

# PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN PILGRIMS REST, 1915-1969

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Popular histories and travel publicity have stamped Pilgrims Rest as South Africa's romantic gold rush site. Today's demure and hapless valley is portrayed as a popular locale for swarms of rustic fortune seekers. The tent encampment, and later the village, drained dreams, was home to brutes and dolls, and was the site of rumbustious living and daring escapades.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the curiosity of Pilgrims Rest is also exuded in the contrast it presents between splendid mountain scenery and a place devoid of "the bare essentials of a civilised community".<sup>2</sup> Before and after this diagnosis of 1946, Pilgrims Rest village was wedded to quaint, but deplorable shelter, shops, streets and public services. As anywhere, the emergence and persistence of such conditions resulted partly from public administration.

In Pilgrims Rest from 1915 to the 1970s (when duties were taken over by the Transvaal Provincial Administration as landlord), this was in the hands of a small local authority called a health committee. Situated on land owned by the company named Transvaal Gold Mining Estates Limited (TGME) in a company-dominated environment, the health committee did not operate in a vacuum. On the contrary, the face of Pilgrims Rest during most of this century reflects the workings of an impecunious, amateur public authority which was in many respects reliant upon a fastidious, cost-conscious private mining group.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF A HEALTH COMMITTEE

For close on twenty years after its establishment in 1895, the company TGME gave scant attention to the public domain of the mining village which sprang up around its offices and reduction works. Rents were levied, but streets, sanitation and other public services were rudimentary. Taking exception to the appearance of the town, to its alarming unhealthiness and neglect, 21 residents petitioned the Transvaal Provincial Secretary in mid-1914 for the creation of a local authority in Pilgrims Rest.<sup>3</sup> Although this was but one in a series of efforts to secure some independence of the settlement from TGME,<sup>4</sup> Company officials were aware of the benefits which could be reaped — as one put it in 1915:

"The present very insanitary condition of the village is a serious menace to all residents. Several cases of typhoid have recently occurred, and unless proper steps are taken ... a serious outbreak might ensue during summer months, when the health of the Company's employees would also be in danger."<sup>5</sup>

Consent was given by TGME for the establishment of the Pilgrims Rest Health Committee (PRHC) in mid-1915. At this time the Company was concerned primarily with reigning in a potentially hazardous intruder and contemplated exerting influence by direct representation on the Committee.<sup>6</sup> TGME also took active steps to protect its interests by stipulating that it was amenable to a health committee, provided that its scope "was limited to Pilgrims Rest itself and was not made to embrace the Company's works and properties outside".<sup>7</sup> The dependency and subordination of PRHC with respect to TGME dates from this initial restraining clause.

Proclamation of PRHC in terms of the 1912 Transvaal Local Government Ordinance was made in October 1915,<sup>8</sup> and regulations prescribing the domain and *modus operandi* of PRHC were published in November that year. Provisions

were made for the following: patrol of nuisances and animals; supply of sanitary conveniences and refuse removal; control of cesspools and water pollution; supervision of noxious and offensive trades; building control; prevention of infectious and contagious diseases; appointment of officers and conduct of business.<sup>9</sup> As reflected in periodic notices of the Provincial Administration, much of the work of the Health Committee was devoted to subsequent revision of regulations and framing of new ones in respect of such matters as cemetery and sanitary tariffs and control of traffic, town hall and abattoir and hawkers. At least eighteen regulations and amendments were enacted in these respects between 1915 and 1947. Active participation in wider Transvaal local government affairs was very limited.<sup>10</sup>

## LABOUR AND MATERIALS

The first formal contact between TGME and PRHC involved negotiation for tidying and cleaning the village. As an opening salvo, the Health Committee notified TGME that it expected the Company to clear all vacant land. Explaining, the chairman of PRHC presented himself as

"anxious that standholders should see that something tangible is being done ... it will be nice to think that (TGME) is setting an example, which would at least encourage standholders and brace them ... for any additional taxation which may be imposed upon them ... for sanitary services."<sup>11</sup>

Although TGME's general manager was "perfectly prepared to lend assistance in the general cleaning up", he balked at taking all responsibility, declaring that

"it is obviously unfair that I should be asked to clean-up depositing dumps etc. of all and sundry, just because standholders have chosen to foul my ground rather than to use their own."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See A.P. CARTWRIGHT, *Valley of gold* (Cape Town, 1961).

<sup>2</sup> Pilgrims Rest Museum Archives, Transvaal Gold Mining Estates Records (henceforth PRMA, TGMER), file labelled "Health Committee 32" (henceforth HC32): G. Machanik — Secretary for Public Health, c. March 1946.

<sup>3</sup> Central Archives Depot, Pretoria (henceforth CAD), GG 1411, 44/25: Minute 912 from Prime Minister's Office, 20.7.1915.

<sup>4</sup> A.S. MABIN, and G.H. PIRIE, The township question at Pilgrims Rest, 1894-1922, *South African Historical Journal* 17, November 1985, pp. 64-83.

<sup>5</sup> PRMA, TGMER, file numbered 13D (henceforth 13D): General Manager TGME — Secretary TGME, 7.9.1915.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: General Manager TGME — Magistrate, Cross, 20.9.1915.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*: Secretary TGME — Provincial Administrator, 24.8.1915.

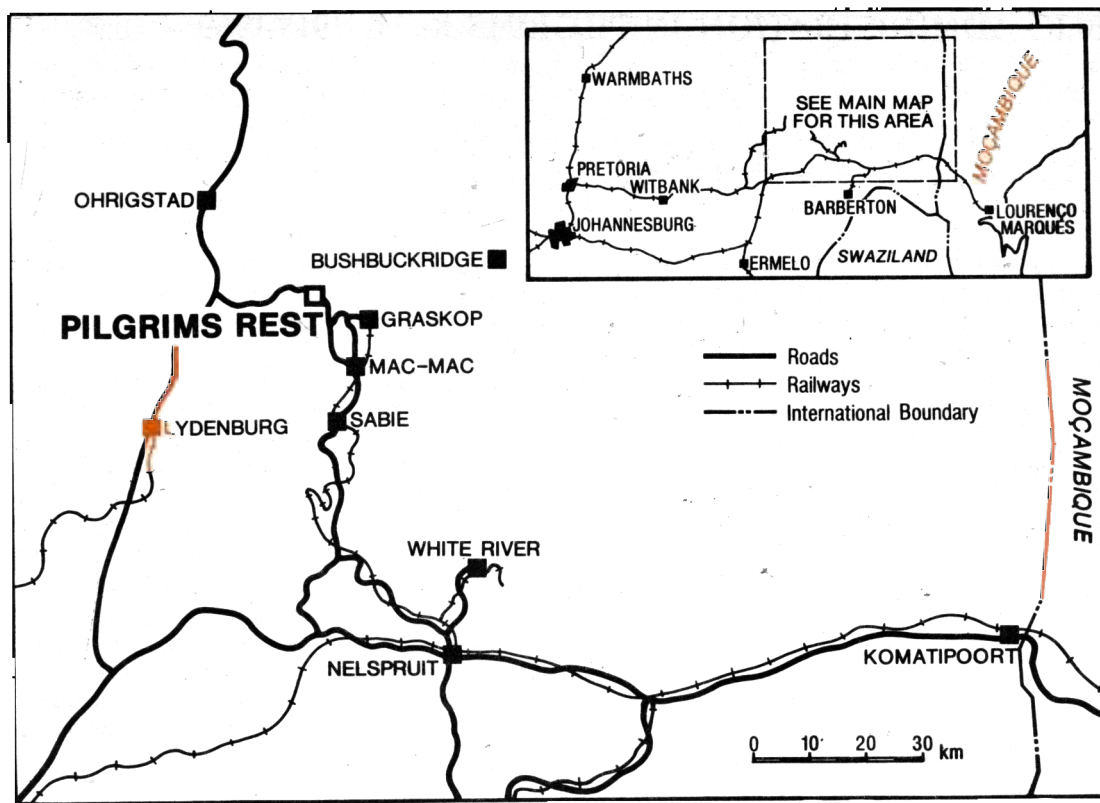
<sup>8</sup> *Transvaal Provincial Gazette*, 13.10.1915 (Proclamation no. 47).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.11.1915 (Notice no. 369).

<sup>10</sup> The invitation to PRHC to send representatives to Cape Town "to watch European interests" during passage of the Class Areas Bill in 1924 was not taken up on account of the cost (see PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 18.2.1924).

<sup>11</sup> PRMA, TGMER 13D: Chairman PRHC — General Manager TGME, 20.11.1915.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 26.11.1915.



The point of difference was finally resolved by means of the Company's offer of free supply of designated labour for a month. TGME insisted that this would end its liability for clearing vacant land, the creek and any other areas within the Health Committee's boundaries.<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding, PRHC continued to request aid in order that the appearance of the cemetery and park be improved.<sup>14</sup> Clearing operations in the cemetery were not assumed lightly by TGME, and although it offered to put ten labourers and a supervisor at the disposal of PRHC, it did so on condition that PRHC contribute £5, or half of the expenses.<sup>15</sup> The Company's business-like approach contained careful specification that its contribution was made

"as an act of grace and as a contribution toward a public service to which it bears no responsibility and must not be taken as accepting any responsibility in connection with the future upkeep of the cemetery."<sup>16</sup>

TGME's premonition that it would continue to be approached by PRHC for assistance with cemetery maintenance, was fulfilled and in 1923 the general manager repeated that he did not think that it was his Company's duty to subscribe to what was "essentially a public health business". Amazed that burial fees did not cover the costs of upkeep, he also pointed out that

"we have been so frequently called upon to provide native labour and tools for grave digging purposes that I feel we have already subscribed very liberally towards cemetery work."<sup>17</sup>

Protest as he may, the general manager did not succeed in relieving TGME from cemetery chores. Over many succeeding years the Company assisted in providing fencing, lopping trees and repairing the access road.<sup>18</sup> In so doing, proprietary issues became so blurred that even when PRHC proposed to put cemetery tree felling out to contract, it was sufficiently hesitant about its rights to ask TGME whose property the felled trees would be.<sup>19</sup> More than this, when TGME indicated its willingness to do lopping and removal, PRHC indemnified the Company against damages.<sup>20</sup> The proposed tree felling programme of 1935 took a year to even-

tuat and gave TGME ample evidence of PRHC's "dilatatory methods". Reluctant to be at the Health Committee's beck and call, the general manager refused labour assistance a second time round, suggesting instead that PRHC "find the labour, we supervise".<sup>21</sup>

It was in relation to its substantial cemetery work that Company officials were infuriated when on one occasion just prior to a burial they discovered that a grave had not been prepared. The general manager took the opportunity to lambaste PRHC for its

"increasing tendency to lean upon (TGME) and the members of its staff for all manner of services whereby the members of the community individually and as a whole are permitted to slack and escape rightful responsibility. In this case the Company had to come in to ensure a service for which (PRHC) levies a heavy charge."<sup>22</sup>

The officers of PRHC recorded "strong exception" to the tirade, the wording of which they saw as being designed "to dominate and belittle members".<sup>23</sup> They contemplated resigning *en masse*, and sent a deputation to TGME. As it happened, the 1937 burial fiasco arose from misunderstanding rather than just from PRHC ineptitude. The Committee were exonerated with a gracious, humbling and unprecedented apology from TGME's general manager for making hasty judgments and for causing "inconvenience or hurt feelings".<sup>24</sup>

Use made of TGME employees by PRHC went beyond menial tasks conducted inside the Committee's area of jurisdiction. For example, the Company's draughting office prepared plans of the Health Committee district. TGME also conducted a census on behalf of the Committee, helped arrange public celebrations, and restored the public tennis

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 27.11.1915.

<sup>14</sup> PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 15.3.1920.

<sup>15</sup> PRMA, TGMER, TGME Letter Book (henceforth LB): Actg. General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 24.1.1919 and 29.1.1919.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 1.2.1919.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 3.4.1923.

<sup>18</sup> PRMA, TGMER, file titled "file no 20, Health Committee" (henceforth 20HC): Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 1.4.1935 and 18.7.1935.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*: Secretary PRHC — General Manager TGME, 12.7.1935; Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 18.7.1935.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*: Secretary PRHC — Estates Agent TGME, 7.2.1936.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*: Margin note by General Manager TGME on memo to him from Estates Agent TGME dated 18.9.1936.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*: Estates Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 10.5.1937.

<sup>23</sup> PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 17.5.1937.

<sup>24</sup> PRMA, TGMER 20HC: General Manager — Chairman PRHC, 19.5.1937.

court.<sup>25</sup> More typically, it was the workshops and estates department of the Company which were involved with PRHC affairs. Although there were times when assignments were delayed by competing mine duties, considerable help was given down the years including, for instance, repair of a water furrow, repair and modification of the Committee's refuse wagon and sanitary cart, erection of an animal pound and latrines and repair to the creek footbridge.<sup>26</sup> In the course of this kind of work, considerable reliance was placed on the Company stores for material such as hardware, oil drums, sanitary pails, iron rails, fencing and building poles.<sup>27</sup> Acting as general supplier to the local authority irked TGME to the extent that in 1926 PRHC was informed that material from the Company stores would in future only be obtainable "in an emergency".<sup>28</sup>

Erection and maintenance of street lights and of hydrants for street-watering<sup>29</sup> was a major facet of Company assistance to PRHC. The general manager advised on at least one occasion that he shrank from expenditure on these items unless it was unequivocally of "material benefit to the public".<sup>30</sup> Reluctance to continue installing street lamps hinged partly on TGME's observation that free maintenance and electricity was being abused by virtue of lamps being left burning during daylight. Complaining in 1924 to PRHC, TGME noted that its expenses would be reduced if its facilities were given "at least the reasonable attention and treatment which ... the Company is entitled to expect".<sup>31</sup> In time, TGME withdrew free streetlight maintenance<sup>32</sup> and even began charging for estimating the likely costs of additional lighting.<sup>33</sup>

Objections about water wastage by private users and by PRHC's leaky water cart<sup>34</sup> were followed by similar withdrawal of free supply. From 1924 PRHC were allowed a certain amount of free water per day, thereafter a fixed scale per consumption unit was applied.<sup>35</sup> In this matter of public facility provision TGME had a clear advantage over PRHC, typified in its attitude during a drought (1924) that "the decision as to a restricted supply of water for street watering ... must rest absolutely in our hands".<sup>36</sup>

## LAND USE

Beyond the calls made upon TGME for materials and labour, another important category of dependence involved land. From its inception in 1915, PRHC requested permission to use Company land for purposes intrinsic to the business of a local authority. For example, request was made for land for a stock slaughter yard, for construction of an animal

pound and a kraal for PRHC draught animals, and for use as a dumping site.<sup>37</sup> Grant of a land servitude for such purposes was usually given on the understanding that should it ever be needed for mining purposes, then land would revert to the Company. Uncertainty about future mining land requirements presented severe problems in relation to irreversible uses such as cemeteries, but not otherwise. In the case of land for shambles (abattoirs) PRHC was advised that the Company retained the right to terminate the agreement at three month's notice, and that the grant was made "on the understanding that no nuisance will be created in the neighbourhood ... at the termination of the servitude (the) site will be left in a clean and healthy condition."<sup>38</sup>

Similar conditions were attached to the award of sites for dumping,<sup>39</sup> a compound for Africans employed in Pilgrims Rest and for a bus stop for African passengers. Terms on the compound site included a nominal monthly rental and a period of one month's notice. TGME stipulated that PRHC was to assume full control of and responsibility for residents so as to ensure that they were "kept in order". Residence in the compound was to be confined to *bona fide* servants of village residents. Smarting from having been reluctantly involved in the earlier town cleaning programme, TGME also insisted that PRHC undertake to remove and destroy all refuse in and around the compound if and when it was aban-

<sup>25</sup> PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 14.6.1968, HC32: Secretary PRHC — General Manager TGME, 16.5.1935, and 20HC: Secretary PRHC — General Manager TGME, 24.7.1947.

<sup>26</sup> PRMA, TGMER HC32: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 23.6.1939; HC32: Secretary PRHC — General Manager TGME, 29.12.1926, 15.7.1930, 25.4.1946 and 21.2.1948; PRHC Minutes, 16.6.1919 and 13.12.1926; 20HC: Secretary PRHC — General Manager TGME, 23.9.1937, 26.3.1938 and 18.4.1938.

<sup>27</sup> PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 23.2.1925 and 16.11.1925; 20HC: Secretary PRHC — General Manager TGME, 18.5.1938 and 22.5.1939; Secretary PRHC — Estates Agent TGME, 13.2.1936 and 8.3.1938; Estates Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 30.3.1939.

<sup>28</sup> PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 19.7.1926.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*: PRHC Minutes, 14.2.1921.

<sup>30</sup> PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — PRHC, 27.12.1917.

<sup>31</sup> PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 18.2.1924 (letter from TGME to PRHC).

<sup>32</sup> PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 30.6.1927.

<sup>33</sup> PRMA, TGMER 20HC: Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 26.10.1936.

<sup>34</sup> PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 21.8.1922.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*: PRHC Minutes, 16.12.1924.

<sup>36</sup> PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 30.5.1924.

<sup>37</sup> PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 17.5.1926 and 22.11.1926.

<sup>38</sup> PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 2.8.1916.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 24.3.1917.

*Panorama of Pilgrims Rest, c. 1920.*

PHOTOGRAPH: AFRICANA MUSEUM, JOHANNESBURG







Main Street, Pilgrims Rest, in the 1920s.

PHOTOGRAPH: TPA, INFORMATION & PUBLICITY, PRETORIA

done. In a manner notable either for its insolence or for its allusion to a grim public record, PRHC was at the same time instructed to keep the area "in a clean and healthy condition".<sup>40</sup>

In the matter of the compound site, as in other instances, TGME was quite ready to advertise its generosity by claiming that it had yielded and lost in a land grant. In this case, TGME in 1916 claimed that it had vacated the compound site "at a considerable inconvenience and expense ... to meet the wishes of (PRHC)".<sup>41</sup> As if pressing for advantage, the Company was later (1932) to argue that the compound had become a great source of worry and expense owing to its proximity to TGME's electric tramway and trees.<sup>42</sup>



TGME compound for Africans.

PHOTOGRAPH: TPA, INFORMATION & PUBLICITY, PRETORIA

A similar argument was put forward by TGME in relation to land it had awarded for the bus stop for African passengers but which it later withdrew. Shortly after having assumed control of a bus stop site in 1947, and having installed latrines, PRHC was advised that Company employees resident in the vicinity had complained to TGME about noise and litter there.<sup>43</sup> PRHC was reluctant to remove the parking ground elsewhere, objecting that their lease had been cancelled peremptorily without consultation and that it saw no point in entering into another lease containing the clause "at the pleasure of the Company".<sup>44</sup>

Vehement denial by TGME of high-handed action speaks either of Company duplicity or, as TGME saw the matter, of administrative confusion in PRHC. As if to suggest that a decision in the matter was the prerogative of the site donor or of the person most involved, rather than the prerogative of the local authority, TGME's general manager reasoned that it was he, not PRHC officials, who in this case had to shoulder "all the unpleasantness of strenuous and well justified complaints". He ended his protest with a fatuous comparison of the respective losses which the almost bankrupt PRHC and his wealthy mine would incur by moving the bus halt, arguing that "a comparison of figures would probably show that the survey costs borne by my Company were in excess of (PRHC) outlay".<sup>45</sup>

## BUILDING TENANCY

Although PRHC kept offices in the village, there is no record of leasing arrangements. The sole instance of tenancy by PRHC for which there is archival material, concerns use of St. Mary's hall. In 1918 PRHC negotiated with TGME for lease of the building as a town hall. Making much of its intention to grant the lease for public benefit, TGME undertook to continue paying fire insurance on the building. For its part, PRHC was to furnish the hall, pay insurance on the furniture, maintain and repair the structure, and absorb the costs of sanitary provision.<sup>46</sup> Electricity, piped water and earth closets were installed by TGME in 1919; costs were waived.<sup>47</sup>

In 1925 PRHC sought to establish tighter control over the town hall by purchasing both site and structure. TGME refused to grant freehold, referring once again to the possibility that in future the site might be needed for mining purposes.<sup>48</sup> Sale of the hall alone was agreed to, with the proviso that TGME would not incur any transfer costs or legal expenses.<sup>49</sup> A figure of £100 (half the estimated value of the building) was settled upon. A nominal land lease renewable at five year intervals was fixed, and TGME made a donation of £25 for building improvements.<sup>50</sup> Additional assistance was extended by TGME which gave rebates on electricity charges when extraordinarily heavy use was made of the hall.<sup>51</sup>

## FINANCE

For major purchases and projects TGME sought overdraft funds from the provincial authorities. Loans (with interest) were obtained for purchase of sanitary equipment (£300 in 1915, extended by £100 in 1916) and a water cart (£100 in 1919), as well as for expenses incurred during the influenza epidemic (£200 in 1919) and for town hall costs (£50 in 1933). Requests for a donation toward establishment and maintenance of a public park (£25 in 1919), for assistance with the acquisition of fire fighting equipment (1919), for money for an abattoir (1945) and a house for PRHC's secretary and health inspector (1950s) were turned down by the Transvaal Provincial Administration.<sup>52</sup>

The dependency of PRHC on the assistance of TGME with labour, land and materials carried significant financial implications. Cautious from the first, TGME warned that it did not intend to incur any major expense by virtue of the exis-

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*: 18.9.1917.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*: 21.10.1916.

<sup>42</sup> PRMA, TGMER HC32: General Manager TGME — Secretary for Public Health, 12.7.1932.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*: Letter to General Manager TGME dated 19.7.1947.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*: Secretary PRHC — General Manager TGME, 31.10.1947.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 6.11.1947.

<sup>46</sup> PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 15.2.1918.

<sup>47</sup> PRMA, TGMER 13D: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 30.9.1919.

<sup>48</sup> PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 2.3.1925.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*: 23.5.1925.

<sup>50</sup> PRMA, TGMER: Minutes, 23.2.1925, 23.3.1925, 18.5.1925 and 8.6.1925.

<sup>51</sup> PRMA, TGMER LB: Actg. General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 20.9.1928.

<sup>52</sup> CAD, TPB 1038, TALG 5/8008; TPB 1039 TA 7/8008 and 9/8008; TPB 2680 TALG 16/12787: Communications between Provincial Secretary and Secretary and Chairman PRHC dated 29.11.1915, 19.8.1916, 1.9.1916, 20.6.1919, 15.9.1919, 22.9.1919, 3.1.1933 and 26.6.1945.

tence of the Health Committee. Although the Company stated in 1915 that PRHC "should not look for any considerable donation", management nonetheless favoured making "a small subscription". As it often was, consideration like this was instantly diminished by the attendant rider that the Committee would have to be formed "on proper lines",<sup>53</sup> in other words, in a fashion palatable to TGME. Clear instruction was also given that TGME expected PRHC to raise its ordinary revenues "from the occupiers of stands ... and not from the Company as owner".<sup>54</sup>

Other than its small monthly donation<sup>55</sup> and its payments for sanitary services to Company owned houses in the village,<sup>56</sup> TGME's financial assistance to PRHC involved it in charging out work and material at cost, sharing costs, waiving charges, levying nominal rentals or arranging long-term repayments. Cost-conscious TGME felt quite often that the weight of such assistance was not fully appreciated by PRHC which appeared disorganised and wasteful. Against this background, it is little wonder that in 1951 when TGME was approached with a view to having a direct representative on PRHC, the general manager speculated that "the object ... might be to burden us with the bulk of the cost" of the improvements which PRHC was then contemplating.<sup>57</sup>



TGME staff members, 1915 (R.A. Barry seated in the centre).

PHOTOGRAPH: TPA, INFORMATION & PUBLICITY, PRETORIA

## COMPLAINTS AND MEDIATION

The role of PRHC as debtor and beneficiary, and that of TGME as creditor and benefactor were not exclusive. Each organisation watched over the other's neglect. In addition, the Company also acted as mediator between PRHC on the one hand, and TGME employees and village residents on the other.

It has already been shown that in the case of the halt for African passenger buses, TGME funnelled complaints from its employees to PRHC. Residents within the formal boundaries of Pilgrims Rest village also directed complaints to TGME, whether deliberately (because they regarded the Company as having more leverage with PRHC) or accidentally (out of ignorance about the domain of PRHC). Some of these complaints concerned the behaviour of Africans as well as their accommodation and sanitary facilities.<sup>58</sup> TGME itself initiated some complaints about village management. For example it pointed out that disrepair of fences around the park encouraged trespassing and misuse,<sup>59</sup> and lodged objections about the absence of vehicular traffic regulations.<sup>60</sup> Company officials complained about PRHC's draught oxen and mules roaming destructively through vegetable gardens, about "disgraceful" conditions at the sanitary disposal site and about waste-water nuisance, an inadequate sanitary service, and leaky buckets.<sup>61</sup>



View of TGME works, c. 1925.

PHOTOGRAPH: TPA, INFORMATION & PUBLICITY, PRETORIA

The tenor of TGME correspondence with PRHC on these matters showed frustration, as when TGME saw fit to give the avuncular advice that certain of PRHC's difficulties would be disposed of with more and better labour supervision. TGME was also dismayed that the Health Committee seemed unable to execute properly even its most basic function. As one village resident claimed in 1948, sanitation arrangements provided by TGME for its houses outside the Health Committee area were superior to those organised by PRHC.<sup>62</sup>

In village affairs PRHC was, however, not always cowed and mute. On occasion it even challenged mighty TGME for contravening regulations. For example, notice was served on the Company that drains on its village properties were malfunctioning. In a notable case during 1945, the health inspector advised TGME of its unauthorised construction of buildings in the Health Committee area and allowed five days for submission of plans.<sup>63</sup> Faulted in this fashion, TGME was reduced to requesting an extension of the deadline on the grounds that it did not have the staff to prepare the necessary plans.<sup>64</sup> The Company also asked that its violation be regarded sympathetically on grounds that the buildings were intended to accommodate returning soldiers. Acceding to the request, the PRHC health inspector added almost apologetically that

"there is no intention whatsoever of stopping building ... as every one knows just what the housing position is like ... I think I can assure you of the Committee's most sympathetic consideration ... but at the same time it will also be understood and appreciated that the Committee must perform its duties in terms of the regulations."<sup>65</sup>

<sup>53</sup> PRMA, TGMER 13D: General Manager TGME — Secretary TGME, 7.9.1915.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*: Secretary TGME — Provincial Administrator, 24.8.1915.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*: Secretary TGME — General Manager TGME, 17.9.1915.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> PRMA, TGMER HC32: General Manager TGME — Secretaries, Rand Mines Ltd., 27.9.1951.

<sup>58</sup> PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 13.1.1936 and 12.4.1948.

<sup>59</sup> PRMA, TGMER 20HC: Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 24.8.1936 and 28.7.1938.

<sup>60</sup> PRMA, TGMER HC32: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 23.2.1945.

<sup>61</sup> PRMA, TGMER 20HC: Estates Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 13.2.1936, 26.10.1936, 11.3.1937, 10.5.1937, 23.9.1937 and 24.4.1947; Estates Manager TGME — General Manager TGME, 8.10.1937; Nevin — Estates Manager TGME, 12.4.1948.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*: Nevin — Estates Manager TGME, 12.4.1948; HC32: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 13.4.1948; Estates Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 24.12.1951.

<sup>63</sup> PRMA, TGMER HC32: PRHC — TGME, 29.8.1945.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*: General Manager TGME — Health Inspector PRHC, 4.9.1945.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*: Health Inspector PRHC — General Manager TGME, 4.9.1945.



"The Berea, residential area in Pilgrims Rest, probably in the 1920s.  
PHOTOGRAPH: TPA, INFORMATION & PUBLICITY, PRETORIA

It was obedience to these regulations which in 1948 had TGME seeking PRHC approval for a standard design African hut it proposed erecting for its employee's servants resident in the Health Committee area.<sup>66</sup>

Just as residents sometimes looked to TGME to galvanise the Health Committee into action, so too there was at least one occasion on which PRHC sought intervention by TGME. The matter in question was default on sanitary payment by two Company employees over a period of nearly a year. After taking legal advice, PRHC turned the matter over to TGME:

"... the Provincial auditors repeatedly point out that there cannot be bad debts in Pilgrims Rest where sanitary services are concerned, because, they maintain, ... the TGME as owner is responsible for payment of sanitary fees if the occupier defaults."<sup>67</sup>

Although TGME disagreed with this interpretation of PRHC regulations, it nevertheless undertook to help extract the arrears payment.<sup>68</sup> After his repeatedly delaying payment, the Company eventually warned one offender that he risked being evicted from the village.<sup>69</sup>

## THE QUALITY OF CO-OPERATION

As indicated, the surviving written record of relations between TGME and PRHC allows discernment of significant material transactions. Certain of the archival material also contains a transparent record of momentary attitudes of PRHC and TGME officials toward one another and their respective organisations. The record of any cumulative and enduring spirit of rivalry or grudging liaison is more opaque. It does appear however that the jaundiced relationship which erupted during the infancy of PRHC, attenuated with the passage of time and with the succession of TGME general managers; difficulties were partially attributable to differences of managerial style and personality.

If reliance can be placed on public pronouncements, then it is plain that at the inception of PRHC "the best of feeling did not exist between the TGME and the camp".<sup>70</sup> Indeed, election of a senior mine manager to PRHC in 1924 was motivated partly by the feeling that "it was absolutely necessary to have one member of the Committee in close touch with the management of TGME".<sup>71</sup> Notwithstanding possible lapses in practice, before 1920 two different general managers wrote of their intention to help the PRHC in every "reasonable" direction<sup>72</sup> and of doing so "consistent with the general welfare of the inhabitants ... and also with the mining requirements of (TGME)".<sup>73</sup>

In whatever fashion the Company's assistance was circumscribed, PRHC certainly recognised the aid it did receive. Minutes of a meeting in 1925 carried endorsement that TGME had "always rendered to the Committee in the hour of need",<sup>74</sup> and correspondence from PRHC to TGME was littered with profuse expressions of gratitude and indebtedness which were intended to be endearing. Also acknow-

ledging "close and friendly co-operation",<sup>75</sup> the TGME general manager of 1932 was nonetheless at pains to distance his Company from PRHC stating that there never was "a case of dual control being established." The TGME, he said, abstained "scrupulously from interference with the Health Committee's administration".<sup>76</sup>

That this position endured in at least some respects, was evident in 1946 when PRHC took steps to license, levy, inspect and supervise more closely building standards and hygiene in the village. The proclamation of the relevant bylaw drew a vigorous response from the Pilgrims Rest Protest Committee. The Provincial Administrator, not TGME, was the third party in the dispute.<sup>77</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Until the establishment of Pilgrims Rest Health Committee, the village appeared an inconvenient accessory in the extractive relationship which TGME had with both its employees and its land. Notwithstanding its interest in keeping the settlement operational, TGME had never involved itself earnestly in village management. The creation of a local authority was not an effort on its part to shed an onerous public burden which it resented carrying.

Established so as to manage everyday and unglamorous village affairs, the work of the volunteer Health Committee was a thankless and more or less haphazard task. It was made less attractive and more difficult still by its shaky financial foundations. On the one hand the Health Committee regulations made no special provision for the peculiar position of Pilgrims Rest as an isolated settlement which, being on privately owned, unrated mining land, made the local authority critically dependent on the viability of a mining company and its goodwill. On the other hand, the Committee was also subordinate to remote provincial authority and was unable to act freely and quickly of its own accord.

These circumstances created an unavoidable condition of institutional patronage and servility in the village, according to which the power and status of the local authority were respectively made contingent and secondary. The mine company preserved its rights jealously and came to regard the Health Committee as a useful but errant offspring to whom terms of conduct had to be dictated and periodic reminders and scoldings issued. Clearly, public administration in Pilgrims Rest was far from being a simple and tranquil affair, notwithstanding the official view that "as the interests of the Camp and Mine — to use the old distinctions — rarely clashed, a happy atmosphere of trust and co-operation was maintained."<sup>78</sup> ©

<sup>66</sup> PRMA, TGMER, file 803 titled "Native Labour — General, no. 43": Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 21.6.1948.

<sup>67</sup> PRMA, TGMER 20HC: Secretary PRHC — Estates Agent TGME, 7.2.1936.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*: Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 11.2.1936.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*: Estates Manager TGME — J. Greaver, 7.2.1940.

<sup>70</sup> PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 23.5.1927.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*: PRHC Minutes, 18.2.1924.

<sup>72</sup> PRMA, TGMER 13D: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 4.4.1916.

<sup>73</sup> PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 24.3.1917.

<sup>74</sup> PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 14.9.1925.

<sup>75</sup> PRMA, TGMER HC32: General Manager TGME — Secretary for Public Health, 12.7.1932.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> CAD, TPB 1175, 10/9559: Memorandum from Pilgrims Rest Protest Committee accompanying letter to Provincial Secretary from Secretary PRHC dated 21.5.1946.

<sup>78</sup> PRMA, TGMER HC32: General Manager TGME — Secretaries, Rand Mines Ltd., 27.9.1951.