

# Some reflections on the history of Port Alfred in the aftermath of World War II\*

Chris Hummel\*\*

Rhodes University

## Introduction: Why local history?

Why write [an article] about such a small area, a [river mouth] which appears as hardly more than a tiny indentation in the southern coastline of this vast continent? This is a question that has been asked frequently during the years [since 1980] in which I have been gathering material on Port Alfred's fascinating story. No epoch-making events have taken place in this [largely] peaceful little town;<sup>1</sup> no battles - barring domestic ones - have been fought here; no world-famous, or really notorious, persons have lived or died here, nor have industry or impressive development schemes thrust economic importance upon it.

My answer to that question as posed by a noted local historian in relation to her chosen locality,<sup>2</sup> has long been a firm conviction of mine. Recently I found that conviction supported when reading an article by Charles Phythian-Adams, a Leicester university local historian who, acknowledging his debt to the great French *Annaliste*, Fernand Braudel, pleads for the reintegration of the local into national history.<sup>3</sup> My essay is a modest attempt to echo that plea and to reinforce his belief that the modern tendency to compartmentalise and therefore to keep local and national histories apart, has severely impoverished the resultant product of *national* (his italics) history. Or to use Phythian-Adams's own words, the 'disintegrative tendencies of one intriguing specialisation after another, as for example [the] exaggerated and therefore distorted emphasis on "class" division' has deprived history of the 'regionally or locally idiosyncratic' and thereby hindered the reconstruction of a more interlinking, interacting and therefore sophisticated and holistic past.<sup>4</sup> Stated in its simplest terms, no community, however small and seemingly insignificant, lives in total isolation. Therein often lies some of its greatest fascination. Port Alfred in the immediate aftermath of World War II furnishes several examples of the interconnectedness of the local with the national dimensions of the human experience or of what Phythian-Adams calls, the 'mutual concerns of national and local history'.<sup>5</sup>

Such examples include the four "themes", here examined. First, some Repercussions of World War II. Second, the Royal Visit of 1947. Third, the Election of 1948 and fourth, the Defiance Campaign of 1952.

## Port Alfred in its historical and regional setting

Founded as the would-be coastal gateway to the British Albany settlement on the eastern Cape frontier in 1820, Port Alfred had grown to a community of roughly 5000 inhabitants by 1945.<sup>6</sup> It had acquired the status of a municipality in 1899. By the time of Union in 1910, it was one of 136 such municipalities in the largest territorial province of the Union of South Africa, the Cape of Good Hope, created by the South Africa Act of 1909.<sup>7</sup> Of the various functions devolved on municipalities by the local government section of that act,<sup>8</sup> those of health, water supply and the levying of local rates on immovable property, feature prominently in this analysis.

## Theme One: Repercussions of the War

As with any community in any country that had fought in World War II, Port Alfred in the last months of 1945 showed many signs of a return to the pattern of its pre-war existence. There was the homecoming of its ex-servicemen, including those who had been prisoners-of-war, among them one Alan Bosworth Smith who had been liberated from German internment by the Red Army.<sup>9</sup> The closing down of wartime institutions included that of Talbot House which had served as a 'Home from Home' for many airmen since January 1942<sup>10</sup> when the air training school under the (British) Empire (Air) Training Scheme, 43 Air School, had been established at Port Alfred.<sup>11</sup>

A serious drought at the end of the war - a recurring feature of Port Alfred's parochial and South Africa's national experience<sup>12</sup> - forced the closure of the local air school sooner than anticipated when what was left of its complement by then had been moved to Grahamstown on 23 July 1945.<sup>13</sup> That closure had a serious effect on the local economy, the fragile survival of which depended to a large extent on the well-being of its recreational infrastructure and hence the

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Chris Hummel died on 4 February 1994, a few weeks after this article had been approved for publication. Throughout the years he researched the history of Port Alfred and its environment extensively. He was undoubtedly the most authoritative expert on the history of the region. In publishing this article Contree wishes to pay tribute to his work.

viability of its one first-class amenity, the Royal Port Alfred Golf Club, founded in 1906. The club chairman's annual report for 1945, delivered as was the custom in the first week of January, spelt out the situation very clearly. 1945, he stated, had shown 'a big drop in membership, 17 in all (roughly a ten per cent fall-off)' 'on account of the Air School having left Port Alfred'.<sup>14</sup>

But at another level, that of human relationships, the legacy of the air training scheme was both more positive and more enduring. It cemented still further the many binding ties between South Africans and Britons. Symbolising that important legacy was the farewell function to the Royal Air Force personnel in September 1945. There two men were singled out for special mention, Sergeant E T Ellwood and Captain J S Deary, as being two of the original 174-strong RAF contingent that had arrived in Port Alfred on 8 December 1941, and both of whom had in the meantime married their South African sweethearts.<sup>15</sup>

### Local finances and the burden of war

Financially, or so it transpired some time after the war, the establishment of Air School 43 had cost Port Alfred dearly. The detail of how much, is contained in a report of the Parliamentary Select Committee of Public Accounts, the gist of which was published on 5 July 1949 as an editorial in *Grocott's Daily Mail*, Grahamstown's newspaper that featured Port Alfred news on a fairly regular basis. Therein established is the fact that when the government had made the decision in 1940 to build a military aerodrome at the Kowie (the historical and popular name for Port Alfred), it had done so only after it had received the assurance from the local municipality that it would make available the necessary water and electricity supplies to the Defence Department. But in the event, the costs in regard to the provision of both those services had proved far too heavy for the local authority to cope with (and not least, because the initial estimate of those costs had been far too conservative). What they had not accounted for was the escalation of the cost of construction materials during wartime conditions. Translated into actual figures, this meant that the sum of £30 000 that it had been estimated it would cost to supply the aerodrome with running water came to be exceeded by more than double that amount to total £63 000. In order to meet those escalated costs, the Port Alfred municipality had borrowed £52 800 from one of its neighbours, the civic fathers of East London. Some of the rest was facilitated by an *ex gratia* sum made available by the Defence Department, a sum of £7 500, subsequently increased to £10 500 with an additional £2 950 towards the laying of a supply pipeline to the aerodrome and a minimum annual forepayment for water of £850 for three years. But there was yet a further expense. 'The water storage, became insufficient, and a rainwater storage scheme was embarked upon, estimated at £20 000 to augment the supply.'

Such heavy financial outlays contributed substantially towards a municipal debt which by 1948 stood at between £75 000 to £80 000,<sup>16</sup> and this is the background to one of

the most dramatic episodes in Port Alfred's municipal history, the resignation of all but one of the nine council members, including the mayor, Councillor Fairlie. The extent of the resignations was in itself dramatic, but what added to the surprise was the fact that the mayor had just previously taken the public into his confidence. That had taken the form of a two and a half hours' long Ratepayers' Association meeting, attended by some 100 citizens, at the end of which a vote of confidence in the council was carried by 70 of those attending, without any dissenting votes.<sup>17</sup>

The editor<sup>18</sup> and other local opinion<sup>19</sup> was not uncritical of those latest developments, but it is clear in retrospect that the civic leadership had taken a carefully calculated decision to force parliament to pay attention to this community's financial plight. It was a strategy that was partially successful when the select committee recommended first, a grant of £17 600 towards the reduction of the moneys still owing on the water development scheme; second, a higher fixed rate of sale of water to the Defence Department, and third, the establishment of a water reserve fund by the depositing into it of the sum of one quarter of the amount of water sales to the aerodrome.<sup>20</sup>

But ratepayers were not left unaffected. How precisely it touched their pockets was spelt out by Port Alfred's mayor, three years hence, in July 1951. He was commenting on a similar financial predicament facing the municipal authorities of neighbouring Grahamstown, namely an overdraft too large to be whittled away by ordinary revenues and/or government subvention. For once perhaps, Port Alfred's mayor was able to give comfort and the benefit of experience to his more powerful neighbour when he said:

During the war years Port Alfred had 'got drunk on patriotism' and immediately after the war found itself suffering from a serious financial hangover. ... [What did the Council do?] [It] very reluctantly decided to levy an emergency rate of 1d in the £ for the year 1947, ... [The following year it] was faced with the very unpleasant task of levying a further emergency rate. It felt that 1d in the £ would not do much to better the position. Consequently the Council again levied an emergency rate, but this time of 2d in the £ for the year 1948 ... [which reduced the deficit sufficiently to reduce the extra rate back to] 1d in the £ [in 1949]. At the end of 1949 the Council, for the first time, found itself with a balance at the bank amounting to £1 600.<sup>21</sup>

That little known "local difficulty" touches on a much neglected theme of South African history. We know something of the broad economic developments as a result of World War II, including the stimulus of war to the local manufacturing industry and the accelerated movement of population from countryside to town under the impact of enhanced industrialisation,<sup>22</sup> but no one has even begun to

"count the cost" of wartime installations,<sup>23</sup> especially in so far as those costs affected communities like Port Alfred which lived on the margin of economic viability even in peacetime. Moreover, the "burden of war" as it continued to weigh on Port Alfred ratepayers in the years of peace after 1945 is one small South African example of much recent overseas historical scholarship which has sought to tilt the balance of the *optimism* of war's domestic effects (as shown by pioneer historians in the field such as Richard Titmuss<sup>24</sup> and the younger Arthur Marwick<sup>25</sup>) towards a more sober assessment, showing rather the more *pessimistic*, debit, retrogressive or at the least, not always advantageous, impact of twentieth century war on civilian life.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, even at the Kowie, the gloomy realisation of the heavy financial cost of war notwithstanding, hopes ran high after the war that wartime facilities could be converted to peace-time advantage. Perhaps precisely because the Kowie was made to feel the financial burden of war so acutely, did it hold out those hopes particularly strongly. First to give formal expression to that hope, was a municipal-sponsored resolution tabled at the first post-war congress of a regional body aimed at promoting the development of Lower Albany, the South Eastern Areas Public Bodies Association (SEAPBA) which had been founded as the Port Alfred and Bathurst District Development Association at Port Alfred in August 1943.<sup>27</sup> The text of it read as follows:

Congress desires to urge upon the Government that the Port Alfred Municipality be compensated for the loss of 43 Air School, by the establishment at Port Alfred of some other institution of commensurate spending value, or by an annual cash subsidy, or otherwise.<sup>28</sup>

That resolution followed on a letter penned by obviously a regular visitor to Port Alfred, writing to *Grocott's* on 10 October 1945. It lamented the lack of any tangible signs that the local economy had benefitted from air personnel spending during the war:

The writer of this letter spent an afternoon at the Kowie a few days ago and having heard what a lot of money had been spent down there by the Air Force, naturally expected to see a little improvement - shopkeepers and hotels thrived but it does not seem to have made any difference.

That observation gave expression to a deep sense of disillusionment at the future prospects of the Kowie:



*Dr. Henry Gluckman, minister of public health and housing, 1946-1948*

the Kowie looked as forlorn and sordid as ever. Nature has been bountiful: it has a lovely river, a beautiful golf course and a grand climate. It seems to be a place 'where every prospect pleases, but only man is vile'.

But on the other hand, even this non-resident prophet of gloom ended his musings on a more hopeful note. It came in the concluding paragraph of the letter where there was articulated the germ of an idea that was obviously being bandied about in the community. Or as the correspondent asked rhetorically, why not seize 'a golden opportunity' to turn the aerodrome as 'it is being dismantled' into a cottage hospital?<sup>29</sup>

Such hope was undoubtedly generated, in part at least, by an initiative in parliament that owed everything to the MP for

Yeoville, Dr Henry Gluckman. He had moved for the appointment of a National Health Services Commission in February 1942. That body was constituted under his chairmanship the following August, and published its findings in May 1944. Those included some very far reaching proposals, and none more so, as holding out the prospect of substantial benefit to every community in the land, than the establishment of a national health service, supported entirely from public funds.<sup>30</sup> Though nothing came of that proposal, and Port Alfred even to this day has to do without its cottage hospital,<sup>31</sup> local initiative at the time did rather better by "helping itself" to some extent, and thereby at the local level fulfilling some of the vision of the new minister of health, Dr Gluckman.<sup>32</sup>

"Self-help" took two forms. First, the establishment at the disused air school premises of a South African National Tuberculosis Association (SANTA) resident hospital and

care centre for tuberculosis sufferers, catering for 200 resident patients alone. That institution was scheduled to receive its first patient on 1 February 1959.<sup>33</sup> It saw the culmination of many years of concerted local welfare effort, spearheaded by the local branches of Child Welfare Society, National Council of Women and SANTA.<sup>34</sup> Second was the local promotion of the cottage hospital project. How that grew out of wartime considerations, was emphasised not least by the fact that when a local hospital fund was launched, spearheading that drive were the local branches of two ex-servicemen's associations. One was the Memorable Order of Tin Hats (MOTH); the other, the British Empire Service League (BESL). The fund was launched in September 1956. It aimed for a target of £10 000,<sup>35</sup> four-fifths of which was reached by the end of July 1959.<sup>36</sup> The town council responded by making available a suitable site free of charge.<sup>37</sup> But the advent of the Nationalist Party government at the level of national affairs in 1948 doomed



*The welcoming arch gracing the entrance to the Botanical Gardens, venue of the garden party, royal visit to Grahamstown, afternoon of Friday, 28 February 1947*

the project. As the architects of the *apartheid* state, the "Nats" promoted enterprises, the priorities of which were far removed from the creation of a national health service, including the expansion of local hospital services, especially at the level of a predominantly English-speaking community, situated in traditionally the most English-settled region of South Africa.

### Themes Two, Three and Four, signalling the Closing of an Era

It is generally acknowledged that the May 1948 general election which brought the Nationalists to power marked one of the decisive turning points in South African history. The "old" South Africa<sup>38</sup> had already been much disturbed by the impact of war, and how the changes made themselves felt in Port Alfred is yet another example of 'the link between local and national' (as Phythian-Adams calls it).<sup>39</sup> That link, manifested at the level of the Kowie's consciousness, formed what he calls 'a pattern of interrelationships' in which the inimitably intimate and singularly local happening was interwoven with the impact of those broader developments that 'blend' a locality such as Port Alfred 'within a higher, wider and thus shared form of integrated experience'.<sup>40</sup>

The first such shared experience was the last dominion royal tour of the age of British Empire before the emergence of the Commonwealth of Nations in the aftermath of India's attainment of republican status in 1949.<sup>41</sup> So, even from an international perspective the late 1940s were of particular significance in modern history, and in that sense, Port Alfred as it felt some of the impact of the royal tour in early 1947, became part of a linking experience even wider than the national. Not that even General Smuts, who had issued the invitation to the royal family to come to South Africa, could have foreseen its wider implications that far ahead. Much of his expectation for the tour was based on the hope that by 'project[ing] the image of a leading Commonwealth country', the visit would 'douse the republican propaganda of the Opposition'.<sup>42</sup> For most of his fellow countrymen, the great event of 1947 probably served rather to make people forget politics just for a while. So certainly it proved for Kowieites. For them the day to remember was Friday, 28 February. On that day - the eleventh of the South African

royal progress - the royal family visited neighbouring Grahamstown. That was the occasion which, as the editor of the local little paper, *The Kowie Announcer*, reflected at the time, was one 'the people of these districts will remember 'for many, many a long day to come.'<sup>43</sup> It was an event that had been eagerly anticipated locally, even though there was regret that the demanding itinerary of the royal family would enable them to do no more than sample "Settler Country". Regret that Port Alfred, 'the scene of so much enterprise and faith' (as one correspondent to *Grocott's* described it) could not be included, was coupled with the hope that time could perhaps be spared to divert the royal cars at least to Grahamstown's Mountain Drive, and there afford the royal family a short glimpse of the panorama across to Lower Albany.<sup>44</sup>

Nearer the time of the visit, Port Alfred put a brave face on its non-inclusion in the programme. On the eve of the great day in Grahamstown the local nursery school, the Una Powell Nursery School, staged a bumper celebration, at which each child was handed its own special royal visit medal and miniature Union Jack, donated by a local firm, Messrs Main and Co., by the mayor, Councillor Colin Keey. 'Loud cheers for Their Majesties, the Princesses, the Mayor and Mayoress were heard all over the neighbourhood before the little gathering broke up'.<sup>45</sup>

The next morning a special train, one of three from out of town to Grahamstown,<sup>46</sup> packed to capacity, including 600 black "royal watchers", left Port Alfred at 11 o'clock and

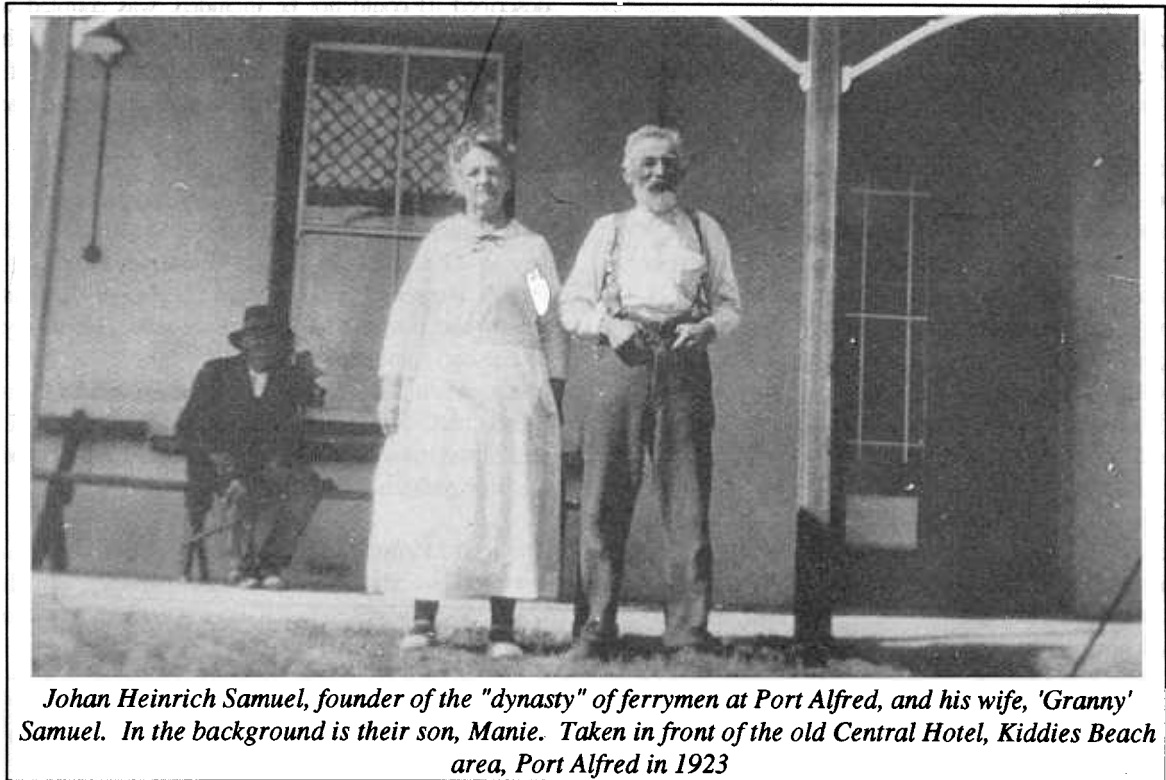


reached its destination just before 2.<sup>47</sup>

So, Kowie wellwishers were part of the throng that welcomed the royal family to Grahamstown and those that

could recall the Prince of Wales's welcome in 1925, could reflect on the pineapple theme which once again formed the centrepiece of the decorations. This time it graced the entrance to the City Hall: 'The beautiful pineapples, together with the whole plants, which figured so prominently ... represented pineapples in various stages of growth ... They were grown at the farm of Mr Douglas Dold, of Clumber ...'<sup>48</sup> Inside the City Hall, the mayor and mayoress of Port

afternoon, to Port Alfred pier and adjacent spots on the sand dunes to watch *H.M.S. Vanguard*, the world's largest battleship, on her visit to the river's mouth. From all parts of the Bathurst and Alexandria districts had come motor-cyclists, cycles and people eager to see for themselves the magnificence of the great vessel. *Vanguard*



*Johan Heinrich Samuel, founder of the "dynasty" of ferrymen at Port Alfred, and his wife, 'Granny' Samuel. In the background is their son, Manie. Taken in front of the old Central Hotel, Kiddies Beach area, Port Alfred in 1923*

Alfred were among the local dignitaries presented to the royal family.<sup>49</sup>

The greatest would-be excitement for Port Alfred associated with the great visit of 1947 was the planned stop-over of the royal ship, *HMS Vanguard*, en route from Cape Town via Port Elizabeth to Durban, in the roadstead of Port Alfred for 4½ hours, 2 pm to 6.30 pm on Wednesday 26 March 1947.<sup>50</sup> That was to have been the biggest day in the life of the local ferryman and *Grocott's* Port Alfred correspondent. He was Manie Samuel, Port Alfred's most experienced and hardy fisherman, one of five surviving children of the original family of sixteen belonging to the late J H Samuel, who had arrived at the Kowie 80 years previous.<sup>51</sup> It was to have been his task that day to have ferried a civic deputation across to the great battleship for an invitation to tea during the afternoon by the skipper, Rear-Admiral William G Agnew, C.B., C.V.O., D.S.O.<sup>52</sup>

But it did not happen quite that way, though expectations certainly ran high:

Many visitors were attracted to-day in beautiful weather, bordering on a hot sunny

arrived off the Kowie at 1.30 pm and formed a magnificent sight, by close in off the river's mouth. On the piers and beaches were assembled some 2,000 people.

People had come from the hinterland as well as the coastal areas numbering many hundreds, including a number of school children from Grahamstown, for whom the opportunity of seeing the battleship at close range afforded a lifelong memory. The weather was all that could be desired, but the sea was rather choppy. At the time of going to press it was not yet known whether the motor fishing boat could make the trip out to *H.M.S. Vanguard*.

The scene from vantage points was magnificent, the silvery sheen of the grey vessel gleaming in sunshine.<sup>53</sup>

The correspondent's caution was well founded. The groundswell proved indeed too heavy. For a boat of the draught of the great battleship to have come close enough to

anchor near the shore, was ruled as too risky,<sup>54</sup> and so the eagerly anticipated longer sojourn and maritime teaparty did not materialise. But there was a courteous sequel. That was a telegram to the mayor, which was reproduced in *The Kowie Announcer* on 1 April. Though the day of its publication was somewhat of a credibility risk, the message contained in it sounds too genuine not to have been true:

I very much regret that the swell off Port Alfred yesterday was such that Boat Work was impracticable. Will you convey my regrets to those of your citizens who were to have visited us. AGNEW, CAPTAIN, VANGUARD.

The editor, commenting on the message, no doubt articulated the feelings of the community, when he wrote:

In this connection we can see why Captain Agnew acted as he did, but we feel such that had he had any idea that so many people were coming from far and near, as well as all the people of Port Alfred, he would most certainly have cruised round in circles for an hour.

He ended his editorial with a request to the mayor to respond to the captain with a message asking him to come and anchor on the return trip instead, though that was not to be.

The royal family left South Africa after an emotion-charged send-off from the mother city on 24 April,<sup>55</sup> and with their departure, the political honeymoon was over. What might be in store for the country was soon spelt out even in Port Alfred, where, as one of the branches of one of the safest United Party (UP) seats in the country, a local audience was addressed by S F Waterson, Smuts's minister of economic development. Speaking on the afternoon of 21 October, the minister did not pull his punches. He warned that those in his political camp were up against a very different Nationalist Party to the one that existed twenty years earlier because it was now under the influence of 'that sinister secret society, the Broederbond'. The Nationalists' race policies both in regard to people of colour and the historic divide between English-speakers and the Afrikaner, he predicted, would lead to a 'catastrophe'. Equally prophetic, he warned of a 'tink[ering] with the constitution, and as part of its consequence, the depriving even of United Party supporters of their political rights, and thereby the threat that once the doors to freedom will be slammed upon us ... there will be no key to re-open them.'<sup>56</sup>

It was fortunate for the local political incumbents that the major local complaint, namely the accumulated debt on Air School 43, only came to public attention much later.<sup>57</sup> Other pin-pricks that needed the electorate at the time, such as the grumblings of ex-servicemen as they adjusted back to civilian life,<sup>58</sup> would have been outweighed by the long standing loyalty to the UP and its sitting member since 1936, Settler descendant, Thomas Bouchier ("Tom") Bowker. A pre-election meeting he addressed drew the enthusiastic support of 250 people.<sup>59</sup> Albany as a whole recorded a record poll of 91.4 per cent on polling day and Bowker's return to the House of Assembly by a majority of 3482 votes was an impressive show of local UP strength.<sup>60</sup>

Obvious signs of the party's decline were only apparent later, during the campaign for the provincial council elections early the following year when a meeting of the local branch of the party three weeks before polling had to be abandoned on account of poor attendance. Such apathy caused 'some caustic gentleman' to remark



*Tower Bowker, MP for Albany, 1936-1964*

that the Kowie residents were not only not politically minded, they were nothing minded, which is rather a sad reflection on the intellectuals who have settled here.<sup>61</sup>

On the other hand, because of the heightened political atmosphere in national affairs since the Nationalists' victory in 1948, the local provincial councillor, J C Rae faced his first real electoral contest in 20 years. Standing as an Independent as was his wont, he was defeated by his UP opponent, ex-secretary of education S B Hobson, by 3500 votes.<sup>62</sup>

So, in matters political and parliamentary the majority of local opinion ran counter to the national tide. At the national level, it remained loyal to the tried and tested helmsman, Tom Bowker, even when it looked that that veteran would retire in 1957 to make room for younger blood in time for the elections due the following year. The occasion was a UP meeting in May 1957, at which the local MP shared the platform with none other than the already redoubtable Mrs Helen Suzman. Her's was acclaimed 'one of the best fighting speeches heard in Port Alfred for a long time'; but the main cheer was reserved for the local man: 'people stood in their seats and cheered Mr Bowker to the echo.'<sup>63</sup> That show of confidence helped the local man to change his mind. On 13 March 1958 a local press item conveyed the news that T B Bowker was returned to the House of Assembly unopposed.<sup>64</sup>

In other respects, even little Port Alfred could not escape some local repercussions of the *apartheid* policy as implemented by D F Malan and his successors. In that respect, Port Alfred was no less immune than other communities to a countrywide wave of protest, unleashed by the black Defiance Campaign of 1952, the start of which was timed to coincide with the tercentenary of Jan van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape on 6 April 1652.<sup>65</sup> One of the chief targets of the later phase of that campaign, which took the form of mass disobedience, inaugurated on 26 June, was the hated pass laws. That campaign which the contemporary press called the 'resistance movement'<sup>66</sup> and blacks themselves called 'Afrika',<sup>67</sup> was centred on the Witwatersrand and in the Eastern Cape before it spread to the Western Cape and the country's major cities. So, not surprisingly, among the first "count" of blacks arrested for their participation in the protest action, a large number were from the Eastern Cape. 1500 were from Port Elizabeth, 850 from East London and 400 from Grahamstown. Port Alfred was one of four smaller Eastern Cape centres singled out as an East Cape "hot spot". The others were Fort Beaufort, King William's Town and Queenstown.<sup>68</sup> 'Afrika' reached its first local climax with the arrest of 45 Port Alfred curfew breakers in October 1952.<sup>69</sup> It peaked a second time on the even of Union Day in 1953 when, following a series of political meetings staged by the African National Congress (ANC) in the Port Alfred location, 27 of its members were arrested for constituting a group of protesters without a permit.<sup>70</sup> The timing of the latter incident is perhaps particularly worthy of note because it constitutes evidence

which contradicts the general impression (as also conveyed, for example, in Davenport's *History*<sup>71</sup>) that once the leaders had made the decision to suspend the campaign for the Christmas and New Year period and then to postpone it until after the outcome of the 1953 general election, the movement petered out.<sup>72</sup> And that perhaps suggests that Port Alfred blacks were not only in the forefront of the most potent of the early anti-*apartheid* protest movements<sup>73</sup> but also possibly its most enduring campaigners.

## Conclusion

Phythian-Adams, "the English mentor" of this analysis, shows some of 'the ways' in which local history is made more meaningful when clearly identifiable local societies (as I have reconstructed the Kowie community over many years<sup>74</sup>) are shown to relate to a more generalised notion of national belonging.<sup>75</sup> My final way of adopting and adapting those 'ways' and applying them to the conclusion of this study is to integrate the passing of two "landmarks". Both symbolised the passing of an age. One was the death of General Smuts at Irene at 7.35 pm on 11 September 1950 at the age of 80. Symbolic of the fact that Port Alfred shared in a sense of 'national belonging', a memorial service in its town hall four days later saw a large gathering of people both from town and district pay its respects to the titan of the old political order.<sup>76</sup> In the locality itself, the passing of the old era had been marked already two years earlier. That earlier passing carried the hallmarks of a community which though it 'belonged' 'nationally', did so only because it had a prior sense of possession and identity in its own familiar local setting. Under the headline, 'Port Alfred Landmark Passes', *Grocott's* furnished the details:

David Kivido, an aged coloured man who was born at Port Alfred 82 years ago, has passed away, and with his passing goes a human landmark well known in the town. He was a picturesque character who for many years had carried out the humble calling of hawking vegetables from door to door with a cart drawn by four donkeys. He will be greatly missed by the many housewives, unable to go to market who obtained supplies from him.

The acknowledged head of the coloured community of Port Alfred, old David was greatly loved by them, while European residents were impressed by his honesty, regular service and high Christian principles ...<sup>77</sup>

## ENDNOTES

1. Only in very recent times has the community received much unenviable publicity on account of violence emanating from its "townships". See for example *Eastern Province Herald* (headlines), *Daily*



- Dispatch*, 8.6.1993; *Grocott's Coastal News*, 25.5.93 and *The Kowie Announcer*, 14.5 & 4.6.1993.
2. My adaptation of the opening paragraph to the Preface of P. Storrer, *Portrait of Plettenberg Bay* (Cape Town, 1978), p.ix.
  3. C. Phythian-Adams, 'Local History and National History: The Quest for the Peoples of England', *Rural History*, (2) 1, 1991, pp.1-23, and especially pp.3-4.
  4. *Ibid.*, p.3.
  5. *Ibid.*, p.2.
  6. This figure is an estimate based on the 1970 population figure of 1390 Whites, 885 Coloureds and 6249 "Bantu" living in Port Alfred. See D.J. Potgieter *et al.*, (eds.), *Standard Encyclopedia of Southern Africa*, Vol.9 (Elsies River, 1973), p.12.
  7. *Official Year Book of the Union of South Africa and of Basutoland, the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and Swaziland 1946-47*, Vol.23, (Pretoria, 1948), Ch.III, pp.8-9.
  8. *Ibid.*, Ch.IV, p.5.
  9. *Grocott's Daily Mail (GDM)*, 6.9.1945. For the wartime "adventures" of this local lad, see *ibid.*, 10.4.1941, 3.2.1942, 25.5.1945.
  10. *Ibid.*, 13.9.1945.
  11. For a short history of 43 Air School, see Capt. D.Becker, *Yellow Wings. The Story of the Joint Air Training Scheme in World War 2* (SAAF Museum, 1989), p.60. See also Major General T.G.E. Cockbain, 'Early History of Aviation in the Eastern Province', 1993, 8 pp. (Typescript, Cory Library), p.6.
  12. This observation draws its inspiration from that aspect of Phythian-Adams's analysis which shows the environmental determinants that link different localities into a collective history. See Phythian-Adams, 'Local History ...', pp. 7-11.
  13. *GDM*, 27.8.1945; Becker, *Yellow Wings ...*, p.60.
  14. *GDM*, 7.1.1946.
  15. *Ibid.*, 17.9.1945.
  17. *Ibid.*, 10.4.1948.
  18. *Ibid.*
  19. *Ibid.*, 7.6.1948.
  20. *Ibid.*, 5.7.1949.
  21. *Ibid.*, 16.7.1951.
  22. D. Hobart Houghton in M. Wilson & L. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa*, Vol.II (Oxford, 1971), pp.36-38; A.W. Stadler in T. Cameron & S.B. Spies, (eds.), *An Illustrated History of South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1986), pp.264-5.
  23. Though it has been done to an extent for an earlier conflict, the South African War of 1899-1902. See D.A. Webb, *King William's Town during the South African War, 1899-1902*, (M.A., Rhodes University, 1993), pp.332-3.
  24. R. Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy* (London, 1950) and *Essays on 'The Welfare State'* (London, 1958).
  25. For example, A. Marwick, 'Great Britain: society in flux', in A.J.P. Taylor & J.M. Roberts, (eds.), *The Twentieth Century*, XIV (London, 1979), p.1910.
  26. For Britain see the collection of essays edited by H.L. Smith, *War and Social Change British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester, 1986). See also J.M. Winter, 'Review Article: Catastrophe and Culture: Recent Trends and the Historiography of the First World War' *Journal of Modern History*, (64) 3, Sept. 1992, pp.525-32. An American example is J.F. Baumann, N.P. Hummon & E.K. Muller, 'Public Housing, Isolation and the Urban Underclass Philadelphia's Richard Allen Homes, 1941-1965', *Journal of Urban History*, (17) 3, May 1991, pp.264-92.
  27. *GDM*, 9.8.1943.
  28. *Ibid.*, 8.11.1945.
  29. *Ibid.*, 10.10.1945.
  30. For a summary, see *Official Year Book 1946-47*, Ch.IV, pp.5-9.
  31. *Grocott's Coastal News*, 2.3.1993.
  32. He was minister of public health and housing from 1946 to 1948.
  33. *GDM*, 18.8.1958.
  34. See e.g. *ibid.*, 12.7.1954.
  35. *Ibid.*, 26.9.1956.
  36. *Ibid.*, 21.7.1959.
  37. *Ibid.*, 16.10.1956.
  38. The 'new' South Africa was a contemporary phrase, used by the press, including *Grocott's*, after the 1948 election.
  39. Phythian-Adams, 'Local History ...', p.5.
  40. *Ibid.*
  41. For the constitutional detail of that development, see F. Madden, *Imperial Constitutional Documents, 1765-1952 A Supplement* (Oxford, 1953), pp.54-5.
  42. T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa A Modern History*, 4th edn. (Basingstoke and London, 1991), p.320.
  43. *The Kowie Announcer*, 4.3.1947.
  44. *GDM.*, 10.1.1947, letter by I.R.J. to editor.
  45. *Ibid.*, 4.3.1947.
  46. *Ibid.*, 1.3.1947.
  47. *Ibid.*
  48. *Ibid.*, 1.3.1947.
  49. *Ibid.*, 3.3.1947.
  50. *Ibid.*, 22.3.1947.
  51. *Ibid.*, 18.1.1956.
  52. *Ibid.*, 22.3.1947.
  53. *Ibid.*, 26.3.1947.
  54. *Ibid.*, 27.3.1947.
  55. D. Morrah, *The Royal Family in Africa* (London, 1947), pp.136-8.
  56. *GDM*, 22.10.1947.
  57. Cf. editorial, *GDM*, 5.7.1949.
  58. Davenport, *South Africa ...*, pp.320-1.
  59. *GDM.*, 4.5.1948.
  60. *Ibid.*, 27.5.1948.
  61. *Ibid.*, 16.2.1949.

62. *Ibid.*, 11.3.1949.
63. *Ibid.*, 28.5.1957.
64. *Ibid.*, 13.3.1958.
65. For background, see M. Horrell, (comp.), *A Survey of Race Relations 1951-52* (Johannesburg, n.d.), pp.27-29; 1952-53, pp.27-29; T. Karis & G.M. Carter (eds.), *From protest to challenge: a documentary history of South African politics in South Africa, 1882-1964, Vol.2: Hope and challenge, 1935-1952* (Stanford 1973), pp.416-27; Davenport, *South Africa ...*, pp.332-6.
66. *GDM*, 20.10.1952.
67. *Ibid.*, 31.5.1953.
68. Horrell, *Survey ... 1951-52*, p.13.
69. *GDM*, 20.10.1952.
70. *Ibid.*, 31.5.1953.
71. Davenport, *South Africa ...*, p.335.
72. Horrell, *Survey ... 1952-53*, p.28.
73. The earlier such protest was the 'Day of Protest' of 26 June 1950, which anniversary was commemorated by the start of the 'Campaign of Defiance' in 1952.
74. See particularly H.C.Hummel, 'Various Perspectives of the Kowie Scene 100 years ago', *Toposcope*, XII, 1981, pp.43-57; 'The month of August - an *Annales* approach to the history of the Kowie: August 1881 - August 1914' *Contree*, 18, July 1985, pp.18-26; *Settler Hamlet: a study in mentalité*, H.H. Dugmore Lecture, 1988, (Grahamstown, 1988), 16 pp.
75. Phythian-Adams, 'Local History ...', p.20.
76. *GDM*, 18.9.1950.
77. *Ibid.*, 15.11.1948.