

# THE NATAL COASTAL BELT

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The Natal Coastal Belt, owing to its peculiar environment and comparative isolation from the remainder of the country, presents a distinctive region within South Africa. The imprint of the colonial period (1843–1910) lies firmly upon the region as the scene of one of the major attempts to promote plantation agriculture, with the aid of indentured Indian labourers. Colonial foundations have been expanded rapidly in the present century as Durban has become one of the major metropolitan regions of the country, with a broad industrial and commercial base.

## PHYSICAL BACKGROUND<sup>1</sup>

The Natal coastal belt is a narrow zone of land approximately 240 km long, yet lying largely within 40 km of the Indian Ocean. It may be divided into three marked subregions: the coastal plains, the granite lands, and the interior plateaux. The coastal plains are formed of sedimentary rocks, which dip towards the Indian Ocean and give rise to comparatively gentle slopes; these reach a height of 760 m in the lower Tugela District and vary in width from 25 km in the north to 1 km or less in the south. The coastal plain is backed by an area of granite outcrops, which result in comparatively rugged land, with steep slopes and sandy soil. In the south the granites are themselves backed by more sedimentary rocks which give rise to a series of plateaux reaching an altitude of 2 250 m in the western extremity of Alfred District. In the vicinity of Durban, faulting has resulted in the absence of the granites, with the result that the sedimentary rocks extend from the coast to the interior, thereby facilitating ease of communication. Climatically the region differs from the remainder of South Africa, with the exception of Zululand, with its wet subtropical conditions, and high summer temperatures and humidities. However, this has resulted in the prevalence of subtropical animal and plant diseases.

## PRELUDE TO EUROPEAN COLONISATION

The region was one of established Nguni settlement at the time the first European contacts were made. The Nguni of Natal were forged into the Zulu nation in the early nineteenth century through a reorganisation of clans and a series of successful wars undertaken by Kings Dingisweyo (1806–1816) and Shaka (1816–1826). The wars led to large-scale loss of life and the depopulation of the more open regions of the coast and interior of Natal, as people fled to the more rugged granite lands or to areas of coastal forest. Thus at the time of the first major European settlement large parts of the northern coastal belt appeared to be comparatively devoid of Zulu inhabitants, as the core of Zulu power lay north of the Tugela River. Successive European governments in the 1840's established reserves for the Zulu population where most of the people appeared to be living, namely the granite lands. North of Durban the reserves formed a solid block, while to the south they were more scattered. The reserves today form a part of the self-governing Kingdom of KwaZulu and are excluded from consideration of the coastal belt as far as possible. Even after the demarcation of the reserves large numbers of Zulu continued to live in the areas set aside for European settlement, indeed they always constituted the majority of the population. Their presence as a source of cheap labour for agriculture and industry was generally viewed by European immigrants as an advantage of the area.

The Natal coastal belt was regarded as a field for

European settlement from the 1830's onwards. In order to comprehend how and why it was settled, some examination of the perception of the coastal belt is necessary. Two opposing views were expressed — the first by colonists from the Cape Colony and the second by those from England.

At the time of the Great Trek (1836–1837), Natal was viewed by the Trekkers from the Cape Colony as a potentially prosperous land, where their basically pastoral economy could be pursued on the interior grassland plateaux. The coastal belt with its bush and forest, and diseases, was basically unattractive, except where local areas of grassland or open bush appeared.<sup>2</sup> Thus most of the Voortrekker settlement was confined to the interior of Natal and few penetrated to the coast, except in the vicinity of Durban, where they joined up with an earlier small English trading colony.

By contrast, British administrators and the promoters of emigration schemes regarded the coastal belt as the most desirable part of the Colony and many glowing accounts were penned in the 1840's and 1850's:

"The author of these pages has visited many climes, has dwelt beneath the burning sun of India, has traversed Australia, visited New Zealand, and many other lands, but never have his eyes rested upon a land blessed by a bounteous Providence with a more fertile soil than Natal."<sup>3</sup>

"In fact it is not too much to say that nature can scarcely have been more prodigal in her gifts to any spot of the earth than to Natal."<sup>4</sup>

"The coastlands ... are now proved beyond a doubt to be equally well adapted for the productions of tropical climates, such as sugar, coffee ..."<sup>5</sup>

The Natal coastal belt was thus advertised as being an agriculturalist's paradise in a period when emigration from Great Britain was running at over 250 000 per annum in the late 1840's and early 1850's. Similar literature, akin to the 'booster' writings of America and Australia, continued to be published until 1914.<sup>6</sup>

## SURVEYING THE LAND

The physical planning of the land through the survey of farm units is of the utmost importance in the conversion of the landscape from the primaeval to an

1. M.M. COLE, *South Africa* (London, 1961), pp.576–590.
2. A.J. CHRISTOPHER, The initial European farm pattern in Natal, *Journal for Geography* 2(3), April 1968, pp.167–178.
3. J.C. BYRNE, *Emigrants' guide to Port Natal* (London, 1848), pp.46–47.
4. J.S. CHRISTOPHER, *Natal, Cape of Good Hope* (London, 1850), p.64.
5. A. COQUI, *Practical remarks on the Colony of Natal, South Africa* (London 1857), p.3.
6. NATAL, *Descriptive guide and official year-book* (Durban, 1911), p.557.

ordered and productive state. In this process the main lineaments of the cultural landscape were laid down, reflecting the contrasting appraisals of the agricultural potential of the belt, within which later generations have had to live.<sup>7</sup>

The initial European farms were planned by the Voortrekkers in the late 1830's and early 1840's, together with a few appropriated by a small group of British settlers at Durban. The Voortrekker concept of a farm was a basic 2 500 ha grazing unit, derived from their experience in the semi-arid interior of the Cape of Good Hope. As only a portion of the coastal belt was considered to be suitable grazing ground for sheep and cattle, comparatively few farms of this nature were established. Only 85 of the 585 Voortrekker farms in Natal were in the coastal belt, but because of their large size they occupied nearly a third of the area set aside for European farming. Nearly the whole of Durban County and much of the south of Victoria County were so granted. However, to the south of Durban few farms were granted, reflecting the basic problems of communications in the nineteenth century.

alienation was slow — an average of only 1 200 ha per annum in the coastal belt. However, the introduction of extended credit terms in 1880, together with a new approach to immigration, resulted in a boost and a steady filling up of Alfred and Alexandra Counties in the following thirty years. This process was not confined to European immigrants, as small plots were made available to Indians who had completed their period of indenture but who did not wish to return to India. Few grouped or village settlements were planned, following the failure of the 1850 schemes, although the Norwegian settlement at Marburg was a significant exception in the 1880's. Generally farms were small, the average grant size between 1880 and 1910 was only 233 ha, and irregular in shape. The recent survey of much of the south coastal belt reflected its isolation from Durban and the interior of Natal.

### SETTLING THE LAND

The surveying and granting of land did not go hand in hand with occupation. Land speculation had appeared at an early stage, even before the British annexation. A

TABLE 1: LAND AREAS GRANTED<sup>8</sup>

Tenure and Period		Victoria County (000 ha)	Durban County (000 ha)	Alexandra County (000 ha)	Alfred County (000 ha)	TOTAL (000 ha)
Voortrekkers	1838—1848	82,6	49,8	10,5	—	143,0
Freehold	1848—1860	34,8	2,4	7,3	—	44,6
Settlements	1856—1857	17,4	—	12,6	—	30,0
Freehold	1861—1880	8,5	0,4	10,9	4,5	24,3
Freehold	1881—1910	9,3	1,2	89,5	118,3	218,3
Since	1910	1,2	—	6,5	3,2	10,9
<b>TOTAL</b>		153,9	53,9	137,3	126,0	471,0

The alternative concept of the coastal belt as a tropical plantation colony was pursued in two stages. The first (1847—1851) envisaged small plantations of 8-200 ha within a few kilometres of the coast. At first the plantations were at the larger end of the scale, but as a result of proposed immigration schemes most farms were within the 8-20 ha range. The proprietor of the largest of the settlement schemes acquired 15,053 ha and divided the planned rural areas into 278 plots with extensive commonages and townlands. The total area alienated in freehold for plantations and settlements in the period up to 1860 was small, only 45 000 ha, yet the period introduced a markedly new style of landscape, based on small farms, which of necessity had to be intensively farmed. In the main the small farms were laid out in orderly blocks of rectangles in contrast to the irregular shape of those granted to the Voortrekkers.

The attempt to produce close settlement on small farms based on the English village model proved to be unsuccessful and the schemes were discontinued. However, in a second effort to attract settlers in 1857, farms of 120—240 ha were offered in the coastal belt for low annual rentals. Some 30 000 ha were alienated in this manner, for mixed farming enterprises. Thus by 1860 eighty-eight percent of Victoria County available for settlement had been granted, compared with only twenty-two percent of Alexandra County.

Between 1860 and 1880, despite the incorporation of Alfred County into Natal in 1865, progress in land

large number of the Voortrekker farms passed into the hands of speculators and land companies when their owners abandoned the country, so that by 1860 nearly half the entire alienated area of the coastal belt was unoccupied by European farmers.<sup>9</sup> Clearly there was a significant difference between granting land and settling it.

The first reasonably reliable estimates of the European population were produced in 1852, when only 1 751 persons lived on the coastal belt.<sup>10</sup> By 1860 the number had increased to 4 781, but most were concentrated in the town of Durban, with only 1 024 living in the rural areas to the north of the port and 260 to the south (Table 2).<sup>11</sup> In contrast there were an estimated 61 000 Zulu living on the coastal belt in 1860. The comparative success of the development of the region was attributable to the rise of plantation agriculture. However, the planters found themselves short of a reliable labour force as the Zulu would only work spasmodically, when economic

7. A.J. CHRISTOPHER, Colonial land policy in Natal, *Annals of the Association of American geographers* 61(3), September 1971, pp.560—575.
8. Computed by the author from the records of the Deeds Office, Pietermaritzburg.
9. A.J. CHRISTOPHER, Land speculation in colonial Natal, *Historia* 16(2) April 1971, pp.102—111.
10. NATAL, *Blue Book of the Colony* 1852.
11. NATAL, *Blue Book of the Colony* 1860.

circumstances forced him to do so. Thus in 1860 the first importation of Indian indentured labour took place and periodic immigration occurred in the following fifty years. A further strand in the diversity of the population was added, and the Indian imprint upon the landscape has been profound.

percent living on the North Coast as late as 1891. It should be remembered that the Zulu numbers continued to grow, so that there were by 1891 approximately 160 000 in the four coastal counties.

The urbanisation of the European and Indian populations continued in the twentieth century, although

TABLE 2: EUROPEAN POPULATION OF THE COASTAL BELT DISTRICT 1860—1970<sup>12</sup>

Year	Lower Tugela	Inanda	Durban & Pinetown	Umzinto	Port Shepstone	Alfred
1860	344	680	3 497	260	*	—
1880	714	1 094	8 768	469	*	282
1891	837	1 277	15 330	688	507	695
1911	919	1 253	41 645	1 238	1 042	407
1921	1 687	1 682	63 041	1 935	1 634	650
1936	2 628	1 622	98 787	3 014	4 134	1 357
1951	2 969	2 976	153 825	4 572	8 523	976
1960	4 453	4 820	197 228	4 995	8 623	1 136
1970	5 797	10 860	260 106	7 617	15 726	1 202

\*Port Shepstone District formed from parts of Umzinto and Alfred.

The development of the sugar industry and the expansion of the port of Durban, particularly following the opening of the Witwatersrand goldfields, resulted in massive increases in the population. In 1880 some 11 327 Europeans and 17 052 Indians were to be found on the coastal belt, while eleven years later this had risen to 19 334 and 35 391 respectively. The European population became ever more concentrated in Durban until by 1891 approximately four-fifths lived in the port city. The Indian population remained more rural with sixty

both European and Indian rural numbers continued to rise until 1960, and absolute decline only occurred in the following years. Thus at the last census in 1970 only 2,4 percent of the European and 14,4 percent of the Indian population lived in the rural areas. The numbers involved were relatively small, 1 000 and 62 000 respectively.

### CULTIVATING THE LAND

The coastal belt was regarded, almost from the inception of European settlement, as an area capable of tropical and subtropical crop production. However, progress was slow in discovering the potential of the coastal belt, and experimentation took place with crops such as sugar-cane, cotton, indigo, arrowroot and coffee. The period of experimentation was lengthy and it was to be through the efforts of men such as Edmund Morewood that sugar-cane was shown to offer the most profitable crop for the planters. Morewood began planting cane in 1848 at his farm at Compensation on the North Coast and successful processing started in 1851/2.<sup>13</sup> Thereafter progress was rapid and a rush into sugar farming began. Thus in 1860 some 4 953 ha were cultivated, mostly on the North coast, twenty-seven sugar mills were in operation and sugar exports were worth £32 000.

The initial works had mainly been small scale and individual, but after 1860, through the introduction of London capital, Indian labour and new strains of sugar-cane, the nature of the industry began to change. Progress was chequered, with disease, labour shortages and fluctuations in price; but efficiency increased. Thus in 1880 some 7 328 ha were under sugar-cane, mostly in the Inanda district; seventy mills were working and sugar exports were valued at £215 000, a quarter of the Natal total value of exports. In the following thirty years the sugar area increased to 23 658 ha, with only twenty-five mills operating. Reorganisation of the industry resulted in the emergence of a few large milling companies

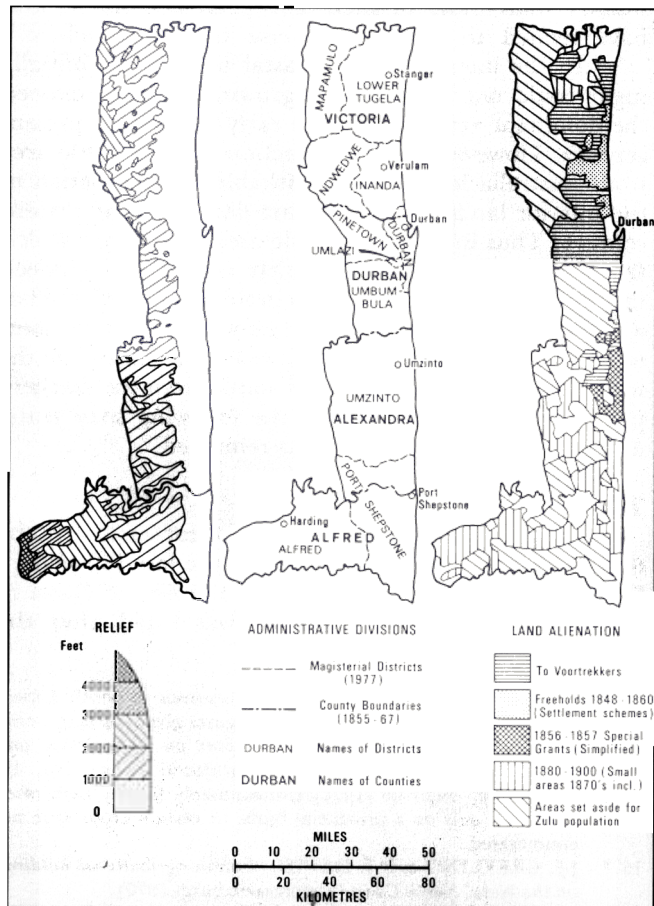
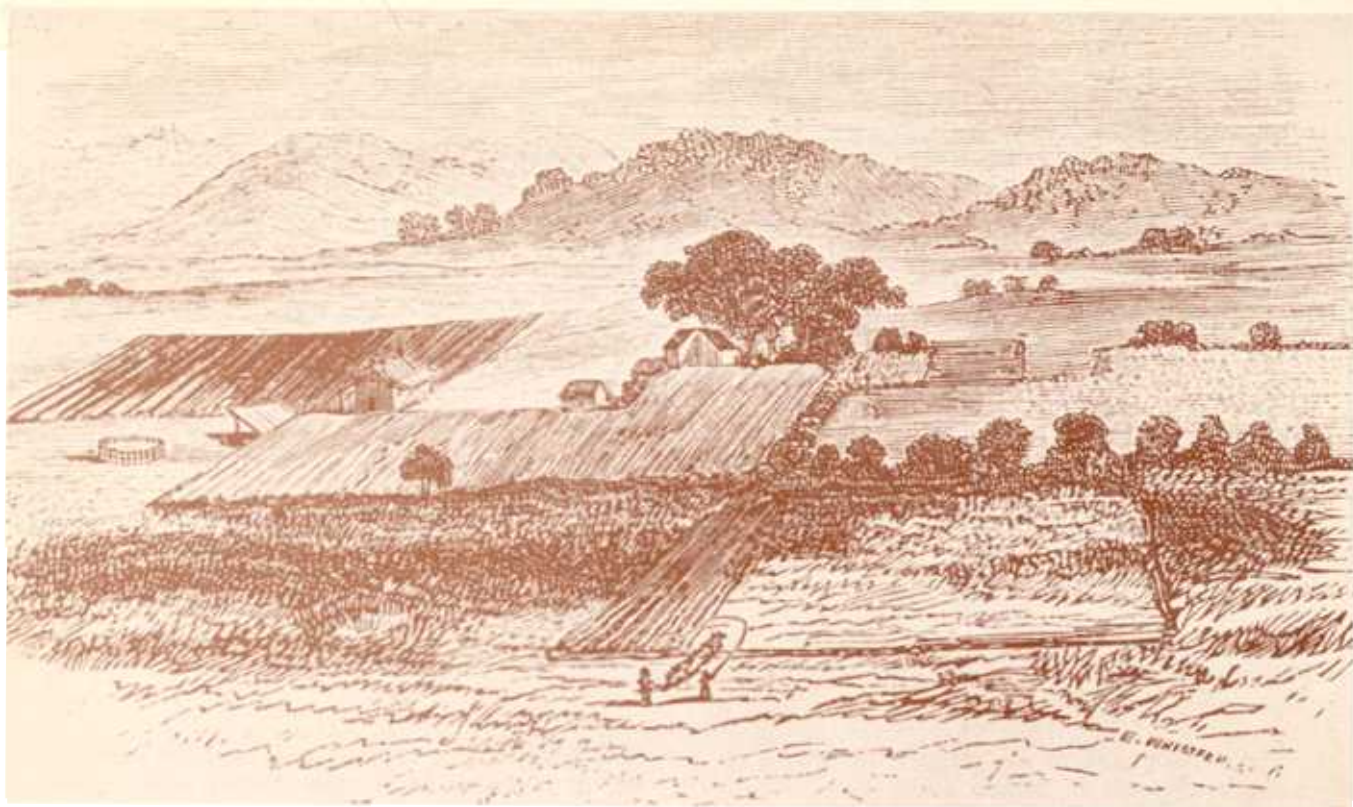


FIG. 1: Natal Coastal Belt showing (a) relief (b) district boundaries and (c) progress in land alienation.

- Figures taken from the *Blue Books of the Colony*, 1860, 1880, *Censuses of Natal* 1891, 1904, and *Censuses of South Africa* 1911—1970.
- R.F. OSBORN, *Valiant harvest: the founding of the South African sugar industry 1848—1926* (Durban, 1964).



*Edmund Morewood's farm, Compensation, 1852.*

PHOTOGRAPH: LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUM, DURBAN.

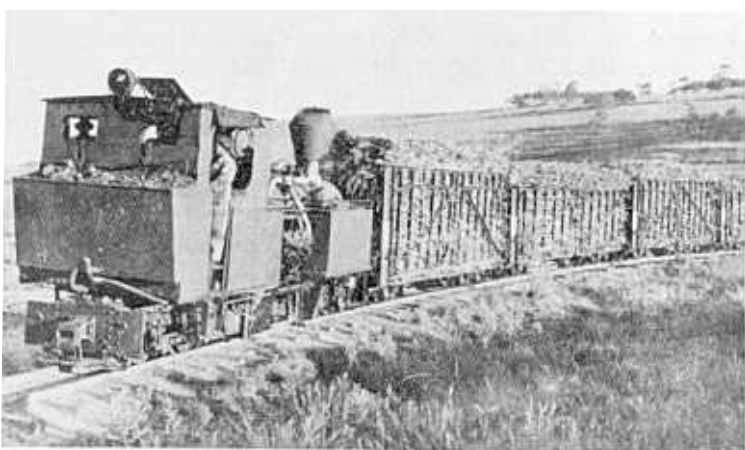
such as Hulett's, Natal Estates, Tongaat Estates and Reynolds Brothers, who owned large tracts of land, milled their own cane and increasingly milled that of their smaller neighbours. Thus the smaller mills went out of production and, initially, narrow-gauge railways linked the various parts of estates and their clients to the mills.

The emergence of a 'Sugar Belt' only occurred after Union as the area under sugar-cane expanded into areas previously unused, or used for grazing purposes; and as improved strains enabled the crop to be successfully cultivated in the interior of the coastal belt. Thus in 1939 the area under sugar-cane amounted to 95 460 ha and in 1950 129 485 ha. By the latter year over half the North Coast districts were under sugar-cane, but to the south the area was still small and highly localised. A slight retreat took place between 1960 and 1971 largely as a result of the expansion of the towns onto the coastal canelands.<sup>14</sup>

Sugar was not the only crop grown on the coastal belt, nor has it occupied all the available cane land.

*Sugar-cane train.*

PHOTOGRAPH: SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR ASSOCIATION.



Large tracts remained as grazing grounds, while vegetable and fruit gardens, particularly those farmed by the Indian population, became a noticeable feature of the coastal belt from the 1870's onwards. Indian-owned farms are smaller than those of their European neighbours and have tended to be more diverse in their produce.<sup>15</sup>

In the interior of the coastal belt, where initially sugar could not be profitably grown, grazing remained the dominant activity until the early part of the present century. However, the introduction of the wattle tree from Australia led to the remarkable transformation of the interior landscape in the first decade of the present century. Thus in 1911 the wattle area of the coastal belt (20 897 ha) rivalled that of sugar (23 660 ha). Indeed the south coast could have been more readily regarded as a timber belt than a sugar belt! However, improvements in sugar cultivation and the precarious nature of the wattle extract industry displaced wattle from the northern portions of the coastal belt in the following sixty years; although in 1971 some 36 578 ha remained.

## THE GROWTH OF TOWNS

Urban development has been the cornerstone in the transformation of the coastal belt in the last 150 years.<sup>16</sup> Durban was initially established on the Bay of Natal in 1824 as a trading post. Growth was rapid after the

14. Figures taken from the agricultural censuses of South Africa. The last comprehensive census with figures given for magisterial districts was SOUTH AFRICA, *Report on agricultural and pastoral production 1970-71*, Agricultural Census No. 44, Report No. 06-01-08 (1974). Unfortunately figures were often published only on a provincial basis, or certain crops were not enumerated.
15. J.J. GREYLING & R.J. DAVIES, *Indian agricultural holdings on the Natal North Coast* (Pietermaritzburg, 1970).
16. R.J. DAVIES, The growth of the Durban metropolitan area, *South African geographical journal* 45, December 1963, pp.15-43.

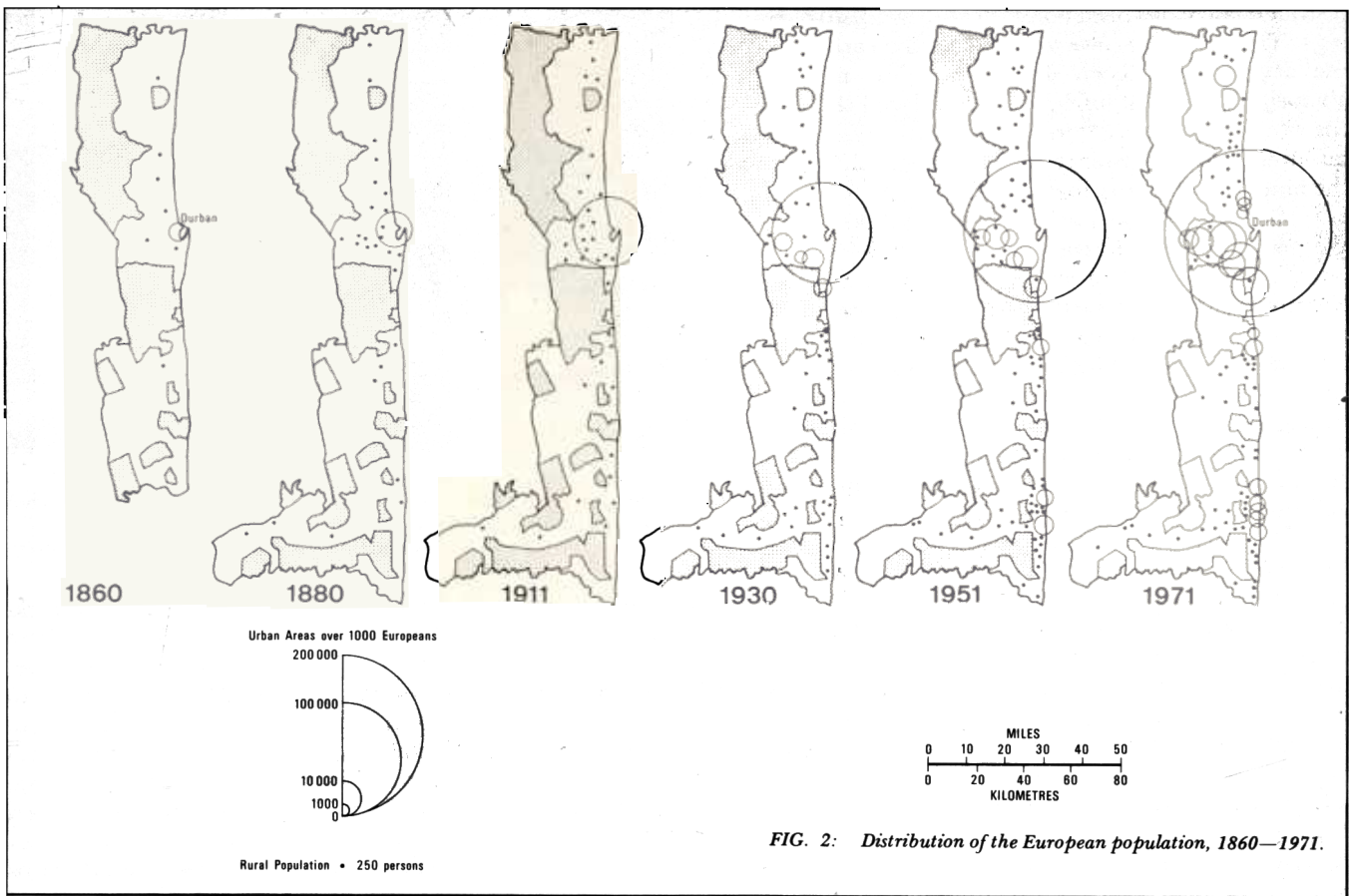


FIG. 2: Distribution of the European population, 1860–1971.

establishment of the colonial government, as trade and industry increased. The value of trade passing through the port increased from £51 000 in 1845 to £495 000 fifteen years later and to £3,2 million in 1880. Allied to this growth was a steady increase in population from approximately 4 000 in 1860, including 2 000 Europeans, to 14 000 in 1881, when it was the third largest city in southern Africa, a position it has since retained. The dominant position of Durban in the economy of the coastal belt is well illustrated by the fact that at Union, with a population of 94 226, it was forty times the size of the next largest town on the coastal belt. The position has not changed markedly since (Table 3).<sup>17</sup>

The initial grid extended from the Bay of Natal to the Ordnance land (later to become the site of the railway station). The lots were restricted in number and area, yet this zone remained the commercial and administrative centre of the city. Initially fewer than 200 lots were laid out, plus a market square. The square was progressively reduced in area by the construction of the church (St. Paul's) and three successive town halls. The central business district around the market square expanded in two directions: towards the sea and along the road to the interior. Part of this expansion was occupied by Indian traders who established a dual commercial centre to the town which still persists.<sup>18</sup> Within the central business

TABLE 3: URBAN POPULATION OF MAJOR TOWNS 1911 1970

Year	Durban	Pinetown	Stanger	Verulam	Umzinto	Port Shepstone	Tongaat
1911	94 226	768	951	1 279	2 262	548	919
1921	152 796	2 480	1 828	1 395	1 358	1 156	1 487
1936	239 512	4 018	2 877	1 876	2 789	2 393	2 871
1951	434 548	8 652	5 585	2 169	3 811	4 216	6 494
1960	560 010	12 889	9 619	2 627	4 106	4 266	9 051
1970	739 857	22 540	10 899	7 401	5 193	5 510	12 772

## DURBAN

Durban clearly overshadows all other urban centres in Natal and exerts a powerful influence throughout the coastal belt. The initial town layout was highly restricted both in the extent of the original town grid and in the townlands. Thus from the 1850's onwards Durban's residential areas, whether central high density or suburban smallholdings, have been sprawling across the townlands and neighbouring farms.

17. Changing definitions of the urban areas tend to confuse the picture. Thus in 1970 the Durban population was over 850 000 if the African population of Umlazi is included. However it then formed part of KwaZulu. Similarly KwaMashu (1970 population approximately 100 000), then part of Durban, has this year (1977) been incorporated into Kwa Zulu.
18. R.J. DAVIES & D.S. RAJAH, *The Durban C.B.D.: Boundary delimitation and racial dualism*, *South African geographical journal* 47, December 1965, pp.45–58.

district change has been constant with successive rebuildings. Thus not only have virtually all the early houses on the original grid been demolished, but most of the Victorian shops and offices which replaced them. Today the central grid has more than half its area covered by buildings less than twenty years old and only the plan of the nineteenth century town remains.

Suburban sprawl and industrialisation adjacent to the port, and later to the south of it, have transformed large tracts of land, producing a diversified landscape. Nineteenth and twentieth century villadom, including railway settlements, intermingle with poorer areas of tenements, flats and high density housing. Owing to the climate, termites and a lack of good building stone, corrugated iron was the most popular building material in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Bricks became readily available by the 1850's and superior buildings in brick provide variety in pre-1914 areas.

The explosion of Durban's population in the post-1918 era (a result of the expansion of commerce and industry associated with Durban's position as one of the most important ports of the country) and also the tourist trade led to a major change in the character of the town.<sup>19</sup> The built-up area expanded rapidly, indeed at a faster rate than population growth. This was assisted by transport improvements, more particularly the motor car and bus, which enabled previously inaccessible areas to be opened up for housing development. Although pre-1914 growth had been largely restricted to the old townlands and the line of the main railway and road, in the post-1918 period much of the area between the Inanda and Umlazi Locations was urbanised, with a marked linear axis towards the interior of Natal. In general such areas were characterised by low density single storey dwellings for Europeans and Indians. Industrial development at Pinetown became significant in the 1950's as land become more restricted in the established industrial area, thereby adding to the axis of growth along the road to the interior.<sup>20</sup>

Special living areas were provided for imported labourers. At first Indian indentured labourers, working



Phoenix Hotel, Durban, ca. 1860, showing early wattle and daub construction with thatched roof.

PHOTOGRAPH: LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUM, DURBAN.

on the docks and elsewhere, were housed in large barracks in the docklands. Later African migrant labourers were similarly housed in blocks, several of which survive, adjacent to the industrial area. In the period 1939 to 1960 large numbers of Africans flocked to Durban in search of work and established vast squatter slums of which Cato Manor was probably the best known.<sup>21</sup> Large-scale housing schemes from the 1950's onwards established separate suburbs for Africans, at Umlazi and KwaMashu, and for Indians at Chatsworth. Thus new satellite towns have taken the place of the slums and the majority of the barracks, changing substantially the total appearance of Durban in a comparatively short period of time, but adding to the sprawl.

19. O.P.F. HORWOOD, *The port of Durban: its history and development* (Durban, 1969).
20. B.S. YOUNG, *The industrial geography of the Durban region* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1972).
21. Between 1936 and 1960 the African population of Durban rose from 63 500 to 177 900.

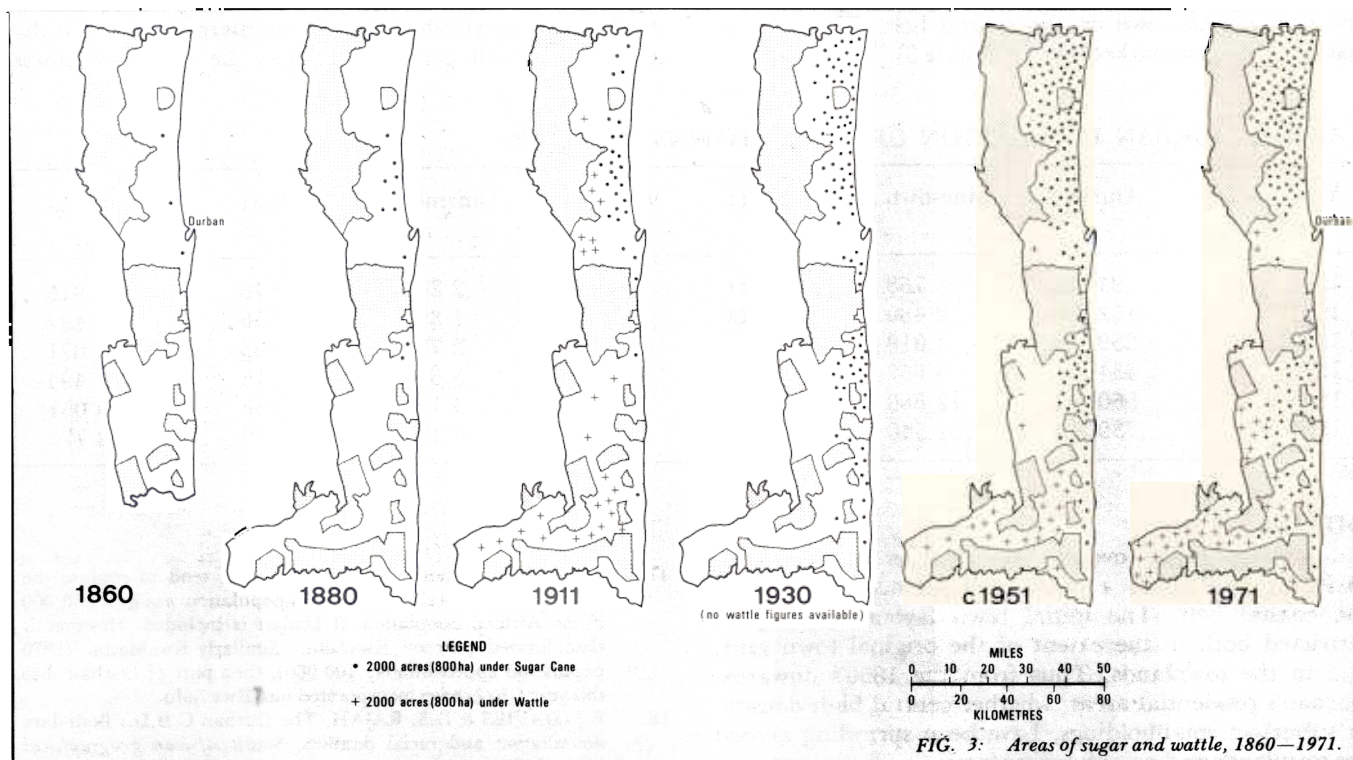


FIG. 3: Areas of sugar and wattle, 1860—1971.



West Street, Durban, ca. 1879

PHOTOGRAPH: LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUM, DURBAN.

Within Durban substantial changes occurred when the central business district and the industrial area expanded at the expense of residential areas, and the beachfront tourist area emerged. Thus mixed land uses with complex histories abound in the area of the old town and townlands, reflecting the keynote of Durban's history, rapid change.

### TOWNS OUTSIDE DURBAN

The provision of urban centres outside Durban was first investigated in 1848, when the North Coast was opened up for plantation agriculture.<sup>22</sup> Three sites were proposed, including Tongaat (Victoria). However, planning was overtaken by the British settlement of 1849–1851, when three towns were planned on the Cotton lands Estate. Verulam, on the main road from Durban to Zululand, succeeded at the centre of a Wesleyan group settlement. The other two, New Glasgow and Mount Moreland, although surveyed, were unoccupied and remain as interesting reminders upon the cadastral map, complete with their crescents and squares designed for fashionable residences.<sup>23</sup> The establishment of Stanger in the 1850's completed the initial provision of urban areas on the North Coast. Inland from Durban, Pinetown was established as a small town in 1849 on the route to Pietermaritzburg, where a fort had been built.

South of Durban urban activity was much more belated. The area was difficult of access and occupied by substantial numbers of Zulu. It was only with the opening up of the area under the 1857 land grant regulations that the need for a town was felt. Scottburgh was established in 1860 and this was followed soon afterwards by Umkomaas and Umzinto. No towns were planned further south until Port Shepstone in 1882. It would appear that, with the possible exception of Verulam, none of these towns reached a population of 1 000 in the course of the nineteenth century.

In the present century two major developments have occurred. The first was the centralisation of milling facilities. The number of sugar mills declined rapidly as new improved and expensive machinery was introduced. The new centralised mills gave rise to substantial communities, several of which became company towns focused upon the mill. Twelve such towns came into existence, one of which (Maidstone) by 1970 possessed a population of over 8 000.<sup>24</sup> Planned as a whole, mill towns present a distinctive landscape with the marked differentiation of industrial area, European employees' town, and a series of African and Indian compounds and townships, and the absence of any other activity.

An even more spectacular form of urban development was the emergence of the coastal resorts and beach townships. The Natal South Coast experienced the first stages of this process soon after the construction of the South Coast railway (1895–1900). The first townships were laid out at Hibberdene (1905) and Umzube (1908), but the major advance occurred in the previously relatively untouched area south of the Umzimkulu River in the period 1919–1922, when Margate, Ramsgate, Uvongo, and Port Edward were established. After the Second World War, in the period 1945–1953 an estimated 22 500 beach township plots of  $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$  acre (0,1–0,2 ha) were laid out on the South Coast, in one of the major property booms in South African history.<sup>25</sup> Although land was sold freely, comparatively little construction occurred, leaving large areas of 'ghost towns', with roads and plots, but no buildings. On the North Coast the process was more controlled, largely because the railway and road lay inland, and not along the coast. Thus only about 3 000 plots were planned, and the greater proportion of them were developed (half against a tenth on the South Coast).<sup>26</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Urban development has been rapid in the present century, with the emergence of specialised towns, and also areas of agglomeration within rural areas, as the over-all population has risen. The whole structure is dominated by the sprawl of the Durban-Pinetown region, which has profoundly affected the landscape of large parts of the coastal belt. However, rural landscapes remain, and even within the towns reminders of their history have survived the outward thrust of expansion and the inner process of redevelopment and renewal. The coastal belt of Natal, more than most areas of South Africa, is a creation of the post-1945 era and reflects the prosperity of the period. **□**

22. NATAL, *Report on the division of Natal into separate magistracies and selection of sites for magistracies*, 1848.
23. A.J. CHRISTOPHER, *Southern Africa* (Folkestone, 1976) pp. 112–114.
24. J.J. OLIVIER, Maatskappydorpe in Natal: problematiek en riglyne, *South African geographer* 5(3) April, 1976, pp.198–204.
25. NATAL TOWN AND REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, *Natal South Coast, draft regional plan* (Pietermaritzburg, 1974).
26. R.A. PISTORIUS, *Natal North Coast survey* (Pietermaritzburg, 1962).