accepted that the better we understand the forces which have made our cities and towns in the past, the better we may become at making liveable cities in the future, then we (citizens and professionals) need to think carefully about the ways in which the urban changes, achievements and inequities of the past are communicated through public means. Unlike some other countries (Sweden, the UK, Australia and preeminently the USA) we do not have many open-air museums of the urban past.[1] Indeed, only two spring readily to mind - Pilgrims Rest and the Kimberley Open Mine Museum.[2]

This paper addresses the possibilities of open air museums as contributors to the understanding of our urban past. The paper considers the representations of the past at Kimberley and Pilgrims Rest. It outlines the achievements of those museums, contrasts their portrayals with some other versions of the same histories, and contemplates ways in which their contributions to extending our understanding of the urban past could be enhanced.

The purpose of paper is not to highlight negative criticism of the two main museums which it describes. The great difficulties under which any museologist must labour in portraying the past of an urban community are recognised, and more than anything else the paper seeks to convey a sense of the remarkable achievements which Pilgrims Rest and the Kimberley Open Mine Museum represent. The paper is, rather, directed to exploring implications of public history which are not, perhaps, easily considered in the making of displays; and to stimulating discussion of the ways in which such museums may contribute to better consideration of our urban past.

Achievements

Perhaps the first thing to be said about the Open Mine Museum at Kimberley is that it is a considerable achievement. A large collection of buildings, not to mention other artifacts - some static, like the De Beers Directors coach, others working, like the Kimberley tram - has been assembled at the spectacular lip of the world's deepest open cast mine. Some parts of the collection show lavish attention to detail. Nowhere else in the country is there such an accessible and impressive, museum display of our urban past.

The Kimberley Mine Museum originated in the nineteen fifties with the relocation of a small number of old Kimberley buildings that someone thought worth preserving. One such was the 'oldest house in Kimberley', assembled from a prefabricated British kit in 1877 and relocated to the edge of the Big Hole in 1952. De Beers Consolidated Mines - ever since 1888 the most powerful actor in the city - encouraged or at least allowed these buildings to be placed 'on the edge of the hole'. Gradually the collection of buildings expanded, as older buildings continued to be relocated. From 1969 the substantial site was developed as an open air museum, a process which has continued to the present and which might proceed into the future, if land and resources were available.[3]

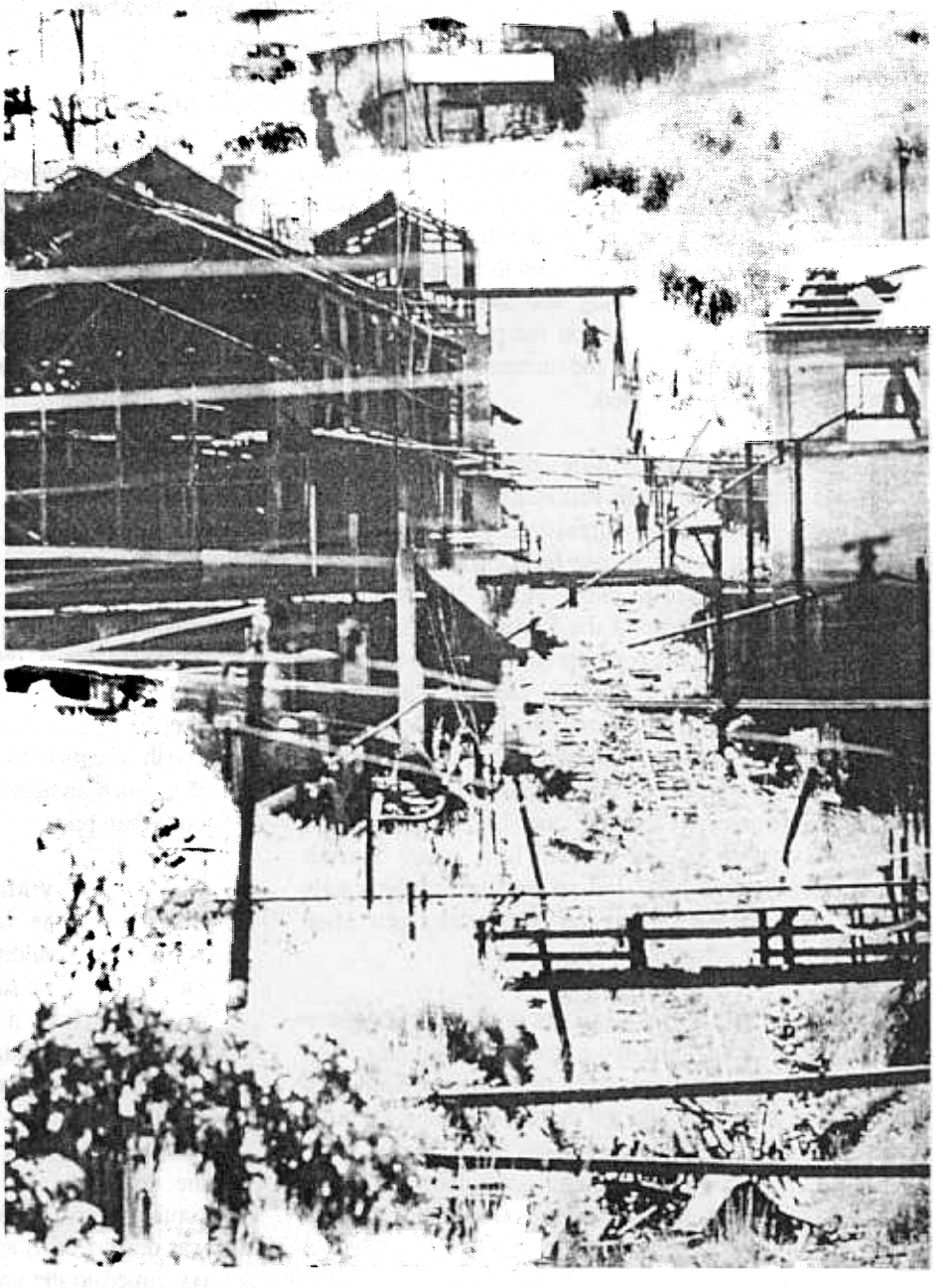
Acknowledgements: thanks to Jon Stone, Cynthia Kros, Jubilee Kok, Peter Coston and others for ideas which I hope I have not misused too freely. Financial assistance has been derived from HSRC/CSD grants and from the University of the Witwatersrand.

Kimberley Mine Museum provides more historical material for its users' engagement than any other site of its kind in South Africa. And the users enjoy the experience, paying in many cases close attention to the details of exhibits:

> And do you know that [old] style is coming into fashion again.[4]

While the context of the original buildings, meticulously restored, has to all intents been lost, and with it the record of meaning which all urban settings provide to their inhabitants, the museum has at least rescued some of this fabric from oblivion.[5] Moreover, it supplies many pointers to the production of the environment of the present through its complex past: one can walk into the architect's offices and sense the context of design in the nineties; at least the display of plans of early Kimberley helps to convey some idea of the physical production and change of the town, as in the plan dated 6 November 1877 hung on the wall of Barnato's boxing gymnasium.

Beyond that, there is a remarkable collection of places of business which give some sense of life: banks (even if the dummy teller at the Standard refuses to talk or move), blacksmith, dentist, under-taker, pawnbroker, diamond buyer, cigarette maker and more. The pre-mining state of the area (and the Dutch/boer back-ground) is partially cap-tured through the farmhouse of the 1860s owners of the land, the very De Beers from whom the well-known company name is drawn. There is a series of interesting displays (photographic, paintings, models, cabi-nets of clothing), placed inside houses and buildings which help to make up completed streets. Many features of the layout bear the imprint of careful consideration, some of which has been contributed by consulting architects.[6]



The abandoned reduction works at Pilgrims Rest in the mid-1970s prior to restoration. (All photographs taken by the author.)

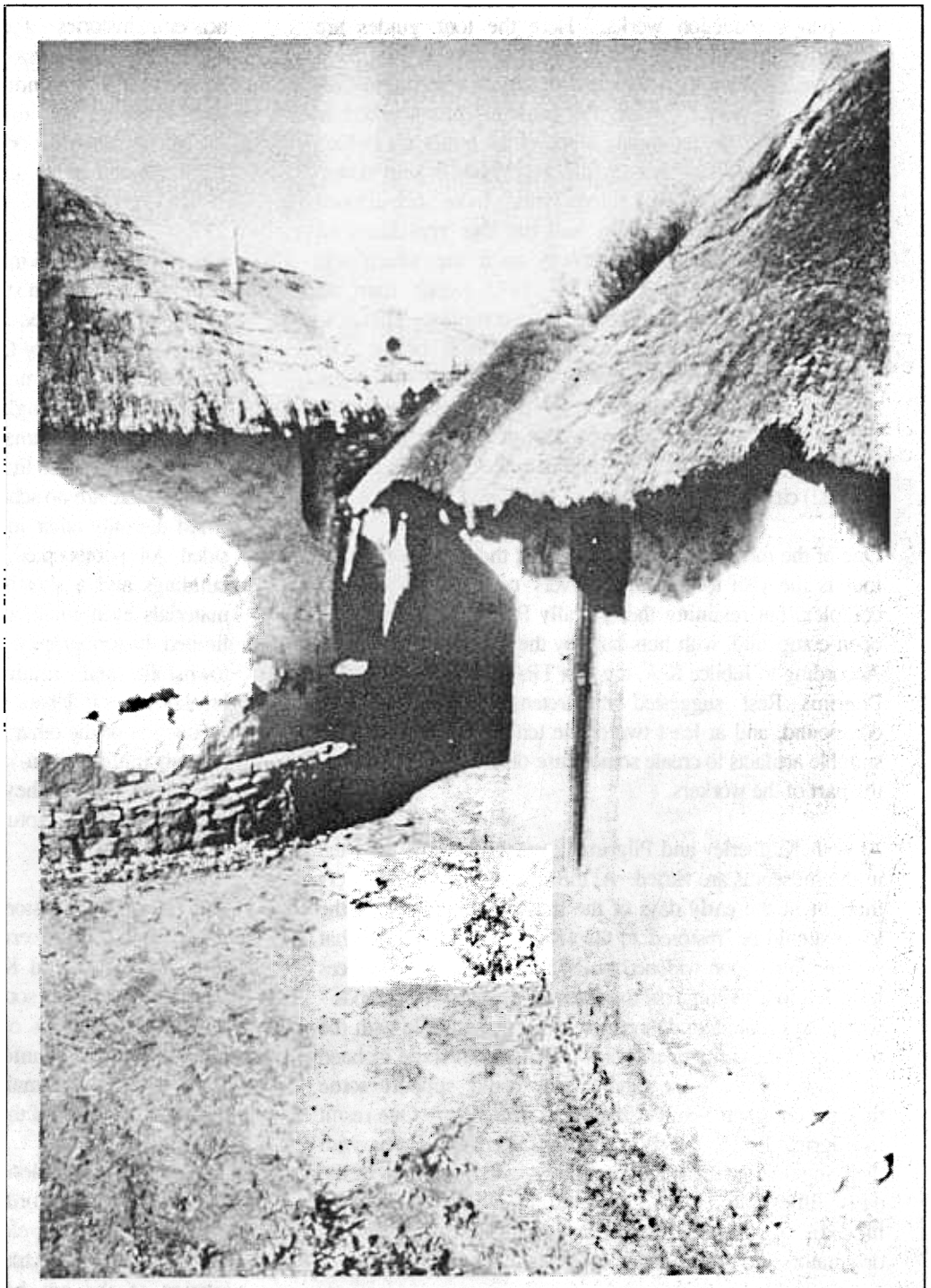
Representations of the river diggings and their alluvial diamond work, some rather static but nevertheless impressive halls of vehicles and machinery and, of course, a display of some of the more famous diamonds produced (real and imitation) provides a great deal of interest and even entertainment, drawing back many visitors who have regularly returned as they travel through Kimberley en route between major metropolises of the late twentieth century. In short, the Kimberley Mine Museum is a rewarding public presentation of urban history, sponsored by a major corporation, linked in many ways to its urban surroundings, but mainly isolated around a sophisticated recreation of some 'historical' surroundings.

Pilgrims Rest is a different phenomenon. This museum consists primarily of half a dozen sites in the interstices of a small, functioning town, with real shops selling nineteen nineties groceries to township dwellers and rural people as well as curio mongers, `historic resort' house conversions, partly restored mine reduction works, and several buildings devoted solely to museum functions. When the mines ceased work in the early seventies, a century after South Africa's first really significant modern gold prospect was found here in 1873, the then Transvaal Provincial Administration bought extensive surface rights and began the development of a museum complex. So one of the major differences from Kimberley Mine Museum is that here the key actor in celebrating the urban past is a public authority, not a private company.

The most obviously impressive thing about visiting Pilgrims Rest is the natural environment - beautiful in the extreme, mountainous, well watered by most South African standards, and varied. And the town itself is beautiful too - the Royal Hotel and the main street are surely among the most photographed human creations in the country. One of the achievements of the preser-vation era of the past two decades is the retention of many of the older structures, removal of some of the more appalling later additions, and the provision of a reasonable amount of accommodation for visitors.

Some 360 000 people are estimated to visit Pilgrims Rest annually, for periods varying literally from minutes to weeks. About 120 000 enter the museum sites, most of the latter going only to one or two of the available number. A wallmark of the six museum sites in Pilgrims Rest is that visitors can get right inside the feel of the house museums, river diggings and workshops. Kitchen tables, children's chairs and digger's beds are not glassed or walled or fenced off. and the sense of immediacy and contact with the periods depicted is almost tangi-ble.

This intimate feel is most lavishly accomplished at Alanglade, the mine manager's house built in 1915 for occupation by the somewhat dicta-torial incum-bent of the position at the time,[8] and retored to 1920s splendour by the museum service. Un-fortunately described in the museum's one interpretive publi-cation as `the ultimate in the architectural evolution of the town'',[9] Alanglade is actually a mansion in quite different style from almost every other building in the vicinity, with little of the charm of the



Self-built huts in the truck drivers' compound, Pilgrims Rest, preserved by the museum..

Pilgrims Rest vernacular.

Visitors to Alanglade must book to take the tour of the house, and similarly must hold a ticket to tour the river diggings, intended to represent the earliest period in Pilgrims Rest. For the visitors, gold is panned from a sluice box off the Pilgrims Creek and a sense of a complex history conveyed by the guide. Here occurs the only mention of women at work in the history provided by the museum (except for Alanglade's governess and nurse) - romantic tales of two women diggers who made good, one a school teacher from Durban.

The third tour available covers the old complex of buildings associated with the Transvaal Gold Mining Estates (TGME) Company's reduction works. Here the tour guides are people who used to work for TGME, like Jubilee Kok, now employed by the provincial museum service after more than 60 years at work. While the museum has worked at preservation of the remaining fabric of the buildings (which were seriously dilapidated by the time TGME shut down: see the first photo), limited funds have constrained restoration taking place here, and the tour represents an invitation to industrial archaeology on a site which was simply abandoned by TGME in 1972 rather than an introduction to the making of a mining complex. This is so despite the extraordinary breadth and depth of the tour guides' knowledge and repertoire of fascinating anecdotes, and the visits to such intriguing parts of the works as the James Table on the corduroy top of which gold was recovered for many decades - and tiny specks (which are not pyrites!) can still be knifed off.

One of the most remarkable features of the reduction works tour is the visit to the truck drivers' compound - a small complex, but retaining the typically Pilgrims Rest style of open compound, with huts built by the workers themselves. According to Jubilee Kok, the first TPA museum director at Pilgrims Rest suggested the retention of this small compound, and at least two of the ten huts have beds and suitable artifacts to create some sense of life at the works on the part of the workers.

At both Kimberley and Pilgrims Rest, the periods depicted in the museums are varied. At the latter, some practitioners thought in the early days of the museum (1970s) that the town should be `restored' to the 1880-1910 period; but that scheme fairly soon widened to 1875-1915. Later influences have led to a willingness to represent a variety of periods - which lays some foundations for visitors to grapple with the making of the contemporary town rather than some isolated snapshots of the past (and which could support some thought on urban South Africa more generally). One result in Pilgrims Rest is the shop museum, Dredzen's Store, with its living quarters attached, perfectly dressed to represent the early fifties (an unusual museum idea in South Africa indeed). Again, then, this is an impressive place, and its originators and practitioners worthy of congratulation.

Contrasts between public and printed histories

Yet, of course, the museums concerned present particular views of history, and even at their own sites printed materials which offer slightly different views might be encountered. And very different accounts do indeed exist, albeit not available at the museum shops. Impressed as many - perhaps most - visitors are with the exhibits and collections, they flock to the relevant outlets to seek printed materials as well as the more predictable souvenirs. The `Kimberley Mine Gift Shop' sells little material of real historical interest, but it does stock a collection of books. According to one of the staff Brian Roberts's book *Kimberley: Turbulent City*,[10] the best-distributed history of Kimberley, is in high demand. But the two more recent academic histories - Turrell's and Worger's[11] - are nowhere to be seen. Still less can one acquire popular materials which might help individuals, teachers, pupils or anyone else interpret the material on view, stimulate some analytical activity, or relate the questions posed by Kimberley's past to the challenges facing urban South Africa today.

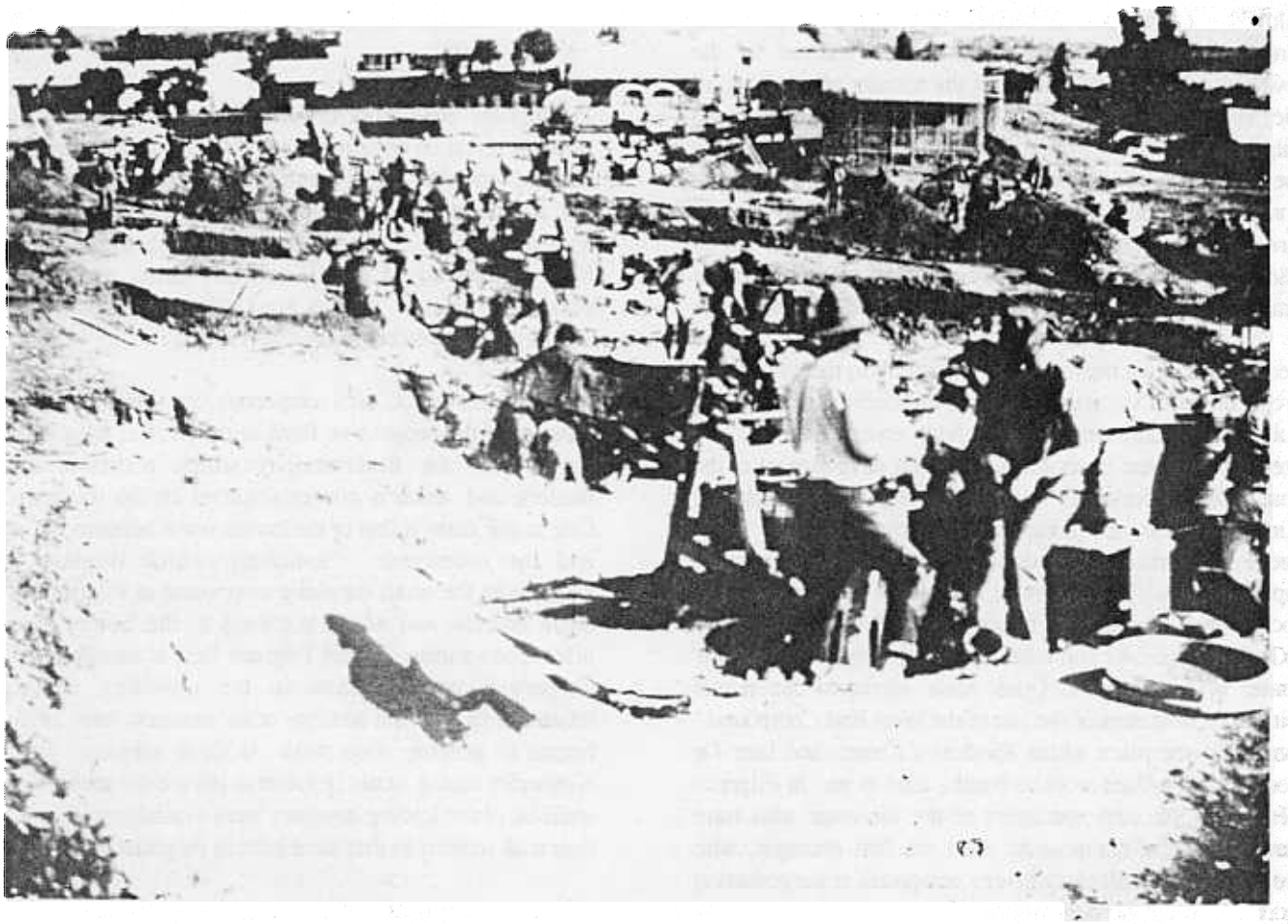
Similarly, at the information centre in Pilgrims Rest, which is run by the museum staff, many people are reported to ask for books. The local equivalent of Roberts on Kimberley, AP Cartwright's *Valley of Gold*,[12] is said to be out of print, and the few interpretive materials produced by the museum - a R2 booklet on Alanglade and a collection of historical photographs of Pilgrims Rest, with very interesting but brief annotations, provide little solace. No other books on sale - indeed, there are no scholarly monographs on Pilgrims Rest - and the only other interpretive material offered is a two sided A4 photocopied page with some notes on a few buildings and a sketch map of the town. No available materials even mention the sorts of questions which the limited historiography covers, such as conflicts between townsfolk and mining company, the creation and breakdown of labour tenancy as the basis of mine production or the other facets of social relations in a South African mining town. For both Kimberley and Pilgrims Rest, fascinating as they are, could be subjected to criticism for their failure to capture any degree of the forces of social change.

One other form of history lies in the oral record possessed by the communities concerned - notably the black communities of Pilgrims Rest and Kimberley. A little of the existing historiography is to some extent informed by that record, and here some of its contrasts with the museum versions will be subsumed (unfortunately) under discussion of the differences between mainly academic, printed accounts and the public accounts of the two site museums.

The academic mind longs for something which might help to make sense of the order of things in Kimberley - even the historical order of development of the mines, why De Beer's mine comes first, what De Beer's New Rush means in relation to the big hole next to the museum; or the geography of the place at the simplest level - where is

Beaconsfield (originally Du Toit's Pan)? Going a little further, something which would make sense of so many vanished company names would help: not even the De Beers-approved Chilvers version of the disappearance of Barnato's giant, the Kimberley Central Co., is given in the displays of the correspondence relating to the famous deal which gave the world De Beers Consolidated, let alone the later and self-consciously critical renderings of Turrell or Worger.[13]

heaps of debris left over by earlier mining. Nor, of course, is there any explanation of the train of events which led to mass unemployment - involving among other things monopolisation of ownership of the Kimberley mines and drastic cutbacks in production to raise the price of diamonds in the 1890s.[14] A hint of the travesty which the display regrettably foists upon the viewer is found across the road in the Art Gallery at Kimberley Mine Museum, where the order of Philip Bawcombe watercolours, apparently



Debris washers in Kimberley in the 1890s as displayed at the Kimberley Mine Museum.

An illustration from the Kimberley Mine Museum will help to capture the problem. Presumably by failure to understand the social history concerned rather than by intent, the various displays which relate to the hugely important work of debris washing tend to obfuscate the history of Kimberley rather than help the visitor to understand the relationships, changes and difficulties of the past. In the digger's cottage, the huge black and white prints on the walls appear at first glance to show people involved in the same activity as that portrayed in a glass case, which contains a model of `Debris Washing' - the treatment of ore hauled from the mine by claimholders in the 1870s (the case bears the date 1880). What the surrounding photographs actually reveal, however, is the very different 1890s matter of unemployed people desperately searching for a glimpse of survival in the

arranged in historical sequence, begins

Du Toit's Pan Camp 1871
2. Debris Washing 1894
3. Diamond Dealers 1873
4. New Rush 1874
5. The Diamond Market 1886, etc.

If the academic histories explain the descent of workers into an informal debris washing economy in the nineties through a tissue of conflicts, those matters are also left mostly untested and unexplored at Kimberley Mine Museum. At Pilgrims Rest, the tour of the river diggings has the potential to reveal some such issues. The guide's patter covers the basic history of change from small scale diggers, starting with Patterson and Trafford, through the republican

concession granted to David Benjamin in 1881, to the amalgamation which created TGME in the mid-1890s. But the conflicts along the way - such as the state-aided struggle waged by Benjamin to eliminate the rights of small diggers - generally disappear. The Cartwright book becomes THE authority - documentary and material sources (which after all lie all around as one hears the tales) are ignored - as is any other historiography, and the very different accounts of the consolidation processes contained in some of the academic work.[16]

Why did small diggers disappear at Pilgrims Rest? In the account provided at the river diggings, they did so because alluvial gold ran out, or because of hardships (with much stress on the dangers of malaria and `natives' in the lowveld). One hears nothing of the transfer of title over all the key farms in the area to the Port Elizabeth-based Pilgrims Rest Gold Mining Company in 1875; nor of how the very issue of violence might just have been even more complicated after 1875, at the time of the Boer-Pedi and British-Swazi wars and again around the Transvaal war of 1880-1881 - the famous graveyard in the town indeed has gravestone evidence to support an alternative account.[17]

Perhaps the most obvious way of pointing to the gaps in the presentation of the past at the two museums is to make the point that, unfortunately, the built environment of the present has come to contradict the built environment of the past. One of the major features of both Pilgrims Rest and Kimberley was the compounds which housed so many people at work over the decades from the 1880s to much more recently. These central institutions of South African society have largely been removed from the sight of visitors to both towns. As one takes the Kimberley tram from the centre of town to the Open Mine Museum, one passes within a few metres of the site of the West End Compound - famous as the place where Kimberley Central and later De Beers Consolidated workers lived - used to be. In Pilgrims Rest, it is the very managers of the museums who have demolished the compounds: even the first manager, who preserved the small truckdrivers' compound at the reduction works, ordered the demolition of the horsemen's compound outside the fence. The main compound at the reduction works was apparently demolished because senior political figures complained that it was an eyesore, despite the existence of tentative if longer term plans to restore it.[18]

The people who lived in these compounds and elsewhere in the towns represented a highly varied population. Delightfully, the Kimberley Mine Museum displays a letter (obscurely, in the Barney Barnato Boxing Gym), from Gwayi Tyamzashe to Dr James Stewart at Lovedale, dated 30.11.1872. Apart from demonstrating how relatively integrated residence was in Kimberley in the early years, and how black people suffered considerable official neglect, this letter provides an unparalleled sense of how many languages, cultures and experiences met in Kimberley - as they still do in our urban areas.

> `Here you find nearly all the different coloured races of South Africa - The Bushmen, Hottentots, Korannas, Griquas, Batlaping, Barolong, Bahurutse, Bakhatla, Bakwena, Mangwatu; Mazulu, Maswazi, Matsuetsua, Mehonga, Bapeli, Matebele, Marhalatha, Baroka. Batsuetla, Bayanana; Mahaca, Mamfengu, Batembu, Maxosa, &c ... The two prevailing languages are the Dutch and the Sisutu. So that in our services we require two interpreters at one and the same time, one into Dutch and another into Sisutu, while I myself speak the Kaffir'.

In Pilgrims Rest workers walked from Maputo in the twenties, grew up on surrounding farms, Mocambican men married local Mapulana women. The whole labour system, not mentioned at any point in the prevailing museum approach, meant that even though labour tenants' families lived close by on the TGME company farms, men (and in some cases women - another great unknown) lived for their 180 day work stretches in the compounds.

The demolition of the compounds is symbolic of the removal of the people who lived in them. But what can be learnt from the historiography which addresses these matters, and which is not yet absorbed by the museums? One major issue is that of the connections between the city and the countryside - something which displays, for example in the small surviving compound at Pilgrims Rest could address, and which is central to the history of our urban phenomena. Indeed, Pilgrims Rest is ideally situated to portray various phases in the unfolding of those relationships, and the archives of its museum have already helped to generate some work on these subjects. In the Kimberley case, it would be easier to pursue the matter if the archives of the leading company were available to the same degree of scrutiny as they have been in Pilgrims Rest.

Of course these relationships are underlain by stresses, and beneath the tranquillity of Pilgrims Rest has been substantial conflict. Kimberley too saw great conflicts, and ones which made a great difference to the history of the country, if the work of Worger and Turrell is to be accepted. Regrettably conflicts are not portrayed in the museums concerned. Perhaps the classic illustration of the blandness of both museums in this regard is the period poster on the wall of the transport hall at Kimberley Mine Museum, which proclaims `Don't forget the public meeting in the town hall, Beaconsfield, on Monday night' - but we learn nothing of the issues which drove Kimberley's citizens to hold such meetings, nor of the rhetoric which flourished at them. That rhetoric was often colourful, such as that which the Daily Independent reported in February and March 1891, while hundreds washed old debris to survive and De Beers prevented a new rush at the Wesselton mine, and a citizen complained to a public meeting about the

> down-right, hard-fisted, solid-crushing monopoly ... one of the cruellest monopolies that ever oppressed mankind.[19]

The public meeting poster, completely decontextualised and deperiodised, could be - but is not - woven into debate about the truths of these matters a century ago.

To understand today's cities does require a sense of collective action, as unions, civic associations and other organisations have increasingly shaped the pace of change. The same, of course, can be said of the past. Kimberley was, after all, the site of the first large industrial strikes in South Africa in 1883 and 1884, organised by the first large unions - and, more tragically, of the first known deaths in industrial conflict too. The strikes are wholly ignored. Surely they do not have to be. More controversially, of course, historians have argued that the aftermath of the strikes included the strict division of the labour force at the Kimberley mines between black and white; and the creation of compounds as instruments of control. While the means of addressing these events could be debated, the effect of ignoring them is clear - subverting our ability to understand how our cities have been made.

In Pilgrims Rest, too, long struggles proceeded at various times, particularly in the twentieth century. The major strike by black workers in 1919; the 75-year fight between townsfolk and mining company over local government;[20] struggle against forced removal in 1950s-70s; all not only shaped Pilgrims Rest, but echo the social processes of South Africa more broadly. Indeed, the last-mentioned conflict is especially important, because in those processes of forced removal and failed pass laws lies the making of present urban-rural relationships in South Africa - and if we are to understand our cities today it is vital that we know something of the connections. Finally, it should not be too difficult nor expensive to find ways of portraying some of the strikes and other conflicts which have been so important in shaping our urban past.[21]

This section has addressed some of the contrasts between the past of books and the past represented publicly at the two museums under discussion. It raises obvious questions about the way forward for these institutions. As I turn to look to the future, the first issue which is addressed below is that of the future of the museums themselves.

Possibilities for the future: at Kimberley and at Pilgrims Rest

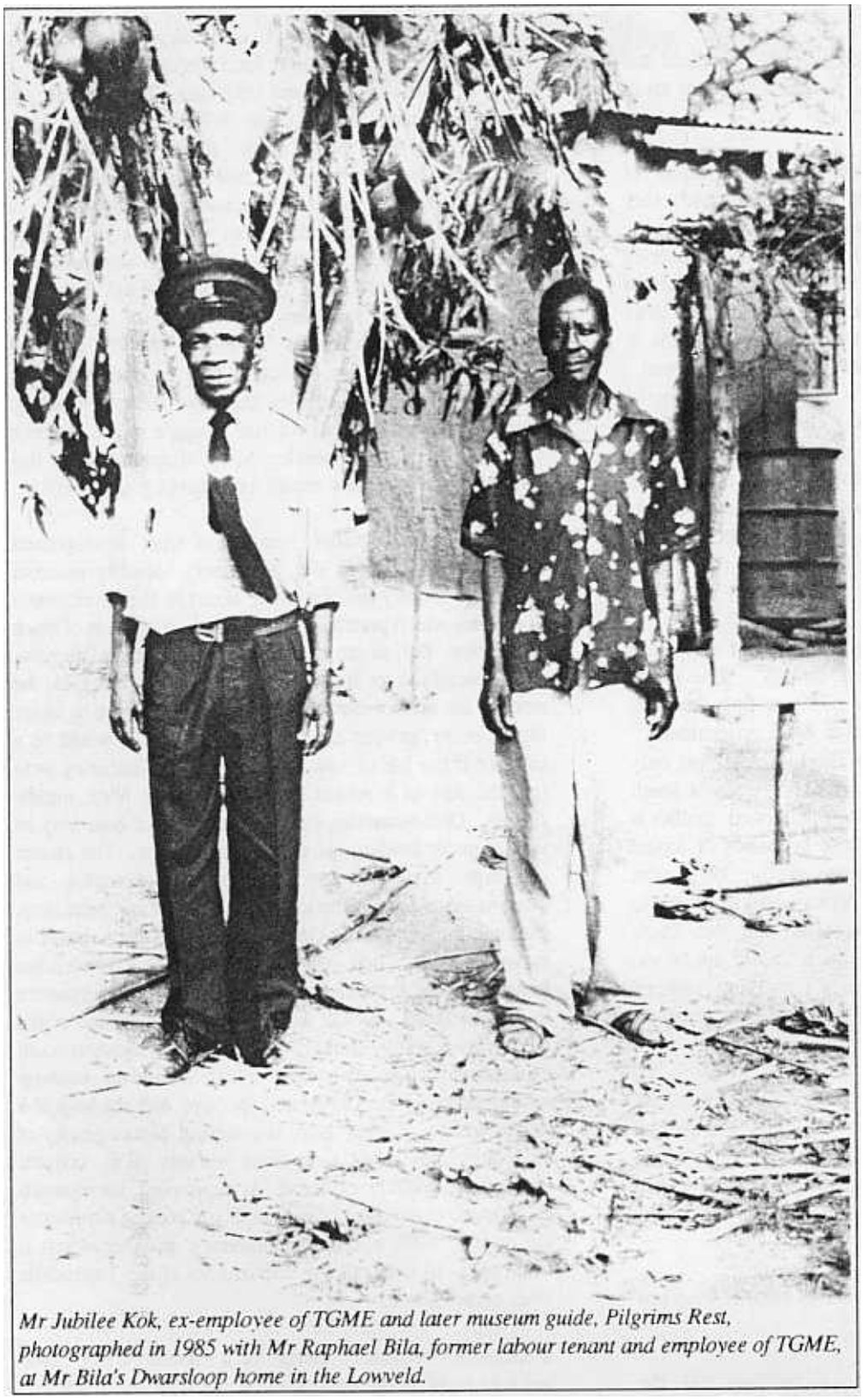
The expansion of the collection of buildings at the Kimberley Mine Museum has begun to approach a stage at which the site will be full.[22] More seriously, however, the considerable resources of De Beers may no longer stretch to subsidising their museum. In recent years several `activities' for which participants pay have been added to the museum, including a bowling alley and the near-gambling diggings at which visitors can search for `diamonds' and win prizes for finding rare tokens. With the removal of De Beers's headquarters to Johannesburg after more than a century, the prospects for continued one-company sponsorship look dim.

Possibilities such as the City Council taking over the area's number one tourist attraction form the stuff of rumour. It seems clear that management may alter. But the direction of resultant changes is less clear. Will the Kimberley Mine Museum go the `theme park' route, with its larger attendances but limited intellectual rewards? Or could a new management structure, including representatives of communities long excluded from all forms of decision making in Kimberley, come into being in this period of shifts towards democracy? What effects would flow from the presence in museum governance of community representatives from Floors Township (the old coloured group area named for the early blue ground depositing floors), and from Galeshewe, the large African township named for a hero of anti-colonial struggle in the northern Cape? Could the Kimberley Mine Museum pursue this route and become a new model for museum governance?

If it did so, the question remains of what developments might come about in the immensely valuable museum collection. Surely the first point would be the development of exhibits which portrayed a little more of the lives of black Kimberley. But, as the example of Williamsburg, Virginia, shows, simply to set the story of black workers alongside the story of the mineowners would represent a failure to tackle the *relations* between those classes. Indeed, it would be a travesty if the life of *white* working class Kimberley were ignored, just as it would be to pass by the black middle classes. Understanding the rises and falls of both may be vital to understanding our urban society today. The greater challenge would be to represent the complex and interwoven tale of Kimberley's owning, working, preaching, entertaining and trading classes - and of conflicts drawn in various colours. Then, perhaps, the connection between the removal of the Permanent Building Society's headquarters to Johannesburg - as late as 1976 - and the decline of the Kimberley economy could be explored;[23] the museum could explain why so many people found themselves washing mining debris in the 1890s; and (perhaps with the help of a rebuilt section of compound) the varying historiography of the compounding of black mine workers (IDB, control, segregation) could be explored. At its simplest, the museum could try to make more of the implicitly present richness of the origins of the people of Kimberley: in other words it could begin to flesh out the implications of the Tyamzashe letter quoted above.

If Kimberley provides material for a museum which could begin to assist in the understanding of what has made our cities, it might be doubted that so small a place as Pilgrims Rest could make a contribution to such a project. Yet, hopefully it has been demonstrated above that the story of Pilgrims Rest is full of the social changes and relationships which characterise the building of our cities and, for that matter, towns.

One of the peculiarities of Pilgrims Rest is that although it looks like a small town, officially it has never been recognised as such. The whole place sits on land owned by the Transvaal Provincial Administration - bought in the early 70s by that body from a subsidiary of one of the largest conglomerates in the country (Barlow Rand), which inherited the mantle of owner and gold concessionaire from Transvaal Gold Mining Estates Ltd. Pilgrims Rest has never enjoyed any, even segregated, form of local government and most of its residents have never owned the land on which they have lived.



Mr Jubilee Kok, ex-employee of TGME and later museum guide, Pilgrims Rest, photographed in 1985 with Mr Raphael Bila, former labour tenant and employee of TGME, at Mr Bila's Dwarsloop home in the Lowveld.

Recent proposals would place most of Pilgrims Rest in individual ownership - though probably at 99 year leasehold, thereby avoiding the problems of survey, town planning, local authority and all the other `evils' which TGME spent much time and effort to avoid from the 1890s to 1973. This process is part of the `privatisation' of the town and its management made possible since the private sector became strongly represented on the provincial administration's controlling body for the town (including the museum) about five years ago.[24]

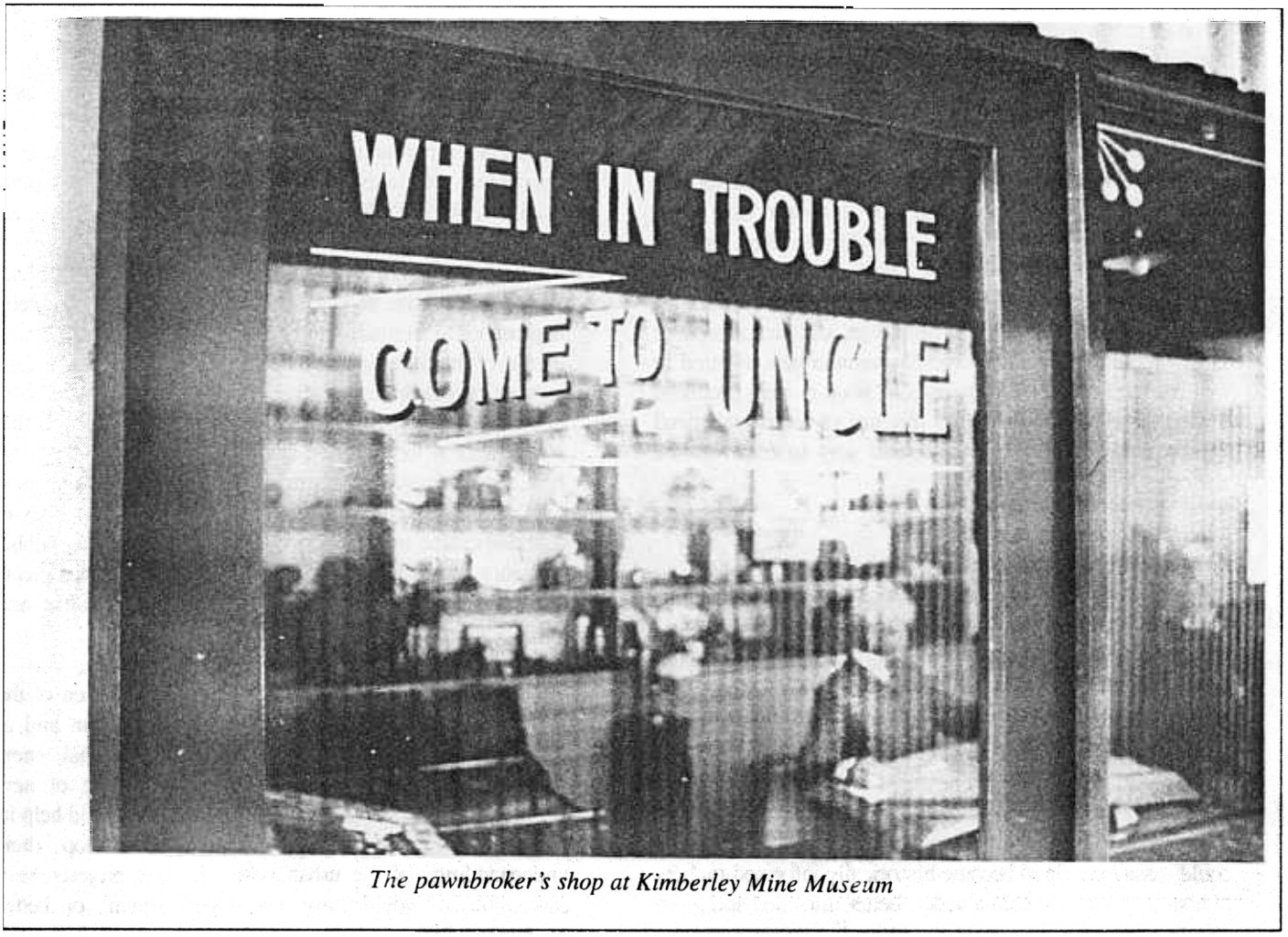
For wider national reasons, the headlong rush to privatisation which appeared to be in train seems to have slowed. But the key issue remains the costs of maintenance of buildings. If sales of leaseholds generated the income to maintain and expand the museum, it might be difficult to criticise them. A remote possibility exists that they might even generate the cash to resurrect more ambitious projects - such as rehabilitating the mine tramway system to convey tourists around the area.

Other priorities should perhaps prevail. The museum staff recognise that Africans have not been portrayed in the museum - but the idea of producing a `Mapulana village' in town seems misdirected. After all, the forced removals of thousands of labour tenants from TGME land - performed largely by the company using the very same Albion trucks which stand rusting at the reduction works today - took people from the valley, where ruins remain, to distant sites such as Dwarsloop in the lowveld and Hlabekisa near the Blyde River Canyon. It might be better to alter these plans to find a suitable site in the valley just below the town to recreate what was lost in the period 1969-73.

Pilgrims Rest has much to say to people who have lived in com-pany towns - as many South Africans have. Thought through, it could help them to start asking questions about how those small social systems worked - and work: the kinds of questions which it used to be so difficult to pose in pre-museum Pilgrims Rest, and still is in many other places.

But like Kimberley, Pilgrims Rest also has much potential to speak about the larger South African urban phenomenon. There are many glimpses of dynamics of how the places have come to be which could be explored, not least - as indicated above - the rural-urban connec-tions.

The key to accomplishing this ambitious task must surely be to establish, within the museums, relationships between different periods, different artifacts, diffe-rent individuals, different groups of people. In several instances, vital material already exists in the museums for commencing this task. For example, in Kimberley, the non-academic visitor must find it almost impossible to establish connections between the digger visiting the bank manager at the Perm, the cheque paid to Barney Barnato's company for the Kimberley mine and the history of debris washing. The



The pawnbroker's shop at Kimberley Mine Museum

museum certainly offers few if any hints. Yet impressive shop exhibits such as that of A. Ciring, Pawnbroker, with the slogan on the window: `when in trouble, come to uncle', provide a low-key way of beginning to show visitors some of the connections - for what were (and are) the forces which lead people to pawnbrokers?

Perhaps a more mundane (and cheaper) place to start dealing with the problems in the public historiography is to deal with servants and servants quarters. What's in those backyards at Kimberley Mine Museum? At Pilgrims Rest, the answers vary.

At Alanglade, the visitor may note the contrast between the governess quarters and the manager's daughters' bedroom - but the work done and the conditions of the relationship even between these literate protagonists dies away. There is a connection between Alanglade's hiding of servants (note the separate servants' stairs) and the total absence of labour performed to keep the domestic environment going. Outside the house, one is told on tour that the servants' quarters are `not usually included' - `there are just a few ob-jects there'. And indeed, to redo the servants quarters at Alanglade would be very costly - perhaps requiring total rebuilding because of their condition. But something could be done here.

Somewhere in between in cost terms, take the example of the miner's house museum in Pilgrims Rest. As one walks out onto the back porch, down the path lies the servant's room. But it is firmly locked - and on peering through the window, the only thing inside is a hose pipe. Surely the life

of servants, and the relationships between them and employers, could be explored.

While properly addressing the hostels, compounds and servants quarters issue might be expensive, some prospects exist to accomplish new meaning simply by using the available buildings more sensitively. Displays on such subjects as the urban-rural interaction issue could add to decent use of artifacts. One does not have to look far to find advisers on those subjects in a context where the gatekeeper at Alanglade comes from Malawian stock, and from a mineworking family; the Griqua origins of Jubilee Kok, tell us, in the end, that even Pilgrims Rest is indelibly linked to Kimberley.

It is not necessarily a continuing financial burden to apply ideas such as these: just as one begins to wonder where the (black) purchasers of the wonderful articles in the shop museum in Pilgrims Rest are, those very impressive bicycles and chairs and blankets and German prints hanging from the roof, the missed commercial opportunity strikes one - surely some imitation 1950s artifacts could be for sale among the other items as an income generator?

In order to accomplish further development at the museums, funding is a *sine qua non*. Developing further down the path of 'historical' things in which people can participate would be an approach to explore in this connection. The Alexandersfontein bowling alley at Kimberley provides an illustration of possibilities. There are also prospects for employees to do productive work, not just sweeping up in period costume. Both Kimberley and Pilgrims Rest have, as a start, blacksmith's shops at which products could be produced - and sold. The reduction works site offers innumerable possibilities in Pilgrims Rest, and the example of Blists Hill at Ironbridge Gorge Museum comes to mind in this context. After all, Kruger gold pounds were produced at Pilgrims Rest as well as all manner of wood and metal objects: why not find a commercial way to resurrect the trades applied?

Conclusion

Ours are circumstances in which, if anything, the collective resources necessary to achieve change even in the public presentation of the past may be lacking. To accomplish the widely desired 'reconstruction' of our cities (and towns) may lie even further beyond the probable. Here, however, lies a connection between the two. The history of the making of urban South Africa might 'be freed to become a powerful agent for understanding - and changing - the present'. If, as part of that liberation of the story of our cities, museums could 'assist people to become historically informed makers of history', we might gain a wider, better informed and more effective force for change in the cities.[25] To reconstruct - and to construct - presentations of the past which assisted in these ways, could contribute to a positive future in the cities.

In the absence of the resources to create more Pilgrims Rests and more Kimberley Open Mine Museums, one thing that could be done is to create the materials which would assist visitors; to campaign for their accessibility, including sale at the museum shops; to encourage schools to use the museums thoroughly; and of course to explore ways of making these enterprises more viable so that like Blists Hill at Ironbridge in England, they attract more support and more money - and thus perhaps start to be imitated in new ways in other urban environments.

The simplest level of extending the experience of the museums would be to 'cross reference' to other museums - thus in the Kimberley Mine Museum case, clear connections to materials and displays at McGregor and Duggan Cronin Museums could prove effective. But there is clearly a need for interpretation to go beyond these simple steps. A range of interpretive materials is most vitally necessary. Such materials can be produced on a cost recovery or profitable basis - parents will buy some types for small children; after all, many school parties visit these museums and both teachers and students could make use of a variety of booklets. As to the general adult market, experiments with popular versions of academic articles or even simply reprints of the articles themselves might begin to indicate saleable directions of development. Audio and video options also present themselves.[26]

Of course a close relationship between the museums concerned and the authors of interpretive materials would be beneficial, inherent in which would be a commitment to distribute such items through museum shops and other channels. Good examples of such projects of which I am aware would include Ironbridge Gorge Museum in England, or Sovereign Hill at Ballarat, Victoria, Australia. What is instructive about the ranges of materials, the careful approaches to stimulating interest and thought, and the high quality of the publications at Ironbridge lies just not in their content or medium, however; it lies in the structures of governance of the series of museums at Ironbridge. If that model were to be followed at either Kimberley or Pilgrims Rest, or both, independent trusts, able to retain good relations with former funders while building new lines of communication and support with a range of private, public, educational and individual interests, would perhaps create the best infrastructure for the genesis of innovative and exciting interpretive materials.

The paper has suggested that the creative extension of the existing displays at the Kimberley Mine Museum and at Pilgrims Rest, the development of substantial, new interpretive materials, and possibly involvement of new actors in the management of those institutions, could help in no small way to equip citizens to develop their understandings of the urban past. If such projects were successful, it would have the added benefit of better equipping citizens to understand the changes which will occur in our cities in the future - short and longer term.

ENDNOTES

1 cf. M. Wallace, `Visiting the past', in S Porter Benson, S. Brier and R Rosenzweig (eds) *Presenting the Past* (Philadelphia, 1986) pp. 137-161.

2 Schoemansdal is another possible member of the genre. Gold Reef City is more of a theme park than an open air museum, though to some extent it serves some of the same purposes (cf. C. Kros, "Experiencing a century in a day: making more of Gold Reef City", *South African Historical Journal*, 29, 1993, pp. 28-43). Graaff Reinet and indeed other towns evoke important questions but will not be treated here. Pilgrims Rest and Kimberley are both places with which I am reasonably familiar as a frequent visitor of fairly long standing; they also happen to have provided focal points of some of my past research on the making of urban South Africa, cf. "The land clearances at Pilgrims Rest", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 13 (3), 1987, pp. 303-319; "Labour, capital, class struggle and the origins of residential segregation in Kimberley 1880-1920", *Journal of Historical Geography*, 12 (1), 1986, pp. 4-26; and "The township question at Pilgrims Rest, 1892-1922", *South African Historical Journal*, 17, 1985, pp. 64-83 (with G. Pirie).

3 D. Schaefer, Manager of Kimberley Mine Museum (hereafter KMM), Interview (telephone) with A Mabin, 27.05.92.

4 Overheard at KMM, 29.05.92, outside Blacklaw's Shoe Shop.

5 Hopefully the existence of the museum has not provided an argument in favour of removing older buildings from their context on the streets of Kimberley

6 For example, David Yuill, Bloemfontein, formerly of Goldblatt Yuill, Kimberley.

7 P. Coston, Interview with A Mabin, 06.06.92.

8 cf. P. Bonner and K. Shapiro, "The Pilgrims Rest Republic", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19 (2), 1993, pp. 171-200.

9 Pilgrims Rest Museum, *Alanglade: a Period House of the Pilgrims Rest Site Museum* (Pretoria: Transvaal Provincial Library and Museum Service, 1983), p. 5.

10 (Cape Town, 1984)

11 R. Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields 1871-1890* (Cambridge, 1987); W Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895* (New Haven, 1987).

12 (Cape Town, 1973).

13 H. Chilvers, *The Story of De Beers* (London, 1939). See also A. Mabin, "Labour. capital, class struggle and the origins of residential segregation in Kimberley, 1880-1920", *Journal of Historical Geography* 12 (1),

14 W. Worger, *City of Diamonds*, pp. 270-274, 279-284. The museum's whitewash of the causes of poverty (after all, even the Standard Bank's branch inspector reported De Beers's actions as the cause) is reminiscent of the Rhodes (Cape Colonial) government commission on the subject in 1891 - cf. *Report of the Select Committee on Griqualand West Trade and Business*, A.7-91 (Cape of Good Hope Select Committee Reports).

15 Noted by A. Mabin, 30.05.92.

16 cf. A. Mabin, "The land clearances at Pilgrims Rest", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 13 (3), 1987, pp. 399-416, and "Labour tenancy and the land clearances at Pilgrims Rest", unpubl. seminar paper, African Studies Institute, Univ of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1985.

17 cf. the grave of Fred Sanders, `killed in a skirmish with kaffirs' in August 1878.

18 The demolition, too, of the well-hidden forest compound suggests that the issues run a little deeper than aesthetics.

19 W. Worger, *City of Diamonds*, p. 276.

20 A. Mabin and G. Pirie, "The township question at Pilgrims Rest 1894-1922", *South African Historical Journal*, 17, 1985, pp. 64-83; G. Pirie, "Public administration in Pilgrims Rest 1915-1969", *Contree*, 20, 1986, pp. 27-32.

21 Conflict over urban forced removals also comes to mind; in the Kimberley case there is a useful if brief historiography on the Malay Camp removals, for example; see G. Pirie, "Kimberley", in A. Lemon (ed) *Homes Apart: South Africa's Segregated Cities* (Cape Town, 1991) pp. 120-128; C. Mather, "Racial zoning in Kimberley, 1951-1959", unpubl. seminar paper, Dept of Geography, Univ. of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1985.

22 Derek Schaefer, director of KMM, remarks that `the site as it stands now is virtually full. If we were to expand we would have to acquire more land.' He also notes that the land area available is not the only constraint on growth: `Museums have a maximum size, an optimum size - if they're too big you suffer from museum overload.' Telephone interview with A. Mabin, 27.05.92.

23 Remarkably, the excellent exhibit of the Perm's early offices in KMM leaves entirely unexplained the presence of the huge former Perm headquarters building in the centre of town. Similarly the 1891 map of Johannesburg on the wall of the office suggests Kimberley capital's role in the growth of the former - ultimately to Kimberley's detriment. KMM leaves the subject of the Perm's departure to the McGregor Museum, which treats it very briefly in its street of old names. Noted 28.05.92.

24 P. Coston, Director Pilgrims Rest Museum, interview with A Mabin in Pilgrims Rest, 06.06.92.

25 The quotations are from M. Wallace, "Visiting the past", in S.P. Benson, S. Brier and R. Rosenzweig (eds), *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* (Philadelphia, 1986), pp. 157, 161.

26 Any and all of these initiatives would of course cost, but not necessarily too much. Any suggestions as to potential donors for such projects to generate interpretive materials would be gratefully received!