

# Capital, coal and conflict: the genesis and planning of a company town at Indwe

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The past century of southern African history is dominated by the development of the mining industry and associated social changes such as the entrenchment of migrant labour in the mining economy. In this context of powerful economic forces and the growth of very large cities, a small town like Indwe (present population about 6000) in the northeastern Cape might be considered somewhat obscure. Yet Indwe occupies a special position in the history of town planning in South Africa. The reason for this perhaps unusual claim lies in Indwe's origins as an early example of a company town, among the first properly laid out and planned in an attempt to produce an order suitable for the model of corporate control which over the past century has come to characterise so many urban settlements in this country.

Like many South African towns, Indwe was planned and built in the context of struggles over land and labour. Its very site required forced removal before its titular owners could accomplish their urban purpose. Establishment of the town, however, represented an ultimately pyrrhic victory: for within a matter of decades the company was gone, the mines closed, and a long process of decay in the social control exerted by the colonists set in.

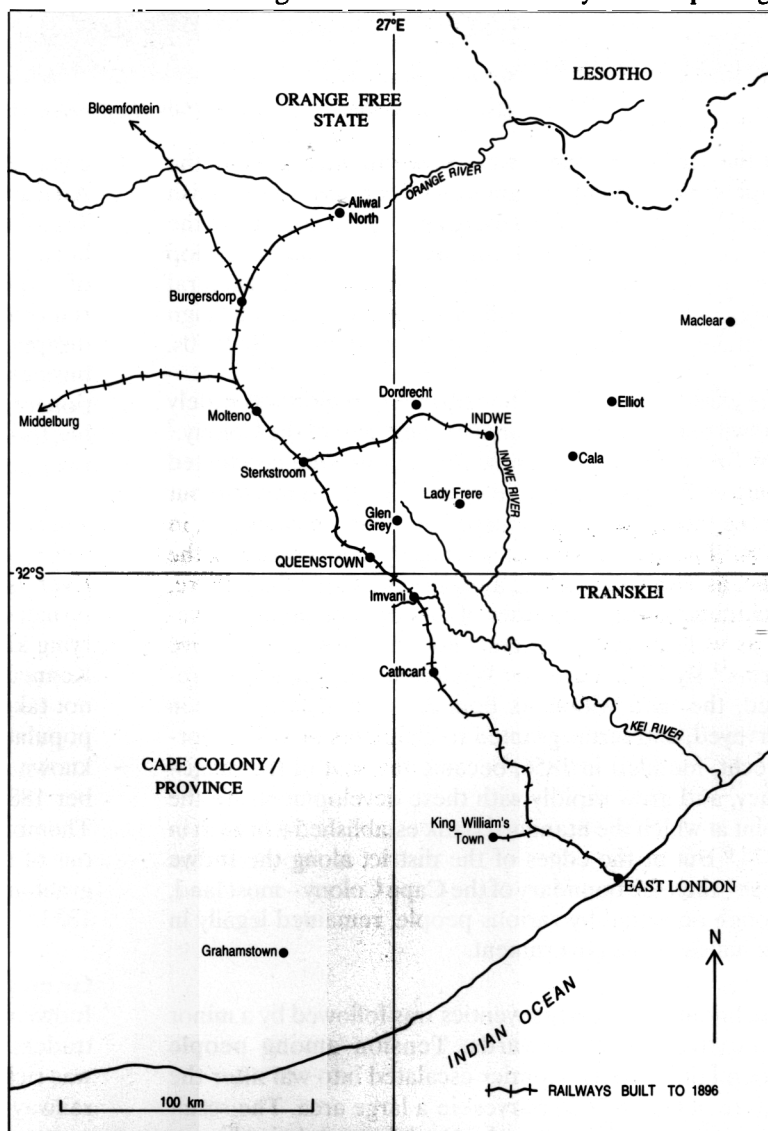
The purpose of this paper is to recount the origins of Indwe as a planned corporate town in the context of the struggles mentioned, and in the wider context of the expansion of the South African economy. Its argument is that an understanding of the processes of urban genesis in South Africa requires an unravelling of complexities, which can be sketched that much more readily in a small if apparently obscure case such as Indwe. In particular, the Indwe story – accessible in part because of the retention by De Beers of private records which in many other cases do not exist – draws us to explore the specific ways in which rural land has come into urban use; relationships between large and small business and their impact on urban development; and the intricate web of political, economic and professional connections between the planning of individual towns and the wider southern African scene.

## Indwe to 1891

The Stormberg area in which Indwe lies might be considered remote by most people, and to reinforce the impression, the environment in the surrounding districts is mostly bleak and cold, though the scenery is beautiful and at times breathtaking. About 70 kilometres north-

east of Queenstown, the town nudges the toe of a branch of the Drakensberg mountains, sandwiched between those ranges and the Transkei border. To the south-west stretches the old Tembu Location of the Queenstown division, better known as the Glen Grey district; to the south-east, Xalanga district, once part of Emigrant Tembuland. The town is half a kilometre west of the Indwe (Xhosa: blue crane bird) river, which between 1847 and 1883 formed the boundary between the Cape Colony and Emigrant Tembuland.

Prior to the cattle-killing in 1857, 'Kreli' (Sandile), Gcaleka chief, had occupied some of the upper reaches of the Indwe river.<sup>1</sup> The disturbances of the late fifties meant that few people in the region could claim lengthy ancestral rights over land on which they ended up living.



*Indwe in the context of the Border and northeastern Cape.*



*General view, Indwe, C.C. – ca. 1909 (Kaffrarian Museum, Kingwilliamstown).*

At the same time, there were powerful incentives in the Cape's increasingly commercial economy to establish rights to land. In the Stormberg area, quite apart from the value of agricultural land, coal deposits began to develop a new significance along with expansion and structural change in the economy evidenced by an influx of foreign capital and a spate of railway building in the early 1870s.

The existence of coal in the Stormberg region was widely known before the Indwe area became part of the Colony.<sup>2</sup> The first commercial mining operations were conducted south of Burghersdorp; the town of Molteno was laid out on the farm owned by George Vice, early coal owner, in 1874.<sup>3</sup> The area to the east was hardly 'unoccupied' at the time, as Theal suggested: a variety of people lived there, including 'numerous bodies of Fingoes and other Native-s', as well as white settlers who laid claim to extensive farms.<sup>4</sup> By 1872 when the Wodehouse division was created, the land within its boundaries had largely been surveyed, and farms granted to claimants or sold.<sup>5</sup> Dordrecht, founded in 1856, became the seat of the magistracy, and grew rapidly with these developments, to the point at which the Standard Bank established a branch in 1874.<sup>6</sup> But at the edges of the district along the Indwe river – then the boundary of the Cape Colony – most land, though occupied by various people, remained legally in the hands of the government.

The boom of the early seventies was followed by a minor slump from 1875 onwards. Tension among people around the colonial frontier escalated into war after the failure of the 1877-78 harvest in a large area. The result of the war was defeat for the Gcaleka and their allies at much the same time as Pedi and Zulu armies suffered

conquest elsewhere, and renewed mass removal of the African population of the eastern Cape and southern Transkei.<sup>7</sup> The end of the war brought merchants in the border or frontier districts the prospect of 'an extension of ... trade hitherto altogether unprecedented'.<sup>8</sup> But the removal of large colonial forces after the war meant disappointment. In this context, a group of Dordrecht businessmen including J.L. Bradfield, landowner, auctioneer, attorney and Member of the Legislative Assembly, took out mineral leases on three areas near the Indwe river and began very small scale mining.<sup>9</sup>

While this limited mining activity took place, the pace of white penetration into the fertile valleys across the Indwe river quickened. Within a couple of years traders, farmers and speculators had established toeholds of varying kinds across the Indwe river, among them Martin Kennedy and John Moore.<sup>10</sup> This colonial pressure did not take long to generate resistance among the African population of the area, resulting in a series of skirmishes known as the 'Tembuland rebellion' in 1880. By December 1880 Colonial forces had proved too much for the Thembu 'rebels' and had driven several thousand people out of the northern reaches of Tembuland (both Emigrant and Proper); the area was annexed to the Cape in 1883.<sup>11</sup>

Given greater 'security', land on the west side of the Indwe river also came under more severe pressure from traders, prospectors and adventurers aware that the area was rich in coal. Industrialisation of the diamond fields, railway extensions and manufacturing in the colonial ports and other towns rapidly increased demand for coal. Small operators attempted to gain access to this poten-

tially lucrative market: in the Glen Grey district, near present-day Indwe, at least one location headman, Thomas Zwedaba, marshalled local people and materials to develop a small mine. But he faced practically insurmountable difficulties even in delivering coal to the Magistrate at Lady Frere (now Cacadu).<sup>24</sup> Larger resources were needed.

The establishment of numerous joint-stock companies provided a possible model. The most well-known were formed at Kimberley in connection with diamond mining, but the phenomenon was also evident at the ports and elsewhere; late in 1881 and during 1882, a number of companies came into being to mine coal in various parts of South Africa. Cecil Rhodes and his fellow De Beers director Rudd were on the board of one – the Kimberley Coal Mining Company – formed in 1881 to mine near Winburg in the Orange Free State. Among those formed to mine coal in the north-eastern Cape, brought tantalisingly closer to markets with the completion of the railway to Queenstown in 1880, were the Great Stormberg and Cyphergat companies, whose properties were in the vicinity of Molteno. Another was the Indwe Coal Mining Company, really a partnership set up by Dordrecht merchant-farmers including Bradfield.<sup>12</sup>

Coal at the Indwe river seemed to occur in thicker seams, with higher quality and in more easily mineable situations than anywhere else in the Cape. However, several difficulties lay in the way of utilising this coal for profit. Chief among them was the inaccessibility of the district, given rugged topography and the distance to the nearest rail-head at Queenstown. To connect the Indwe to that railway would require capital.

The Indwe coal promoters were denied indirect government support for their potential mines by government's decision to extend the East London-Queenstown railway to the Orange River via Molteno and Burghersdorp, rather than Dordrecht. The Indwe coal seams were thus placed more than 90 km from the nearest point on the railway, allowing for the terrain. The Dordrecht merchants concerned, though the wealthiest local figures and politicians like Bradfield were among them, could not muster capital which would see to the necessary railway connection. They turned to larger entrepreneurs for help, in particular Kingwilliamstown merchants James Weir and E.J. Byrne. The latter formed the Imvani and Indwe Railway Company and the two groups employed their political connections to secure a different and more direct form of government support: the promise of a substantial land grant should the railway to the Indwe area be completed. The government would reserve 25 000 morgen of land in the vicinity of the coal mines, to be selected by the company and to be transferred on completion of the railway. On this basis the two companies – Indwe Coal and Imvani Rail – were merged under the name of the latter.<sup>13</sup>

Hardly had the ink dried on the documents concerning the privileges of the company than the process of forced removal, lately accomplished by war against the 'rebels', began again, this time to clear the inhabitants from farms 'reserved' for the company. Removals began in the winter

of 1882 and continued into 1883. By the middle of that year substantial opposition had been organised, and eventually, at a meeting in August, it was agreed that no further action would be taken for a time.<sup>14</sup> The central reason for loss of enthusiasm on the part of the government was not only organised opposition to the removals, for the motive of the exercise had faded. In the depths of the worst recession of the century<sup>15</sup>, the promoters of the company were unable to commence construction of the railway, without which there would be no need to transfer the land to the company. A tiny workforce of ten or a dozen picked coal at the Indwe lease, with no hope of effective competition in the colonial market without a railway connection. It was not until 1886 that the economy showed signs of recovery, and long before that, Cape investors – not to mention overseas capitalists – had shown a far greater interest in Transvaal gold shares (Pilgrims Rest, Barberton etc) than mining ventures in the 'old Colony'.<sup>16</sup>

The completion of various extension railways, especially that to Kimberley in 1885, changed the shape of the coal market in South Africa. The price of coal at Kimberley came down by a large percentage, and excluded South African coals – all of which required long distance wagon transport – from competition until their transport costs could be much reduced. Enough coal was being produced and moved from Indwe to power the first train to Aliwal North in September 1885.<sup>17</sup> Rapid expansion of the fuel market on Transvaal gold fields offered a lucrative if distant alternative. But within a year or two, exploitation of coal deposits in the Transvaal – at Boksburg in particular – excluded the Witwatersrand from the potential market for coal from the Cape and Natal for the immediate future. Closer to home, the lack of a connecting line between the eastern system and the midland lines cut off eastern Cape coal producers from the Kimberley market. Only with such a railway connection could Indwe (and other Cape) coals compete with the imported article at Kimberley, or in the rapidly expanding railway market of the Cape as a whole.

It was in this context of difficulty that the proprietors of the Imvani and Indwe Company negotiated with the Cape government during 1889 for the sale of their mining rights to the latter. The government's interest was complex. The demand for coal on the railways cannot alone explain the sudden determination to develop colonial mineral resources. I have suggested elsewhere that, in 1889, Cape Prime Minister Gordon Sprigg's administration switched to a policy of internal economic development from its previous commitment to servicing the mining industry in territories to the north.<sup>18</sup> Whatever the precise reasons, for the first time there appeared to be the reasonable prospect of government investment in support of colonial coal mining. But the government refused to offer more than £50 000, while the Indwe Company – initially demanding £100 000 for its coal interests – was not prepared to drop below £75 000. Negotiations were broken off at the end of 1889<sup>19</sup>, and the Indwe promoters turned elsewhere for support or sale. Their hopes of direct government capital support were destroyed by the defeat of Sprigg's government in July 1890, and the accession to power of Rhodes's first ministry – which was clearly

opposed to government investment in Cape mining development. The only aid, intriguingly, which Cape coal mining received was the government's agreement to build the long-awaited 'junction' line between Border and Midland railways. The net effect of this line would be to lower still further the price of coal at Kimberley, where there was only one major customer. Although the government also obtained parliamentary approval for the raising of funds to construct a line to Indwe, the latter did not materialise. At the same time, J.X. Merriman, Commissioner of Crown Lands and Public Works in the new cabinet, sought to terminate the Imvani and Indwe Company's hold on government land in the Indwe area – including farms in the Glen Grey district – which continued to exist, despite the failure of the proprietors even to start the construction of the Indwe railway. Threatened with a scant three months' notice of termination in 1891, the promoters finally moved rapidly – to stall any rash moves on the part of the state.<sup>20</sup>

### Formation of the Indwe Railway, Collieries and Land Co.

A powerful card in the company's hands was the liability which government had incurred in building the border-midland junction line. Profitability for that new line seemed to require a substantial volume of coal traffic, which in turn implied a branch line to Indwe. Seizing the initiative, the company's directors offered to build the railway via a new route – now proposed to run to Indwe from Sterkstroom, some distance north of Queenstown rather than Imvani to the south – in return for a cash grant, plus a new land grant deal under which the company would give up its rights to many of its Glen Grey district farms (more suited to its purposes had the Imvani-Indwe line ever been built) in return for the promise of the same total area of land, mainly to be selected around the coal mines. The government was also held at bay with new assurances (later proved false) that the company was busily raising funds in Britain. These arguments carried the day, and far from revoking the earlier grants, government agreed to renegotiate its terms, making in the process the land swap which the company desired.<sup>21</sup>

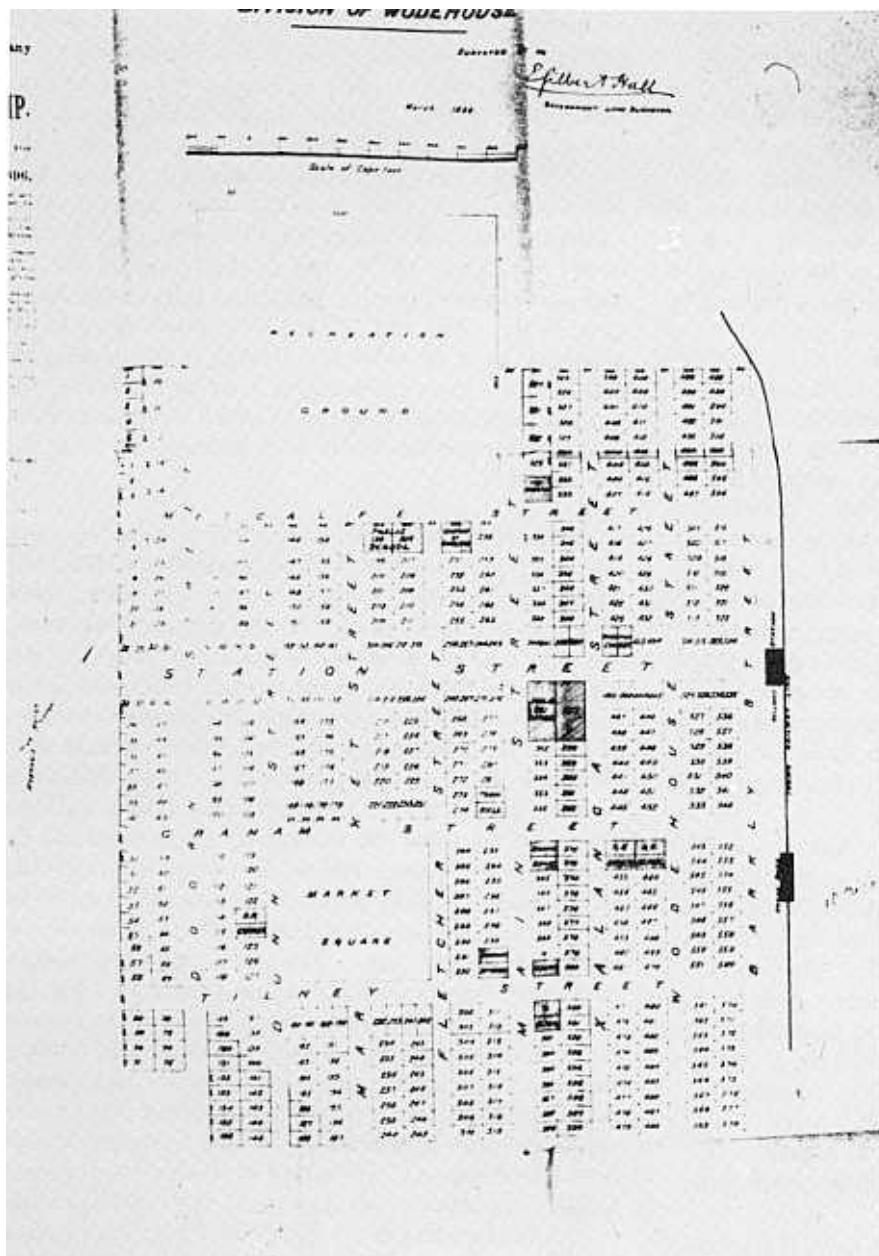
Turning to private interests for aid as well as to government, it was with Rhodes's own De Beers Consolidated that the Indwe Company found the interest which would transform the Indwe mines into a significant concern. In pursuit of the most economical local fuel, De Beers conducted tests on coals from mines in the Cape, Natal, Free State and Transvaal during 1891, as a result of which the company had entirely switched to South African coal (and wood) for fuel by the middle of 1893.<sup>22</sup> The results of De Beers' tests put Indwe coal second after Natal samples. It was, presumably, the prospect of Indwe coal contributing to reduced costs which finally induced De Beers to agree to the proposals of the Imvani and Indwe proprietors to establish a new company, in which De Beers would invest substantial capital. The purposes of the new company would be to build a railway to the mine, develop output capacity, and employ the extensive land grant which it was (still) hoped to acquire from the government.

The disposition of De Beers to involve itself in this manner in the Indwe area may have derived in part from Rhodes's political situation. The cabinet crisis of 1893 placed several of the more prominent members of his first ministry on the opposition benches, and to continue in office Rhodes was forced to rely more heavily on the support of the Afrikaner Bond. Although the Prime Minister enjoyed substantial sway over that party by virtue of his financial dealings with some of its leaders, it was necessary to demonstrate at least some propensity to carry out its programme. That called for a greater degree of interest in the internal economic development of the Cape than the first Rhodes ministry had demonstrated. Although Rhodes and James Sivewright, his minister of railways (Commissioner of Crown Lands and Public Works) would not agree to direct government involvement in railway building within the colony, they were prepared to offer incentives to private companies to undertake such works – as they did in the Breede river valley. The departure of Sivewright in scandalous circumstances during 1894 perhaps helped matters along, given his tendency to favour non-colonial mines such as those of Lewis and Marks at the Vaal River.<sup>23</sup>

It was in this way that the Indwe Railway, Collieries and Land Company (IRC&L) came to be formed in Kimberley in late 1894.<sup>24</sup> The shares were divided between De Beers, the public and the promoters, only the public actually paying immediately for their holdings. In other words, the coal party sought backing for their project in much the same fashion, if on a smaller scale, as the backers of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) were doing at much the same time: they lobbied for what Robert Chodos called 'corporate welfare'.<sup>25</sup> And, like the shareholders in the CPR, they got it. For the Board, like the CPR's directors before them, starting the railway became a matter of some urgency in order to avoid forfeiting the promised 25 000 morgen of land in the vicinity of the Indwe river. On 16 February 1895 the IRC&L struck a deal with Pauling and Co. to construct the railway from Sterkstroom to Indwe.<sup>26</sup> The new Indwe company set about its purposes with great vigour – but soon ran into difficulties.

### The Town

As the railway approached the coal fields, and as the first parties of workers began to extract increasing amounts of coal, so the Company began to worry about how its workers (not to mention its managers) would be housed, and how it would both exercise control over a growing non-rural population and make a suitable statement about its power and incipient wealth to the inhabitants of the district and anyone who might chance to visit it. As part of the solution to these interrelated problems, some time before June 1895 the company selected a site for a town on the farm No 17 Block 3. This site lay immediately adjacent to the coal mines (which were on the farm 'The Camp') and at the terminus of the railway then under construction.<sup>27</sup> Two preliminary steps were required to bring the town into being: the removal of the people who inconveniently lived and farmed on the chosen site, and the design of the place itself.



Plan of the township of Indwe, March 1896 (Cape Times 04.04.1896).

While the construction of the town had to await the resolution of these difficulties, the company addressed the housing question by putting up some houses for white workers and a compound for Africans.<sup>28</sup> But worst of all, from the immediate point of view of the Indwe Company's directors, was the existence of a large 'squatter' population on the site of the proposed town. In order to sell sites in the town, the land would have to be surveyed; the more quickly this could be achieved, the more rapid the realisation of handsome profits would be.

The design and layout of Indwe was entrusted to an experienced surveyor and speculator who was active in the nearby Cala (Xalanga) area, E. Gilbert Hall.<sup>29</sup> But even survey could not proceed without difficulty amidst the kraals of the occupants. F. Schermbrucker, the mercurial Cape politician who acted as managing director of the IRC&L from his Cape Town office, requested that the government arrange to remove the twenty or so kraals

on the designated townsite. He did not think this would be difficult:

I have no doubt that the Magistrate at Lady Frere could easily arrange this matter and find a place for these people to move to as he has often done before ...<sup>30</sup>

In support of this request the Secretary for Agriculture noted that 'so far as I am aware they (the occupants) have no right to be there'; the farms had been cleared, and it 'was not known' how they had again been 'occupied by Natives'.<sup>31</sup>

But the eviction of the occupants was not to be so easy. To begin with, the company had not yet acquired legal title to the farms, and the old principle of 'Huur gaat voor koop' gave strong rights to legal tenants to remain at least until the expiry of their leases. The complexities of rights to use the land in question were replete; the African residents had been told to quit by the IRC&L's local manager, W. Whitaker, who also operated a store on the farm close to the Indwe mine. But the farm was recorded as 'vacant' in the government's records – indicative both of the uncertainty of land occupancy as opposed to land registration, and of the wide assumed powers of white settlers in the area. The African residents, indeed, claimed to have been on the farm for a long time, a claim which the magistrate at Dordrecht was inclined to respect.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, Hall commenced the survey for the establishment of the town in August 1895, despite the continued presence of the kraals. While the Lands Department's notion that the survey was 'premature' since the company did not yet have title, and therefore would not be able to transfer plots to purchasers, it was clearly the IRC&L's intention to have lots ready for sale as soon as they could be sold.<sup>33</sup> Once the railway was complete the company would be entitled to claim transfer of all 'its' farms as part of its grant; completion was likely only in the new year, but the Lands Department formed the view that occupants should be given notice to quit by the end of 1895. To this end they recruited support from prominent officials in the Native Affairs Department of the Cape government.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile some of the 179 residents, many of whom actually worked in the Indwe company's mines, requested James O'Brien, editor of the *Frontier Guardian* in Dordrecht, to represent them in their bid to remain on the land for as long as possible. O'Brien and his paper



had for some time inveighed against Bradfield and his associates, complaining that they were 'a band of speculators not actuated by or possessed of a single ounce of public spirit and enterprise'.<sup>35</sup> The residents wanted to acquire good alternative land, and their opposition was successful to the extent that they secured a delay and the support of S.H. Roberts, the Queenstown-based Chief Inspector of Native Locations, who was sent to report on the situation during September. By that time the IRC&L, and Schermbrucker in particular, had reached a point of great agitation at the incompleteness of the survey.

Finding a place to dump the townsite residents proved to be a difficult matter for the Cape government.<sup>36</sup> The Indwe Company did not want to accommodate numbers of its inherited tenants and squatters on its own land. But assistance was at hand: government agreed to 'relocate' the residents on Farm 3 Block 3, about three miles south-east of their existing kraals and on the west bank of the Indwe river. This solution was made possible by the Company's directors giving up one of the reserved farms, conveniently selecting one leased (originally from the government and subsequently from the company) by Charles Maqubela. On resumption by the government of this farm, it became the Guba Government Location, and Maqubela was transformed from tenant to headman.<sup>37</sup>

Despite Roberts's intention to remove the residents during October, however, they enjoyed a stay of execution. Rhodes himself, concerned with other developments in the Glen Grey district and 'native policy' more generally, stalled the removal of people from the future townsite. In some ways this limited success in the struggle over land merely ensured greater impoverishment, however, for having stayed beyond the commencement of the growing season, many lost their crops when forced to move before they could reap.<sup>38</sup> The removals finally took place only a month after completion of the railway, in March 1896; only then could the layout of the new town be completed.

The design of the town was simple, following the usual rectangular layout of streets, creating blocks with up to 18 lots, a total of almost 600. Hall preempted any opposition on the part of the owner of the only store, indeed the only building, on the site, by aligning his Main Street parallel to the railway and adjacent to W. Whitaker's store. The only other substantial interest in the area, apart from the IRC&L itself, was held by the Standard Bank, which had opened a branch at the mine with the arrival of the railway in February 1896.<sup>39</sup> Hall ensured that the Bank was allocated two stands on Main Street, near the Market Square, prior to advertisement of the stands in the Cape Press during March 1896.<sup>40</sup>

The design and layout of Indwe may have had a larger impact on town planning practice than might be expected, due to a peculiar connection with later statutory planning in the Cape. Hall almost certainly brought his assistant or apprentice, AH Cornish-Bowden with him to Indwe. As a young immigrant from England, Cornish-Bowden worked on farms in Natal and the Cape and seems to have ended up in survey by chance. He was certainly working with Hall at the time of the Indwe plan. The design and layout of Indwe was probably his first

experience of town planning. If the experience had an impact on his views, the methodical, accurate survey and careful allocation of parts of the townsite to schools, public offices, hospital, hotels and so on may have shaped his later passion for 'proper' town layout and town planning powers. Cornish-Bowden became a devotee of town planning, going on a few years later to become Surveyor-General of the Cape Colony (later Province in the Union) at the young age of 30, and in that capacity the key architect of town planning legislation and practice in the Cape in the 1920s and 1930s. So the planning of Indwe may have been of wider significance in stimulating enthusiasm for town planning, at least in the Cape, and perhaps especially in the towns which Cornish-Bowden designed for private clients, such as Somerset West and the Strand.<sup>41</sup>

Excluded from the town and crowded onto the Maqubela location, a portion of the African population who actually worked in the mine, former rural people, found themselves pushed into reliance on the nascent town whose site they had once farmed. Like many South African towns, Indwe formed a complex relationship with nearby reserves from the first. Meanwhile, the growth of the town of Indwe was fostered by the company's appointment of G. Dugmore as resident manager at Indwe, instead of running the company from offices in Kimberley and Cape Town. In the town the mining company provided the fledgling environment for accumulative opportunities. Descendants of 1820 settlers who the directors of the museum at Grahamstown have perhaps been slow to acknowledge, with names like Isaacs and Dawidslinger, performed building work, produced vegetables and carried out innumerable other tasks which made Indwe a livable environment.<sup>42</sup> As a new town in the mid-nineties, Indwe lent opportunity to people from the older towns of the Eastern Cape: that was why it attracted people from, say, Queenstown. Similarly, southern European traders found the towns of Thembuland profitable environments for their businesses: first Cala in the eighties, then Indwe in the nineties and after. Small business flourished, at least for a time: and in turn provided storekeepers with the opportunity to enter into land dealing, at purchase as well as rental. Such a family was the Costellos, the head of which lived at Cala, with several members scattered widely over the 'border' districts.

The town also provided a base for a supervisory/contracting 'class' which had a wide disparity of relationships with the company, and indeed with other residents of the area. Some of the members of this class were deeply involved in attempts to accumulate, and their contracting to the Indwe Company represented one means which they would employ to achieve this end. At the same time as they would, then, seek the cheapest labour to accomplish contract work, they were often also involved in recruiting labour for mines (and perhaps other sectors) in other areas. In so doing they were, after all, only fulfilling one of the functions which the company had intended for the town: site for labour recruitment from surrounding districts.<sup>43</sup> During the 1890s at the latest some of the earlier generation of the Hillhouse family acted as labour agents, recruiting for the mines of the Witwatersrand and elsewhere simultaneously with contracting and mining for the



*Dugmore Street, Indwe, C.C. – ca. 1909 (Kaffrarian Museum, Kingwilliamstown).*

Indwe Company. The two sets of activity had a tendency to contradict one another, even if the intensity with which particular individuals could carry them on at once was low.<sup>44</sup>

Among Africans too there were many activities which could generate some accumulation in the little empire created by the Indwe Company with the help of De Beers. The various inducements offered to workers by the Indwe company provided an immediate set of trade goods: cattle, meat, beer, and land were commodities in great demand around Indwe, and the workers took full advantage of what was available.<sup>45</sup> Not in all cases could the results have been described as accumulation, but merely, perhaps, as increasing leisure time and enhancing the quality of life. Nonetheless, the picture which emerges is one of a company which facilitated the emergence of independent classes of accumulators, a social strata which undercut the control which the company sought to establish in this early company town, and which outlived the company's own successful existence.

The strength of these independent accumulators had one aspect which made Indwe unusual within the context of South African company towns. Unlike many others, from Pilgrims Rest over a century ago to Copperton in the 1960s, the IRC&L not only sold lots in its town at freehold, but readily consented to the establishment of a municipal authority at Indwe.<sup>46</sup> The company's desire to profit from its land holdings led it to sell stands (as opposed to leasing them, common elsewhere), which unleashed a process that the company neither could nor wished to control. As early as August 1896 a public

meeting was held, attended by seventy standholders and chaired by W. Whitaker (the owner of the only store which preceded the laying out of the town but by then succeeded as local IRC&L manager by William Hogg). The meeting resolved to petition the civil commissioner (local representative of the Cape government) in Dordrecht to support the proclamation of a village management board. The first meeting of a newly elected board took place by December, and the first officials were appointed in February the following year. Its members included not only local traders and contractors such as Hillhouse brothers James and John; its chairman was R.W. Gordon, secretary of the IRC&L. Within a year the Board sought full municipal status, which came into being from August 1898; and Gordon became the first Mayor of Indwe.<sup>47</sup> While the company was prepared to see a measure of autonomy among local interests, it clearly sought to maintain its general control over the municipality and its powers.

Once established, the municipality responded to the aspirations of the Indwe standholders rather than the company, though the latter continued to exercise a powerful influence as employer, power generator, and buyer amongst other things. A major impact of the establishment of the municipality upon the town was the setting aside and rough laying out of a 'location' in which Africans could live – and in which, by and large, most Africans were forced to live by economic necessity or discriminatory practice. The new location originated in a committee consisting of J. Hillhouse, J. Turner and the Rev. M'Vambo, who were appointed by the first standholders meeting in August 1896 to approach the IRC&L

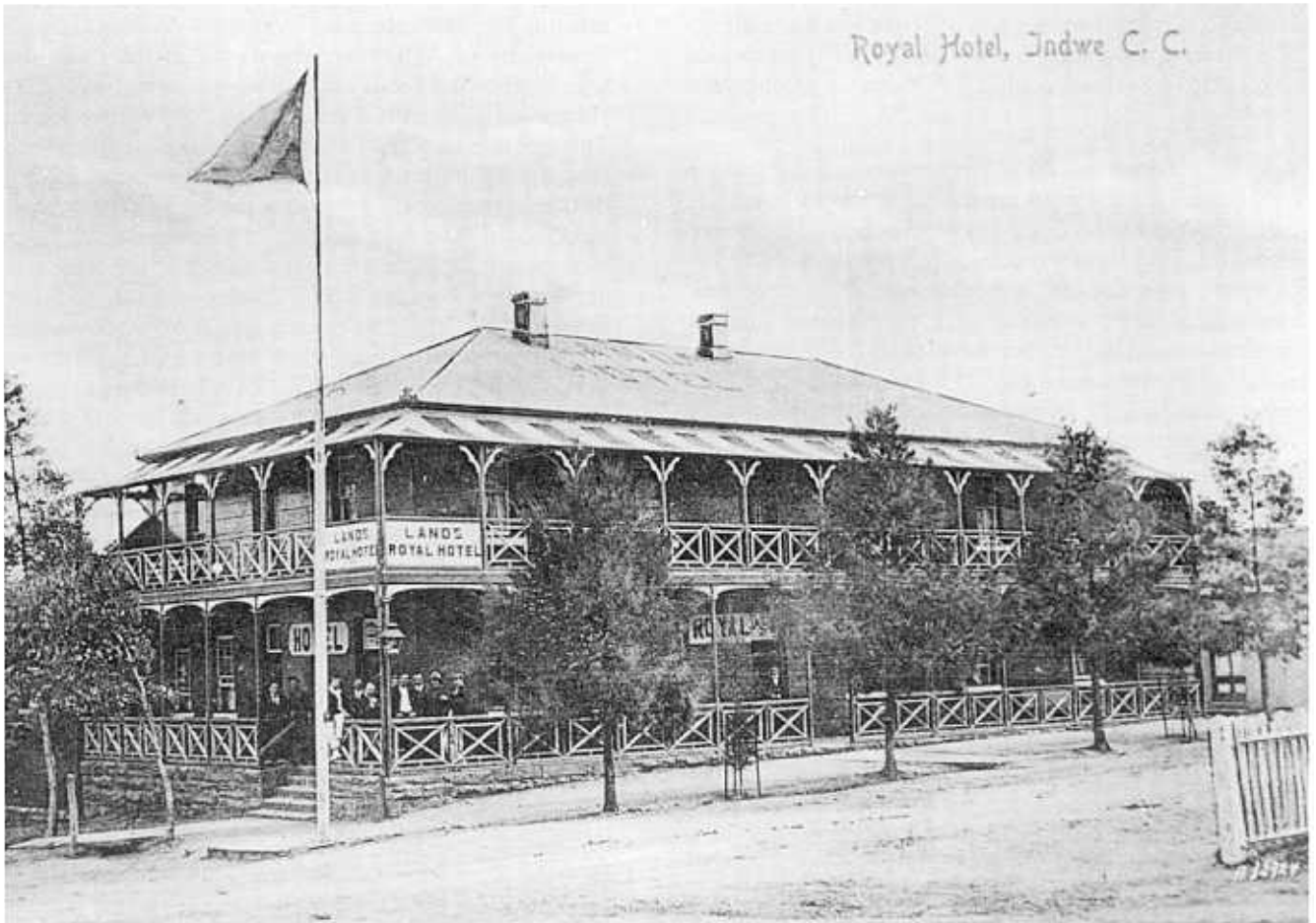
for a piece of land. The location was placed well to the east of the town, following typical nineteenth century temperate latitude relationships between working class and better off urban districts; that site extended beyond the IRC&L's compound, unfortunately demolished during the 1980s.<sup>48</sup> Today the vast majority of Indwe residents live in the 'township' and its site-and-service and shack adjuncts, still situated on and around the location site of 1897; while the town, small though it is, remains central to a much wider population in quasi-urban areas of the surrounding reserves.

#### Changes in power: Indwe 1896-1906

In the second half of the nineties the primary difficulties encountered by the IRC&L were confronted, and in part solved. While the costs of production had been 50% higher than the original estimates, there were improvements; the company was better able to supply coal at more competitive rates, and its production grew. Indwe coal supplied all De Beers' needs by mid-1896. Contracts with the Cape Government Railways (CGR) took up additional output. By 1899 the IRC&L mine produced well over 100 000 tons a year, which for a South African colliery at the turn of the century was a very substantial amount. About 60 whites and 1100 Africans were employed by the company and its contractors at Indwe; the township had been laid out and largely sold on quitrent terms; paying tenants on short leases occupied most of the farms; and all seemed set for a period of uninterrupted profits. Symbol of government confidence in com-

pany and town, handsome stone public buildings had been planned and built 1898-1900.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the company had already assumed regular distribution of a 5% half-yearly dividend, thus gaining the distinction of being the only Cape coal mining venture which ever paid substantial returns.<sup>50</sup> Although the labour supply was never considered adequate, production proceeded uninterrupted.<sup>51</sup> This relatively satisfactory performance ended, however, during the 1899-1902 war.<sup>52</sup>

Thereafter, various factors contributed to the decline of the IRC&L. Most fundamental was its inability to determine the pattern of labour at Indwe. The company soon ran into great difficulties in keeping its production up to the required levels – required by the demands of contracts with both De Beers and the CGR. The flow of labour from the broad Transkeian territories to the Witwatersrand had accelerated at different phases from the early nineties. The construction of the original railway to Indwe facilitated the movement of labour to the Witwatersrand, making Indwe a major centre in the labour system of southern Africa and proving profitable to the IRC&L through the carriage of thousands of passengers at minimal cost to the company. By 1902 at least 200 Africans passed through Indwe every day en route to or from the mines, affording opportunities to all manner of operators, not only the company, to profit from their needs.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, for most of the century, the Royal (now Blue Crane) Hotel, opposite the station, depended for its survival on the off-licence trade which boomed with each train's arrival. Part of the reason for this flow lay not only



*Royal Hotel, Indwe C.C. – ca. 1902 (Cape Archives, Cape Town, AG 8015).*



in the exertions of recruiters, stressed by Alan Jeeves, but also in the deterioration of conditions in the 'native' districts of Glen Grey and Xalanga.<sup>54</sup>

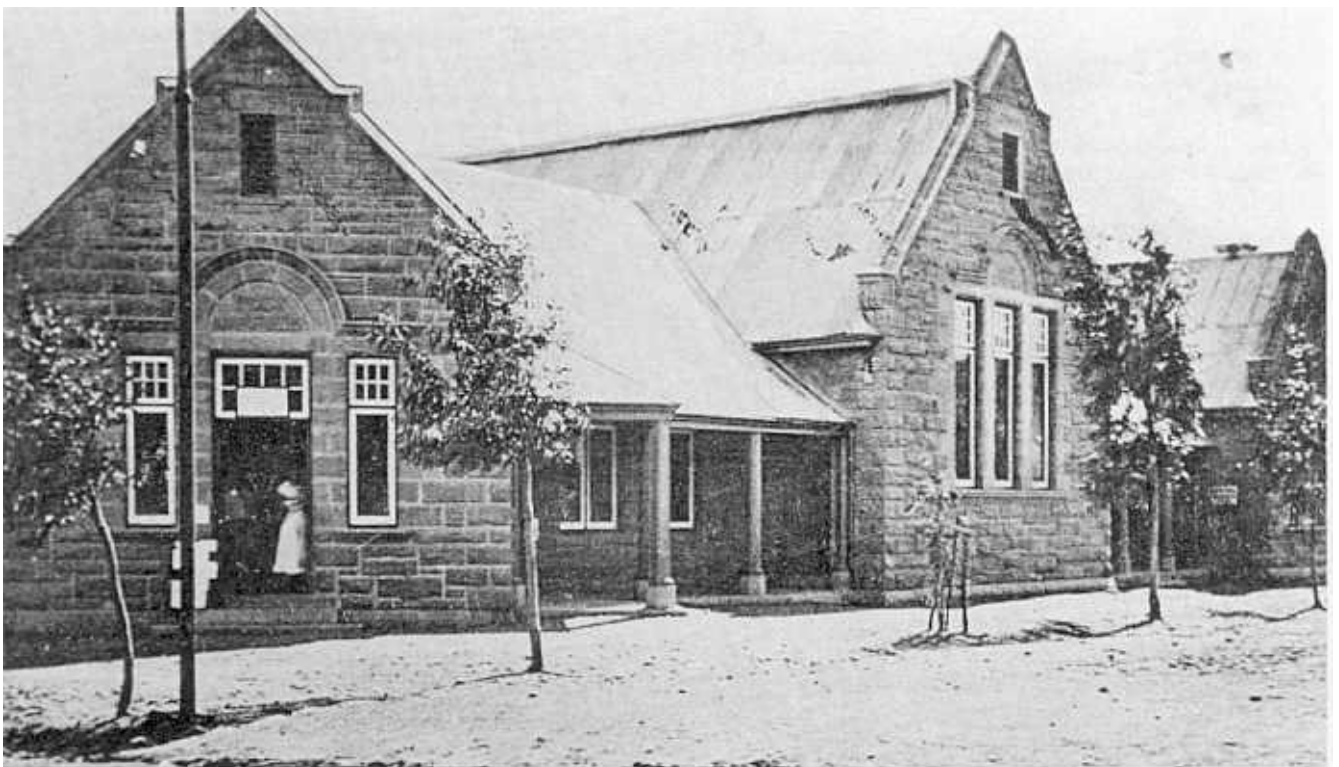
Together with the increasing tendency of the CGR to purchase coal from other areas, these factors contributed to the decline of the IRC&L. The Company went into voluntary liquidation in 1917, and its remaining farms became an area of settlement for (white) returning soldiers after the First World War.<sup>55</sup> The form and functioning of the town shifted only slowly from that time on, though the growth of the black population increased the entrepot activities associated with workers moving to and from other parts of the country; and the servicing of a white farming community has gradually diminished. Many of the early buildings still stand, and the layout and appearance of the town probably differs rather less from its company days than might be expected.

### Conclusion

Indwe originated as a planned corporate town in the context of struggles over land and labour, and in the wider

Some of the complexities of the processes of urban genesis in South Africa have been unravelled in this paper, due to the availability of sources and the assistance of a number of people.<sup>56</sup> First, the specific ways in which rural land became urban at Indwe provides a reminder of the need to explore the history of rural-urban land conversion, something which our literature has more or less ignored to date. Yet we can hardly claim a history of land use planning without detailed investigation of such processes. Secondly, the shifting economic and political relationships between the Indwe company and the smaller businesses in the area had a significant impact on the development of the town. Again, these are relationships of conflict, competition and coalition which need to be understood much more widely. We lack even the muck-raking tradition of north America as a basis for understanding business influence on urban development in South Africa, and scholarly work in this field is long overdue.

A third point: due to the connection of Indwe's planner, E. Gilbert Hall, with A.H. Cornish-Bowden, the town's



*Public Buildings, Indwe, C.C. – ca. 1909 (Kaffrarian Museum, Kingwilliamstown).*

context of the expansion of the South African economy. What happened around Indwe was shaped by many things. Locality, struggles to establish (and profit from) domination over others, control over land (that most peculiar means of production), a mixture of ways of understanding what was 'proper' in these things: all influenced its patterns.

planning may even have exercised an influence on related activities much more widely. Well-researched biographies of such professionals will aid in understanding the intricate web of political, economic and professional connections between the planning of individual towns (until recently, perhaps exclusively by white men) and the wider southern African scene. Finally, the forceful and meticulous planning of the town contrasts strongly with

the almost casual creation of the location, let alone the quasi-urban reserves further afield: and other sources must be found to inform our understanding of so many similar occurrences.

In Indwe's history are intertwined these and other forces. This paper is far from exhausting the writing of Indwe's history, for the relative richness of the sources will allow exploration of many other themes, just as similar research elsewhere would enrich our understanding of urban South Africa.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Evidence of W.D. Fynn to Native Laws and Customs Commission, *Annexures to the Votes and Proceedings of the Cape Colony Parliament* (Cape V&P, Ann.), G.4-'83, paragraph 4967.
- 2 See, e.g., *Cape Blue Book* (Cape Town, 1859).
- 3 J. Meintjes, *Dorp van Drome – Molteno 1874-1974* (Municipality of Molteno, 1974).
- 4 G.M. Theal, *Compendium of South African History and Geography*, (3rd edition) (London 1878), Part 2 pp. 69-70; S.W. Silver & Co., *Handbook for South Africa* (London, 1875), p. 432; H. Aucamp (ed.), *Op die Stormberge* (Cape Town, 1971).
- 5 A.J. Christopher, *The Crown Lands of British South Africa* (Kingston, 1984), pp. 19-20.
- 6 Standard Bank Archive, Johannesburg (hereafter SBA), Branch Index.
- 7 C. Saunders, 'The annexation of the Transkeian Territories', *Archives Yearbook for South African History*, XXXIX, 1976, pp. 1-192.
- 8 East London Museum, Acc. 1243, East London Chamber of Commerce, Annual Report presented to the Meeting held on 7.8.1878.
- 9 SBA, 1/1/43, Inspection Report (IR) Dordrecht, 10.10.1878, pp. 6, 27, 97.
- 10 Report of the Tembuland Commission, *Cape V&P Ann.*, G.66-'83, General Plan of Subdivision of Emigrant Tembuland and Tembuland Proper.
- 11 Saunders, 'Annexation', pp. 91-97. Note that the 'rising' occurred in territory beyond the borders of the colony.
- 12 Johannesburg Public Library, Prospectus of the Kimberley Coal Mining Company, 1881; Cape Archives, Cape Town (hereafter CA), LC 16, 28; SBA, 1/1/43, IR Dordrecht.
- 13 SBA, 1/1/43, IR Dordrecht 1.5.1883, pp. 79-80.
- 14 CA, LND 1/226, L17, correspondence concerning the 'removal of natives from Indwe farms for mining purposes'. See also correspondence from the resident magistrate at Lady Frere in CA, NA 185 and 189.
- 15 SBA, 1/1/43, IR Dordrecht, 20.05.1885, pp. 121-123; see also A. Mabin, 'Recession and its aftermath: the Cape Colony in the 1880s', in A. Mabin (ed.), *Organisation and Economic Change: Southern African Studies Volume 5* (Johannesburg, 1989), pp. 21-47.
- 16 A. Mabin, *The making of colonial capitalism* (Ph.D., Simon Fraser University, 1984), chapter 6.
- 17 'Railway opening festivities at Aliwal North', clipping of unknown origin kindly supplied by Miss H. Weir, Queenstown, 20.11.1984.
- 18 Mabin, *Colonial Capitalism*, Chapter 6.
- 19 Papers re Proposed Purchase of Coal Rights from Indwe Mining Company, *Cape V&P Ann.*, G.44-'89.
- 20 CA, LND 1/226, L17, minute by J.X. Merriman dated 21.8.1891; Papers and Correspondence Relative to Indwe Coalfields Railway, *Cape V&P, Ann.*, G.53-'91.
- 21 SBA, 1/1/43, IR Dordrecht, 25.4.92, p. 8, and 17.07.1894, p. 18; *Debates of the House of Assembly (Hansard)*, 25.8.1892 pp. 383-4, and 4 and 14.8 and 7.9.1893, pp. 248, 263, 388-90; also 31.7.1894, pp. 394-396.
- 22 De Beers Archive, Kimberley (hereafter DBA), Annual Report of De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd. at 30.6.93.
- 23 cf. Merriman in *Hansard* 6.6.1895, p. 250.
- 24 CA, LC 212, IRC&L, Memorandum of Agreement and Articles of Association, 27.11.1894.
- 25 R Chodos, *A Century of Corporate Welfare* (Toronto, 1975).
- 26 CA, LC 212, IRC&L, Memorandum of Agreement, 16.2.1895.
- 27 CA, LND 1/389, L.17 Indwe Railway Construction Agreement, Resident Magistrate (RM) Wodehouse to Under Secretary for Agriculture, Cape Town, 28.6.1895.
- 28 South African Library, *Frontier Guardian* (FG) (Dordrecht), 27.9.1895.
- 29 Hall was born in Cornwall and was 35 at the time of the Indwe survey. For some details see CA, MOOC 6/9/2004, 1392, estate papers of E.G. Hall, and DOC 4/1/240, 82 Part 1, Mortgage Bond: E.G. Hall.
- 30 CA, LND 1/389 L.17, Schermbrucker to Milton, Secretary to Rhodes, 6.7.1895.
- 31 CA, LND 1/389 L.17, Report by Secretary for Agriculture, 11.7.1895.
- 32 CA, LND 1/389 L.17, Whitaker to Civil Commissioner (CC) Dordrecht, 6.8.1895; RM Dordrecht to Currey, private, 28.6.1895.
- 33 CA, LND 1/389, L.17, Schermbrucker to Minister of Agriculture 20.8.1895; Report by Under Secretary of Agriculture, 28.8.1895.
- 34 CA, LND 1/389, L.17, J. Rose-Innes, Under Secretary for Native Affairs to Under Secretary for Agriculture, 14.10.1895.
- 35 FG, 05.07.1895.
- 36 Just as the Nationalist government found in the early 1950s when pushing labour tenant evictions – resulting in passage of amending law in 1954 absolving government of its responsibility to find alternative land.
- 37 CA, LND 1/389 L.17, J. O'Brien to J.L. Bradfield, 27.7.1895; Report of S.H. Roberts, 16.9.1895; Schermbrucker to Minister for Agriculture, 9.9 and 28.9.1895. A report by the Civil Commissioner of Dordrecht in LND 1/389 L.17 outlines a proposed strategy for the removal, which was approved by Native Affairs on 10.3.96.
- 38 CA, LND 1/389 L.17, Roberts to Under Secretary Native Affairs, 21.10.1895; minute by Under Secretary for Agriculture, 30.12.1895; Schermbrucker to Minister of Agriculture, 12.02.1896.
- 39 SBA, Branch Index.
- 40 A simplified layout plan was published in the *Cape Times* of 4.4.1896.
- 41 *Cape Times* 2.12.1931; see also CA, SG 3/2/2/1, personnel file on Cornish-Bowden.
- 42 Interviews with B. Davidslinger and P. Isaacs, Indwe, 17.4.1985.
- 43 *Cape Times*, 4.4.1896.
- 44 DBA, Indwe correspondence; interview with N. and J. Hillhouse, Washington Guest Farm, Indwe, 17.4.1985.
- 45 DBA, Indwe correspondence; interview with A. Magude and D. Nobula, Indwe, 17.4.1985.
- 46 cf. A. Mabin and G. Pirie, 'The township question at Pilgrims Rest', *South African Historical Journal*, XII, 1985, pp. 64-83.
- 47 J.A.E. Hillhouse, L.S. van der Walt and J.H. Combrink, 'Oorsig van die geskiedenis van die dorp en die distrik van Indwe', 19 February 1952, pp. 1-3 (supplied by courtesy of the Town Clerk, Indwe, 1985).
- 48 Hillhouse et. al., 'Oorsig', p. 1; Queenstown and Frontier Museum, 'Plan showing Indwe Township and Surrounding District', ca. 1897. The location was placed 200 metres from the town; when the railway was extended to Elliot and Maclear after the turn of the century, its residents found themselves literally on the other side of the tracks.

- 49 CA, LND 1/738, L12020, New public offices 1898, and LND 1/786, L13410, Public buildings 1900.
- 50 The sources for this summary are DBA, De Beers Annual Reports; SBA, Indwe Inspection Reports; DBA, Indwe Railway, Collieries and Land Company (IRC&L) Annual Reports, Copies of Minutes of Directors Meetings 1897-1909, and Boxes of correspondence received by De Beers from IRC&L.
- 51 DBA, Box 'Indwe 1894-1901', R.W. Gordon, Secretary IRC&L to Secretary, De Beers, 3.5.1898.
- 52 DBA, IRC&L Board Minutes 21.10.1901, 14.11.1901, etc.
- 53 SBA, IR Indwe 27.9.02.
- 54 SBA, IR Cala 1904-1911; IR Indwe 1904-1911; CA, NA, Letters received from RM Lady Frere, and NA 709 Letters received from Assistant RM Indwe; Transvaal Archives (TA), GNLB 188, 1246/14; A. Jeeves, *Migrant Labour in South Africa's Mining Economy*, (Johannesburg, 1985), pp. 119-120; and cf. W. Beinart, 'Joyini Inkomo: cattle advances and the origins of migrancy from Pondoland', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, V, (1979), pp. 199-219.
- 55 This summary is largely based on correspondence in DBA, box 'Indwe 1912-1919'. Papers concerning the Indwe settlement are in CA, 1/LDF 8/1/8, 2/11/3; and State Archives, Pretoria, LDE 4084, 11166/187 and LDE 4430, 14094.
- 56 A number of archivists, curators, librarians, interviewees and correspondents facilitated and enlivened the research for this paper. I wish to thank the Town Clerk at Indwe, and Mr Barend Dawidslinger, Mr Petrus Isaacs, Mr Andries Magude, Mr David Nobula, Mr Neil and Mrs Jeanette Hillhouse, Rev. D de Lange, and Mr RF Baxter of that town and district; at Dordrecht, Mr J.C.V. Erasmus, manager of the Standard Bank; at Queenstown, Mrs Judy Preston, Queenstown and Frontier Museum, and Miss Helen Weir; at Molteno, Mrs R. Meintjes and Mr and Mrs J. Vice; at Kingwilliamstown, Mr Denver Webb, Kaffrarian Museum, Miss Phyllis Weir and Mr M.E. Weir, director, James Weir & Co.; at East London, Mrs Gill Vernon, East London Museum, and Mr Stuart Ferguson, East London Public Library; at Kimberley, Dr Muneen Buys, Mrs Gwyneth Crothall and De Beers Consolidated Mines; at Grahamstown, Ms Ann Torlesse and Ms Sandy Fold, Cory Library, Rhodes University; at Cape Town, Ms Alison Garlick, South African Library. Cynthia Kros contributed through much discussion while travelling with me to all of these places. This research was supported by grants from the Human Sciences Research Council/Centre for Science Development. Views expressed are, of course, those of the author alone.