A CHANGING RURAL ECONOMY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE OVERBERG, 1838 - 1872

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

in the subject

HISTORY

at the University of South Africa

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NOVEMBER 1990
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SUMMARY

The Overberg, incorporating the present-day districts of Swellendam, Caledon and Bredasdorp, forms a geographic microcosm in the south-western Cape. The area, with its Mediterranean climate and undulating hills of Bokkeveld shales and weathered Table Mountain Sandstone, is well adapted for arable and pastoral agriculture.

Original settlement was by the Khoi who by 1710 had succumbed to cumulative disintegrative forces. They presented little resistance to the vanguard of white settlers who by 1710 were receiving land grants in the area. By 1838 the area was optimally settled for the extensive ranching of that time and pressure on the land was becoming acute. There was little scope for British immigrants to obtain land among the Dutch settlers. Grain farming offered little reward as the area was isolated from the Cape Town market by hazardous mountain ranges.

The conversion of the indigenous hairy sheep to wool-bearing Merinos which occurred during the 1830s provided the area with an added income. Wool provided a product which modified Overberg agriculture from its quasi-subsistence form to commercial farming. The wool produced in the area was generally of a high quality and it commanded a consistent price on the world market, a factor which contributed to the financial stability of the area.

The increased income from wool provided scope for unprecedented commercial activity. The new found wealth which was diffused among the white farmers raised their standard of living. Predial labour did not, however, experience commensurate material gains. The social and cultural milieu was not profoundly affected but material prosperity fostered greater political awareness among wool farmers, a factor which was to bolster Afrikaner national movements after 1870.
MAPS, GRAPHS, DIAGRAMS AND APPENDICES

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<td>Bredasdorp Magistrate</td>
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<td>Caledon Magistrate</td>
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<td>CCP</td>
<td>Cape Colony Publications</td>
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<td>Customs</td>
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<td>SWM</td>
<td>Swellendam Magistrate</td>
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This project has been a stimulating and rewarding experience. I am deeply grateful to four people - to Professor Burridge Spies for years of inspiration, encouragement and meticulous attention to detail, to Doctor John Lambert for thought provoking and constructive criticism, to Roy, my brother, for unravelling the mysteries of the computer and especially to Ricky for twenty-five years of unwavering support of a wife committed to study by correspondence.

I wish to record my thanks to the following for friendly and helpful assistance: David Mc Lennan, Leon Theart, Susan Meyer and Annelie van Wyk of the Cape Archives Depot; Petrie le Roux of the South African Library; Mary-Lynn Suttie of the University of South Africa Library; Mr L. Damstra of the Drostdy Museum, Swellendam and Racel de Vos of the Caledon Library. I am also grateful to Andy Vinnicombe of the University of Cape Town Geography Department for mapwork and to Dr Bennie Basson for graphs.

The financial assistance of the Institute for Research Development is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed or conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not to be attributed to the I.R.D.

This work marks the end of a period of twenty-five years study through the University of South Africa as well as twenty-five years residence in the Overberg. The associations have been equally happy and fulfilling.
INTRODUCTION

Agricultural history is in no sense a self-sufficient subject, a discipline on its own; on the contrary, it is an important part of the national history, and there are no boundaries to mark the points at which agricultural history merges into economic history or social history or political history or any of the other areas of history which historians choose to examine.1

In attempting a study of the rural economy of the Overberg one of the main objects has been to examine as comprehensively as possible the primary agricultural activities of the area in order to draw conclusions regarding the importance of each facet of farming. The study was prompted by a belief in the profound changes that were wrought by the introduction of the Merino sheep. The swing to wool-bearing sheep changed not only the character of farming. Because wool was a raw material highly sought after to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding textile industry in Britain, wool producers secured a stable income which they had hitherto not had. A farming economy which had been quasi-subsistence in nature acquired too, the characteristics of a commercial farming economy. The capital which entered the area was bound to have both tangible and intangible implications for the community. This study proposes to investigate the various ways in which a changed farming economy affected the commercial, social, cultural and political milieu of the Overberg.

A closer examination of three closely related terms applied to history of the countryside, agricultural, agrarian, and rural, is necessary to eliminate confusion. The term

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agricultural history is more limited in scope than the other two and is confined to the study of the technical aspects of farming - manuring, field works, crop rotation, cattle breeding, implements and mechanization. The term agrarian history is considered more comprehensive for it covers works dealing with arable and pastoral husbandry, the marketing of produce, housing, the distribution of land ownership, and the structure of rural society. It includes the study of the economic aspects of farming and the social life of the farmers. It covers subjects like property and land rent, labour productivity, the prices of agricultural commodities, the relationship between natural and money economy, the sizes of farms, standard of living of the farmers, profits of agriculture, taxation of agriculture and the place of the agricultural labourer in society. A study in rural history is even more comprehensive than either agrarian or agricultural and includes the occupational structure of country towns and villages. While the emphasis of this study is on farming activities, the farming economy and the effects that changes in these fields had on the farming community, material on the villages has been included. Thus the decision to study a changing rural economy rather than a changing agrarian economy.

The modern rural or agrarian historian is indebted to the Annales School of France, who, through its journal *d'Histoire Economique et Sociale*, begun in 1929, took a stance against the dominance of political and diplomatic history and promoted interest in the interrelationship of environmental and social structures. In order to understand the social relations and the psychological make-up of a region's

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inhabitants, it is necessary to examine the geographical environment and especially the agrarian base on which that society has grown up. 4

South African agrarian history was, until fairly recently, a neglected field. The political and constitutional struggles of the nineteenth century as well as the upheavals wrought by the discovery of minerals provided ample material for historians. The economic and social development of the Cape Colony in the nineteenth century, and particularly in the pre-mineral/industrial era received little attention. The consolidation of agriculture in the tranquil Western Cape during what has been termed a period of transformation 5 which laid the foundation of an improved Colonial economy has almost entirely been overlooked.

The bibliography, South African History and Historians - A Bibliography, compiled by C.F.J. Muller, F.A. van Jaarsveld, T. van Wyk and M. Boucher in 1979, lists only 66 works under "Agriculture, Land and Fisheries". Of these works, only a few have direct relevance to agriculture in the south-western Cape in the nineteenth century and not one deals exclusively with agriculture in the Overberg. Furthermore, most of these works would be classified as agricultural and not agrarian history, as they only touch on, or do not address the social, political and economic aspects of rural society.

There are three scholarly works on early grain culture in South Africa, namely, "Die Geskiedenis van die Graankultuur in Suid-Afrika, 1652 - 1752", by A.J. du Plessis (1933), "Die

Geskiedenis van ons Graanbou, 1652 - 1795", by J.H.D. Schreuder (U.S., 1948) and "Die Geskiedenis van Graanbou aan die Kaap, 1795 - 1826", by D.J. van Zyl, (1968). As suggested in the titles, these works are confined to the study of grain and do not investigate social or cultural issues. The time span covered by the three studies ends in 1826 and they do not investigate specific areas in detail. The Overberg, as a grain producing area, tends to be grouped with the rest of the south-western Cape, and does not receive the individual attention that it requires.

There are a number of works on viticulture, but they have little relevance for the Overberg which has never produced much wine.

Works on cattle and sheep breeding are few. The bibliography mentioned previously lists one work on stockbreeding that has specific relevance for the Cape Colony and this covers a period of only eleven years. It is the dissertation "Landbou en Veeteelt in die Kaapkolonie, 1785 - 1806", by P.K. Louw. (U.S., 1948). A major work, Die Geskiedenis van die Skaapboerdery in Suid-Afrika, was undertaken by Professor H.B. Thom in 1936. He examined the various aspects of sheep farming in the whole of white settled South Africa from the time of Van Riebeeck until the early years of the twentieth century. Despite a vast canvas and a wide time span he produced a thorough and useful study. However his work does not examine the social, cultural and political influence of the agricultural base on society and he fails to emphasize the major importance for society of the change to wool farming. The only other work which deals specifically with sheep is that of J.M. Sellers, The Origin and Development of the Merino Sheep Industry in the Natal Midlands, 1856 - 1866. It is ironic that there is no comprehensive work on the Merino industry of the Overberg, the area in South Africa
where this branch of stock farming first flourished.

Interest in rural and agrarian history gained momentum in the late sixties when a growing body of writers began to examine the intricate interrelationships between land, labour and capital. The impact of white land ownership on indigenous societies began to receive greater attention. Writers such as Stanley Trapido and Colin Bundy gave attention to peasant/tenant production, extended control over the land by whites and the growth of a landless class of wage earners. Colin Bundy’s study, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, (1979) paid attention to the unequal economic growth of black and white in South Africa. He examined the effect on the southern Nguni of the Eastern Cape of becoming embroiled in new economic and social relations with whites. Whereas in the eighteenth century their limited contact with whites had not affected the material structure of their own society, the increased contact during the nineteenth century had important implications for their mode of production and economic organization. Stanley Trapido contributed to an important collection of rural studies which appeared in 1980, edited by S. Marks and A. Atmore, namely, *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*. In the words of the authors, the object of the volume was to "explore, through a series of case studies, three crucial areas in South Africa’s nineteenth-century history: the nature of precapitalist social formations; the ways in which these were affected, if not necessarily yet restructured, by colonial penetration and mercantile capital; and the impact on Africans of the colonial experience and methods of social control". With the exception of the essay by Susan Newton-King on the labour market of the Cape Colony, 1807 - 1828, and the essay by Stanley Trapido on the political and ideological structure

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of liberalism in the Cape, 1854 - 1910, these works deal primarily with frontier interaction between African societies and white penetration. They have little or no direct bearing on developments in the Overberg where the coloureds were rapidly acculturizing and had been almost entirely incorporated into the rural economy.

In 1982 a brief but incisive work appeared by S. Dubow entitled *Land, Labour and Merchant Capital. The Experience of the Graaff-Reinet District in the Pre-Industrial Economy of the Cape, 1852 - 1872*. The work deals with the effect that the introduction of wool farming had on the economy of the Eastern Cape and particularly on the district of Graaff-Reinet. As the major role of wool farming is an important aspect of this study, Dubow's work was of particular interest and value.

The impact of white settlement in Natal was explored in a series of essays which appeared in 1985 in a volume entitled *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony*, edited by B. Guest and J.M. Sellers. John Lambert, who contributed to the series, made a study of the impact of white pervasion on traditional Zulu society in Natal in his work, "Africans in Natal, 1880 - 1899: Continuity, Change and Crisis in a Rural Society" which was completed in 1986. He examined the despair and frustrations of African society which was rapidly being turned into a class of serfs and migrant labourers resultant upon the cumulative effects of taxation, legislation, disasters and indebtedness. In the same year the volume, *Putting a Plough to the Ground. Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850 - 1930*, appeared, edited by W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido. As the title suggests, these essays deal with the accumulation of agricultural land in the hands of whites and the dispossession of the indigenous races. One of the contributors, R. Ross, examines the origins of capitalist
agriculture in the Cape Colony.

Another study that appeared at this time which examines the impact of white society on black, is that of Tim Keegan, namely, *Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa*. Keegan shows that the blacks of the Southern Highveld resisted proletarianization and (pre-1914) were still far from being transformed into a working class.\(^7\)

The writings of M. Morris have also been focussed on agriculture, capital and society. Morris's articles discuss the transition to capitalist agriculture and its effects on class struggles in the countryside. One article appeared in 1976 in *Economy and Society*, Volume 5, and is entitled "The Development of Capitalism in South African Agriculture: Class Struggle in the Countryside". Another article by Morris appeared in *Africa Perspective*, Volume 1, Numbers 5 and 6 in 1987 entitled "Social History and the Transition to Capitalism in the South African Countryside".

An up-to-the-minute review of writing in agrarian and agricultural history\(^8\) reveals that the decade of the eighties showed a remarkable increase in works in this field. Whereas the bibliography previously mentioned recorded only 66 works, an additional 82 works on agrarian and agricultural history have appeared since 1980. Two important works in the agricultural field are those of J.C. Aucamp on the Cape fruit industry, being "Die Geskiedenis van die sagtevrugtebedryf in die Kaapkolonia, 1886 - 1896", (M.A., U.S., 1982) and "Die Geskiedenis van die Kaapse sagtevrugtebedryf, 1896 - 1910", (Ph.D., U.S, 1986). There has been a marked swing away from purely agricultural history

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8. The bibliography, *South African History and Historians* is in the process of being revised and I am indebted to Prof S.B. Spies for providing me with lists of the additions to the volume.
to agrarian or rural history, the main trend of which has been the social and economic consequences of the unequal division of land in South Africa. This trend is particularly noticeable from the mid-eighties. Of the 82 works referred to above, at least 26 deal with the unequal division of land among capitalists and proletarianised pastoralists. Prominent among the writers of these works are W. Beinart, C. Bundy, T. Keegan, J. Lambert, R. Ross and S. Trapido. A valuable work to appear that has specific relevance for the western Cape is that of J.N.C. Marincowitz - "Rural Production and Labour in the Western Cape, 1838 to 1888, with special reference to the Wheat growing Districts", (Ph.D., London University, 1985). Marincowitz examines "proletarianisation, production and politics" and gives much attention to the manipulation of the rural labourer. He acknowledges the need for further research into viticulture and pastoral farming to enhance the understanding of the rural economy as a whole.°

Thus much recent rural history has been concerned with change in indigenous societies following the encroachment of western white society. In doing so, attention has been drawn away from economic, social and political change in areas such as the Overberg where by 1838 "frontier" relations between whites and indigenes had long been transformed into an economically integrated rural society, albeit with class distinctions chiefly based on colour. A new development in agrarian history which is examined by H. Giliomee in an article entitled "Western Cape farmers and the beginnings of Afrikaner nationalism, 1870 - 1915", 10 is the role of growing rural white prosperity on the growth of Afrikaner awareness. This is an aspect also touched on by Marincowitz.

He claims that his study benefited from "new ways of perceiving the relation of nationalism to capitalist expansion". Afrikaner nationalism, he claims, can trace its origins, and later linkages, to agrarian capital.11

Academic studies of the Overberg are few. Apart from the works of Dr E.J. Prins12 which cover an earlier period, i.e. up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, there are only a few masters and honours dissertations which deal with aspects of Overberg history. Among these are A.P. Buirski's "The Barry's and the Overberg", (Stellenbosch, 1952) which by its title implies a limited view, and a study by J.A. Stopforth (U.C.T., 1974) entitled "Swellendam en sy Distrik Gedurende die civiele Kommissariesskap van Harry Rivers, 1828 - 1841". A more recent honours dissertation by T.A. van Ryneveld entitled "Merchants and Missions: Developments in the Caledon District 1838 - 1850", (U.C.T., 1983) examines how a community with a relatively low level of commercial activity was drawn into the world economy. This is a short work and only touches on a vast subject. However, it is a positive contribution to the literature on the pre-industrial nineteenth century rural economy. "A History of Caledon in the Nineteenth Century, 1811 - 1884", (J.E. Wilson, Unisa, 1984), was the springboard for the present study.

Several works have appeared on the coloured community at Genadendal, but in these works this group of the population tends to be seen in isolation and not as part of a wider agricultural economy. The most recent of these works is the published dissertation by I. Balie, Die Geskiedenis van Genadendal, 1738 - 1988. Two earlier works on Genadendal

are The Pear Tree Blossoms, by B. Krüger (1966) and "The Development of the Coloured Community at Genadendal under the Influence of the Missionaries of the Unitas Fratrum, 1792 - 1892" by J.W. Raum, (U.C.T., 1971).

Popular literature on the Overberg is also limited. E.H. Burrows’s work Overberg Outspan, published in 1952, is both well-researched and informative, but it cannot claim to be an objective, systematic rural history. The popularity of this work and the obvious need for literature on the Overberg is indicated in its recent republication. A scientific study of the area seems long overdue.

Although originally the term Overberg applied to the vast and uncharted area beyond the Hottentots Holland Mountains that were visible from Cape Town, today the term is generally accepted as referring to the area from Bot River to Swellendam, between the Riviersonderend Mountains, the Langeberg and the sea. Discussion in this study will be restricted where possible to the present-day magisterial districts of Swellendam, Caledon and Bredasdorp but it will be unavoidable at times to include information and figures on areas such as Ladismith, Robertson, Riversdale and Heidelberg as all these districts at one time fell within the Swellendam magisterial district.

In determining the limits of a period, dates must be used as beacons, but in the process of historical change, it is impossible to establish rigidly the end of one era and the beginning of the next. Attention was drawn to the mid-nineteenth century in a study undertaken by the writer on the history and development of the town of Caledon. ("A History of Caledon in the Nineteenth Century, 1811 - 1884, M.A. Dissertation, Unisa, 1984). During this study it became


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clear that phenomenal and unprecedented growth took place in the town during the eighteen-fifties. The source of this new wealth was easily traced to the wool-bearing Merino. Having established the cause of the economic growth, it was more difficult to determine just when wool really began to make its impact felt. The year 1838 (or rather circa 1838) was decided upon for various reasons.

Although the pioneers who cross bred the non wool-bearing indigenous sheep with imported Merino blood were having undoubted success as early as 1817, it took at least another two decades before sufficient farmers were producing the quantity of wool that could materially affect the Colony’s income. Figures taken from the *South African Commercial Advertiser* for 1840 suggest that it was between 1832 and 1836 that the most impressive conversion of the Colony’s Afrikaner sheep to wool-bearing crosses occurred. In 1832 the Colony exported a mere 6 789 lbs of wool and by 1836 the figure was 256 629 lbs. John Fairbairn, editor of the *South African Commercial Advertiser*, considers the Cape to have entered the "wool race" in 1834. C.W. de Kiewiet, perhaps South Africa’s first economic historian, believes that since 1840, most of the growth which South Africa made was due to wool. More recent writers such as Tim Keegan also acknowledge that it was from the 1840s that the wool boom radically changed the Cape economy. D.W. Rush recognises the period between 1838 and 1842 as the one in which wool, from being an insignificant export, became one of major importance.

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14. *S.A.C.A.*, Editorial, 12 February 1840,
15. Ibid., Editorial, 24 September 1845.
17. Keegan, p.3.
Although C.G.W. Schumann traces an improvement in the economy to as early as 1827, he speaks of a later period, i.e. the years 1850 – 1869 as the "wool period". While he is perhaps correct in selecting these years as the period of a true wool boom, there can be no doubt that by the end of the thirties wool had already proved its economic value to the Colony.

Although with hindsight one can see the beginning of an economic upswing at the close of the thirties, the Colony had been through a difficult period. The Great Trek had created a serious social and political upheaval, the slaves who were liberated in 1834 gained complete freedom in 1838 after a period of apprenticeship and an acute labour shortage was being felt, while the crowding of emancipated slaves in the towns aggravated serious epidemics of measles and smallpox. According to both G.M. Theal and Eric Walker, all these events had created a period of gloom in the Colony. The late thirties marked the beginning of a new era in the social and economic history of the Cape Colony.

It was a simpler task to decide upon a closing date for this study. Figures show that wool exports reached their peak for the nineteenth century in 1872. Although wool continued to maintain a very important position in the country's exports, those of wool were to be eclipsed by those of minerals in the following decades, and it therefore seems


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appropriate to end this study when wool exports, the cause of the first major economic revolution in South Africa, reached their apogee. The mineral discoveries in the last third of the nineteenth century dramatically altered the pace of change in South Africa. Marks and Atmore see the discovery of diamonds and gold as the start of a period of unprecedented imperialist thrust and capitalist development. They spelled the end of the nineteenth century world and introduced a whole new tenor and quality of life. Mabin recognises too, that it was notably after 1870 that an "irrevocable restructuring" occurred in the social, economic and political relations of the sub-continent.

By 1872 the Overberg itself was enjoying "unprecedented success" and "marked prosperity" and furthermore it was in that year that the Colony was granted responsible government. This was in no small part due to the remarkably improved economic state of the Colony that had been brought about chiefly by wool.

Viewed in colonial context, the Overberg in 1815 was part of a colony that had become a permanent British possession, following the defeat of Napoleon. The Cape, hardly a flourishing colony, had been acquired at a time when most colonies were regarded as "millstones around the neck". The old colonial system of reciprocal privileges was falling into disfavour and Macauley's philosophy was encouraging the attainment of British parliamentary institutions in the colonies. The influence of the

Manchester school was forcing a restructuring of agriculture in England because of the increased competition caused by free trade and because of greater urban demand accompanying the urbanization of Britain during Victoria's reign. Agriculture in England after 1840 became increasingly commercial. These developments in the mother country were to affect the Cape Colony both directly and indirectly.

White settlement of the Overberg had begun between 1708 and 1710 and by 1838 the region was supporting a fairly dense population of quasi-subsistence stock and grain farmers. The indigenous settlers of the Overberg, the Khoi, had by 1710, been so greatly reduced in numbers that they were unable to resist the spread of white settlement. A few kraals remained into the period under study, and a certain number settled at the three mission stations in the Overberg. Much miscegenation had occurred with slaves and whites and by 1838 it was becoming appropriate to refer to a coloured population, most of whom resided on the mission stations and on the farms of the whites.

The Dutch system of inheritance, which leaves equal portions to wife and children, had resulted in frequent subdivision of the original land grants of about 3 000 morgen. The pressure on the land in certain areas had increased to the extent where it had become necessary for a significant number of farmers to join the Great Trek for predominantly economic reasons. Although most of the farmers were making a comfortable living, in 1838 the Overberg was not a wealthy

27. B. Booyens, Bronwaters van Geneesing, die Tradisionele Marebroonwaterkuur in ons Volksgeneeskunde, p.15.

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area, as markets for grain and meat were limited and inaccessible. Before the 1830s the sheep kept by the farmers of the Colony had been almost exclusively the fat-tailed Afrikaner which bore no wool. If it had not been for the pioneer wool sheep breeders, who began concerted efforts in 1817 to cross the local sheep with the wool-bearing Merino, the history of the Overberg, and of the Colony, may have been very different. With a growing demand for wool in Great Britain, farmers who were producing wool were assured of a reasonably consistent market and of an income which they had hitherto not had.

The introduction of the wool sheep is recognised as one of the three important turning points in South Africa's economic history, together with the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and of the Witwatersrand gold reef in 1886. It was the advent of a viable cash product in the form of wool together with the change from a Dutch to a British government which enabled the Colony to emerge from what W.W. Rostow describes as a traditional society to a society in the transitional stage on its way to full maturity. Rostow sees the traditional society as one in which there is limited, mainly agricultural production. In such a society, the assumption is that the range of possibilities open to one's grandchildren would be about the same as they had been for one's grandparents. During the transitional stage certain pre-conditions for the take-off to economic maturity are established. The insights of modern science bring new production functions in agriculture and industry, world markets become available and the intrusion of a more advanced society sets in motion ideas and sentiments which initiate the transformation into a

modern society. New types of enterprising men come forward willing to mobilise capital, investment increases, notably in transport, communications and in raw materials in which other nations may have an interest.29

The development of wool production was not necessarily entirely dependent on a British presence but the latter undoubtedly played a major role in the speed with which this farming activity grew. William Freund draws attention to the importance of the permanent British connection for the economic and social development of the Colony30 and Hobart-Houghton also recognises that the traditionalism of the Colony remained unshaken until after the second British occupation.31

The title of this thesis is "A Changing Rural Economy and its Implications for the Overberg, 1838 - 1872". The object is to examine the economic, social and political changes that occurred within the area as a result of the change to the woolled sheep. It is no mean boast that civilization advances on the sheep's back. In mediaeval England wool was the "subject of the earnest thought and care of statesmen" because of the important effect it had on political, social and economic development.32 Previous studies on the Overberg have tended to concentrate on the roles of prominent persons such as Joseph Barry, Harry Rivers, Dr William Robertson, Dr Henry White, Benjamin Hoodie, F.W.Reitz and the Van Breda family. These were all educated men and most of

them were immigrants, in touch with the outside world. The effect that the changing economy had on the average man, the original settler of the Overberg, has been neglected. What effect did Rostow's "outside stimulus" have on the "traditional" population? How did it react to a different weltanschaung? How receptive was it to change and to what extent did the population change? Did economic improvement have social, cultural and political implications?

J.A. Stopforth, in the study on Harry Rivers and the Swellendam district, considers progress inevitable when men of the calibre of Rivers, Robertson, Barry, Reitz, White and Moodie come together in one district - "Ontwikkeling en nuwe groei [is] vanselfsprekend". It is doubtful whether the same progress would have been witnessed if this group of men had been gathered together in a remoter part of South Africa in the 1830s. The Overberg was ripe for development, for economic change - it had to change, for the farming units were rapidly diminishing in size and if the farmers had not taken up the economic challenge presented by a change to wool sheep, the exodus from the south-western Cape in 1838 and subsequently may have been much greater than it was. The farming units could not have continued to support the growing population on grain and mutton farming alone. The advent of the woolled sheep, which provided a living for a denser population, and which prevented a large-scale dispersal of Overberg inhabitants, helped to retain intact a large socio-cultural group who followed the economic lead of, but remained relatively unaffected by the social and cultural changes wrought by anglicization and commercialization. The settled inhabitants did not readily part with their land and of the few outsiders who obtained farms, it was the exception who remained, and they were assimilated and lost their


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English identity. Names such as Shaw, Rainier, Bayley, Dutton, Buchanan, Morris - British immigrants with capital who took the lead in Merino farming - have become obscured by the passage of time.

With the development in South Africa following the discovery of minerals, lines of communication moved away from the Overberg and this tended to increase the isolation of the area, preserving at the same time the social and cultural milieu that had developed over nearly two centuries. If this study can in some small way capture that milieu, it will have fulfilled its aim.

In this study the geographical situation and physical characteristics of the Overberg are examined, followed by an exploration of the pattern of land settlement in the area. The use of the land both for cultivation and stock-raising follows. The emergence of the Merino above all other aspects of farming is discussed followed by the important economic, social and political implications that this branch of farming had for the Overberg.

Gaining information on a rural area where most of the inhabitants, both white and coloured, were either illiterate or semi-literate, was not a simple task. Inevitably there are gaps that cannot be filled and questions that cannot be satisfactorily answered. The journals of travellers were a useful source of information, particularly for the earlier period. Travellers such as M. D. Teenstra who recorded his experiences in the Overberg in the 1820s in his De Vruchten Mijner Werkzaamheden Gedurende Mijne Reize, Over de Kaap de Goede Hoop, Naar Java, En Terug, Over St. Helena, Naar de Nederlanden, left valuable information on the state of farming and rural society in those years. Foreign travellers to the Colony were hosted in the homes of farmers.
and their impressions leave a good deal of information for the historian. However, it was more often the prosperous colonist that hosted the traveller and information on the struggling farmer is rare. As the Colony progressed economically and more public accommodation became available, it became less common for travellers to stay in the homes of colonists and as a result this valuable source of information diminished.

Primary source material on the agrarian past, particularly of a semi-literate population, is scarce. Much reliance was placed on official records in the Cape Archives Depot. Important documentary information was obtained from the correspondence of the Swellendam, Caledon and Bredasdorp civil commissioners who performed the function of agricultural extensionists, but in most cases the civil commissioners were British immigrants and their views were naturally coloured.

Information from the Swellendam Land Reports was particularly useful, providing as it did material on farm size, location, occupation, cultivation and stocking capacity. Unfortunately these reports provided no information on the number of coloured labourers housed on white farms. The greatest lack of information was in fact felt when writing on coloured labour. Official documents on this aspect of the study were few and provided a very one-sided opinion. However, a source which did provide valuable information in this regard was the two reports of the select committees on the granting of land in freehold to "Hottentots" in 1854 and 1856.

The census figures for 1865 and 1875 as well as statistics from the Blue Books were used. A leading agriculturist of the day, F.W.Reitz of Rhenosterfontein in the Swellendam
district, placed little reliance on the official agricultural statistics which were drawn up by field cornets. He termed them "pampoen lists". As the figures were estimates they cannot be regarded as absolute and should only be taken as a guide to indicate general trends.

The Drostdy Museum at Swellendam provided useful information on a variety of topics, particularly regarding commercial, social and cultural aspects. The Moodie and Barry papers in particular, were enlightening on a number of questions. Correspondence between the Moodie family and private persons and agents in England revealed contemporary thought on the early economic upswing in the Colony in the early 1830s. Equally valuable were the mercantile books and papers of Barry and Nephews which provided facts and figures on the economy.

Particularly valuable sources of information because of their rarity, were the farm journals kept on two farms in the Bredasdorp district. The journals written up at Zoetendals Valley from 1817 to 1944 with only minor omissions were a mine of information on the early economic significance of the Merino sheep. The Du Toit journal, although not nearly as voluminous, provided figures which verified certain agricultural trends.

The newspapers and a few agricultural publications from the nineteenth century in the South African Library provided a fairly comprehensive picture of the state of agriculture in the Colony. John Fairbairn, editor of the *South African Commercial Advertiser* was actively interested in the development of the Colony and his columns frequently addressed agricultural problems and the economic state of the

34. F.W. Reitz, *Cape Agriculture in Two Lectures*, p.29.
Colony. The Commercial Advertiser also carried the debates of the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly. As a source of political information of the Overberg the debates were disappointing, revealing little more than the frustrations of farmers at restricted routes for trade in and out of the area. 35 The Overberg Courant, the only local newspaper to appear in these years, was published at Swellendam from 1859 to 1865. Dependent on local patronage, the articles did not provide particularly perceptive or critical articles on contemporary issues, but nevertheless were one of the few sources to emanate from the area. F.W. Reitz, a leading agriculturist and politician from the Swellendam district, assisted in the publication of a farming journal printed in Cape Town, The South African Agricultural News and Farmers' Journal, (1849 - 1850). Although the publication only survived for a very short time, correspondents to the journal provided valuable information on colonial agriculture.

The choice of terms can cause confusion and controversy. The term landed gentry has been used in recent rural history. R. Ross uses the term to define the "relatively prosperous, market-oriented farm owner-operators, almost invariably white and in general considerable employers of labour". 36 Although by the end of the period under study more and more farmers were emerging who answered to this description, the term does not seem entirely appropriate for the majority of white

35. S.A.C.A., House of Assembly, 23 March 1859 and passim. See also CCP 2/1/1/5 Legislative Council, 1859, Petitions signed S.H. Badenhorst, et.al., and W. Robertson, et.al., p.13; CCP 2/1/1/7 Legislative Council 1861, Petition signed T. Barry, et.al., p.63; CCP 2/1/1/12 Legislative Council 1866 - 1867, Petition presented by 60 inhabitants of Swellendam, p.195; CCP 2/1/1/13 Legislative Council 1867, Petition from 574 inhabitants of Swellendam, p.41.


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landowners in the Overberg, particularly during the earlier years of this study. Thus the terms white agriculturists, landlords or landowners are given preference in this study.

It is also difficult to find a term that can be used throughout which includes the various inhabitants of the area who were not white. There were remnants of the original Khoi, emancipated slaves, free blacks, various admixtures of the three as well as the progeny of liaisons between whites and slaves. By 1838 miscegenation made it almost impossible to make an intelligible distinction between the progeny of the various elements, although the Census of 1865 still referred to "Hottentots", "Kafirs", and "Other". The term coloured has been selected to encompass the various groups, and the terms Khoi and slaves are used only where deemed necessary.

The term homestead has been used in recent writing in preference to kraal as the latter is considered derogatory. Substitution of the one for the other appears unnecessary to the writer, who attaches no negative connotation to the latter term.

In the text the words rüens and ruggens are used interchangeably, as are strandveld and duineveld. The former terms refer to the area from Caledon to Swellendam which is characterized by gently rolling hills and the latter refers to the dune country along the Bredasdorp and Stanford coast.

Orthography presented a problem with place names. Where possible English translations and modern spelling are used, but there are names, such as Riviersonderend, Buffeljachts River and Breede River where an attempted translation is an unnecessary rape of colloquialism.
CHAPTER ONE

OVERBERG - GEOGRAPHIC MICROCOSEH

The geographical environment plays an important role in the development of the social milieu of an area. It is with this in mind that the study of the Overberg has been undertaken. Even today, in an age where rapid communication and the mass media hasten the devolution to global homogeneity, the three communities of Swellendam, Caledon and Bredasdorp retain much of the uniqueness of a milieu that has been evolving since the first decade of the eighteenth century.

The arrival of the first white settlers in the Overberg was the outcome of the expansion of a refreshment station established by the Dutch East India Company (VOC or Verenigde Nederlandse Geoktrooiiederde Oos-Indiese Kompanjie) in 1652 on the shores of Table Bay. The object of the Company was to provide passing ships with provisions on their long sea voyage to the east. The indigenous peoples were known to have cattle and sheep and one of the chief objects of the settlement was to obtain meat through barter. Expeditions into the interior in search of tribes with livestock, apart from the almost instinctive human desire to explore, soon took the white man over a formidable mountain barrier to the east which was visible from the settlement at Table Bay. It is to this range of mountains, the Hottentots Holland, that the name Overberg can be attributed, for a wide, unexplored world lay "over the mountains". It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a detailed account of the gradual expansion of white settlers between 1652 and 1710, the latter date marking the first land grant to a white farmer in the Overberg, although a brief history of land settlement up to 1838, when this study commences, will be provided in Chapter Two.
An examination of the limits of what today is termed the Overberg, reveals how geographical or natural boundaries eventually superseded administrative ones.

The natural boundaries of the "true" wool and grain producing Overberg (that is the present-day districts of Caledon, Swellendam and Bredasdorp) are the Houw Hoek Mountains in the west, the Riviersonderend and Langeberg Mountains in the north and the Indian Ocean in the south. The eastern limit is climatic and not quite so easily defined. As one leaves the Swellendam district and enters those of Heidelberg and Riversdale, the winter rains become less plentiful and less predictable and this affects the farming economy and therefore also the society of the area. When the Swellendam district was first created, it was a vast area encompassing many different topographical and climatic zones.

Because the Dutch authorities at the Cape had been unable to prevent white expansion, by 1745 it was deemed necessary to proclaim a judicial district in the interior. Two districts already existed, those of the Cape and Stellenbosch. The area immediately to the east of the Hottentots Holland as far as the Breede River had been included in the latter. Because the population immediately beyond the mountains was sparse, and because for some time to come they were to retain contact with the Stellenbosch church and district authorities, it was inappropriate to declare the Hottentots Holland, a natural dividing line, the boundary between Stellenbosch and the newly created district of Swellendam. Thus in 1745 when J.T. Rhenius was appointed landdrost of Swellendam, the new district was defined as including the territory from the Breede River to Mossel Bay as well as along the Hex River to the mouth of the Olifants River in the west, incorporating part of the Bokkeveld. Expansion continued unchecked, and by 1786 it became necessary to proclaim yet another district. Thus in that year, when
Graaff-Reinet was created, the Swellendam boundaries were adjusted, becoming the Groot Swartberg to the north (near the present towns of Ladismith and Oudtshoorn) and the Gamtoos River in the east.¹

Territorial modifications by the Batavian Regime (1803 - 1806) created the districts of Tulbagh and Uitenhage which further reduced the extent of the Swellendam district. Then again, under the second British occupation which commenced in 1806, further modifications were made with a view to extending greater control and a measure of civilization over the widely scattered population. In March 1810, during the governorship of the Earl of Caledon, two new districts were created. They were the districts of Clanwilliam and George, to both of which Swellendam lost territory. At the same time, Caledon was created as a sub-district of Swellendam, a change which moved the boundaries of the Swellendam district to the Hottentots Holland Mountains in the west and the Gourits River in the east while it still stretched northward to the Great Swartberg.² The Hottentots Holland range, the great natural divide, had been recognised as the boundary between Swellendam and Stellenbosch.

In 1838, when this study commences, the term Overberg was roughly synonymous with the Swellendam magisterial district of that time. However it must be noted that the modern Overberg now excludes the Little Karoo area (Robertson, Montagu and Ladismith) that was once part of the

² G. McCall Theal, Records of the Cape Colony, VII, p.260.
Swellendam district. It also excludes the district of Riversdale which became an independent district on 8 March 1848. Heidelberg is arguably a part of the present Overberg and this is perhaps confirmed by the fact that it was separated from Swellendam as late as 1938.

Reference to Maps 1 and 2 will provide a clearer picture of how the Swellendam district of 1838 became sub-divided into various other districts as the Cape Colony developed. For the sake of clarity it must also be noted that Caledon became an independent judicial district in 1839. From that date until 1855, Bredasdorp was part of the Caledon magisterial district. On 1 September 1855 Bredasdorp was granted magisterial sovereignty.

The Swellendam district of 1838 was divided into 23 wards or field-cornetcies. Most of the names of the wards are self-explanatory with regard to situation, but as frequent reference will be made to the various wards it is desirable that some explanation be given as to the locality of each. The wards are listed below and are followed in brackets by the name of the present-day town to which they are nearest.

Swellendam
Kruitjies Kral (Swellendam)
Potteberg (Port Beaufort or Cape Infanta)
Upper Duiwenhoks River (Heidelberg)
Lower Duiwenhoks River (Heidelberg)
Vette River (Riversdale)
Valsch River (Riversdale)

4. Ibid., 10 December 1938.
5. Ibid., 7 September 1855.
Kafferkuils River (Riversdale)
Breede River (Swellendam)
Klippe River (Swellendam)
Before Cogmans Kloof (Montagu)
Behind Cogmans Kloof (Montagu)
Tradouw (Swellendam)
Langeberg (Swellendam)
Groote Swartberg (Ladismith)
Caledon
Uilenkraal (Gans Bay or Danger Point)
Kars River (Napier)
Zoetendals Valley (Bredasdorp)
Swart River (Caledon)
Upper Riviersonderend (Caledon)
Lower Riviersonderend (Swellendam)
Bosjesveld (Robertson).

Two other wards, Palmiet River and Bot River, were included in the sub-district of Caledon by the delineation of 1810. At the request of farmers in the area, they were re-included in the Stellenbosch district and were only restored to the Caledon district in 1848. The Palmiet ward is the area in the vicinity of the present-day Elgin (or Grabouw). This area is a geographic microcosm within a microcosm and today the agricultural pursuits are very different to those of Swellendam, Caledon and Bredasdorp. The Palmiet area takes the form of a basin surrounded by the Hottentots Holland, Greenland and Houw Hoek Mountains and is drained by the Palmiet River. Its altitude is higher than that of the area being studied and today produces predominantly deciduous fruit and has little grain or wool production.

6. CO 2838 Civil Commissioner of Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, n.d. December 1847.
Geologically, the Overberg lies within what is known as the Cape Folded Belt and two geological series predominate. These are the Table Mountain Sandstone of the mountainous zones and the Bokkeveld series of the rolling plains which consist of shales and sandstones. The Table Mountain sandstone of the elevated areas yields a poor, sandy soil which becomes black through an admixture of organic matter in places which are continuously damp. The series is composed of well-jointed, permeable rocks and normally contains a large water supply, which partly issues in numerous springs near the base. The soil of the Bokkeveld beds is generally more fertile than that of the Table Mountain Sandstone and the shales form good agricultural soil although they tend to be deficient in phosphoric acid and nitrates owing to the fact that the dry summers tend to prevent the accumulation of organic matter and the wet winters leach out of the soil such nitrates as are produced.

Apart from the surrounding mountains, the major part of the Overberg can be divided into two distinctive zones - the rüens (or ruggens) and the strandveld (or duineveld). The Kleinriviersberge together with the Bredasdorp Mountains form the dividing line between the two regions. The rüens, a term that refers to the rolling, hilly countryside, occupies the area from the Houw Hoek Mountains to Swellendam and is made up of Bokkeveld shales. The strandveld, as the term implies, is the coastal strip from about Danger Point to Port Beaufort and beyond. Much of the soil is weathered Table Mountain Sandstone and is not as fertile as the rüens. Neither of the two geological series of the area yield any stone or minerals of any economic value.

Although there are several streams in the area which at times

7. A.H. Rogers, et.al., The Geology of the Union of South Africa, pp.120 - 125.
MAP 3  South-western Cape illustrating situation of Ruens and Duineveld in relation to the three major towns.
become swift torrents in winter, there are really only two significant rivers, namely the Riviersonderend and the Breede River. The former rises in the Franschhoek Mountains and flows into the Breede (which has its source near Worcester) and the latter enters the sea at Port Beaufort. The Breede is partly navigable and for a time it played an important role in the economic development of the area.

The Overberg enjoys the Mediterranean climate of the southwestern fold mountain region and is different from the rest of South Africa in that it receives most of its rainfall in winter. Temperatures are moderate and although the rainfall is not high, it is fairly reliable. Most of the rain falls from April to September (69%) and occasionally there is rain in summer, although this is not as dependable as the winter rains. In the Caledon rûens, annual rainfall is generally between 300 and 500 mm (12 - 20 inches) 9 but as one progresses eastwards it diminishes and becomes less reliable. Figures for Caledon show that between 1877 and 1987 the average annual rainfall for the area is 531,7 mm with the highest falls in June, July and August. 10

Although the Overberg could depend with a fair degree of certainty on its winter rain, by the nineteenth century it was becoming clear that the whole of South Africa experienced wet and dry cycles. In 1859 (the beginning of a very severe dry cycle) the editor of the South African Commercial Advertiser maintained that the Colony could expect a drought of some severity every fifth or seventh year. 11 This is confirmed by entries in the Van Breda Journals of Zoetendals Valley. The year 1840 was an exceedingly

wet year and apparently the end of a wet cycle, as seven dry
years followed. No good rains fell until 8 August 1847.12 The
drought experienced by the whole Colony between 1859 and 1866
was of exceptional severity and the Overberg was not left
unscathed. In 1865 the drought in the Caledon district was
reported to be the worst ever experienced and the prospects
for the farmers were bad. 13 In the same year the normally
perennial springs in the Bredasdorp division dried up and the
oldest inhabitants could not remember having experienced so
severe a drought. 14 Such droughts, however, were
exceptional. Good summer rain, valuable for grazing,
ocasionally fell from the south-east. At Zoetendals Valley
summer rain sometimes filled all the vleis.15 Devastating
floods were unknown although torrential rains sometimes
caused stock losses because such falls were often
accompanied by cold, snowy conditions. During the dry cycle
of the sixties the Caledon area had, ironically, one of the
heaviest falls in 30 years. Some farmers lost as many as 200
sheep and the total sheep losses were estimated at between
8 000 and 10 000.16

The Overberg falls within a vegetation zone of
schlerophyllous macchia, more commonly known as fynbos.
Schlerophyllous means literally, "hard leaves" and the term
fynbos comes from the old Dutch words fijn bos which refers
to the woody shrubs with their ericoid or rolled leaves.
Fynbos is a complex vegetation with a uniquely rich variety
of species. It is particularly associated with sandstone and

16. CO 3079 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1865.
poor, white sandy soil in regions receiving a winter rainfall of not less than 250 mm per annum. The three prominent components of fynbos are proteaceae, ericaceae and restionaceae (reed-like grasses) but where there has been grazing mismanagement, the former two may be poorly represented. 17

It would appear from the journals of Robert Jacob Gordon, (1777 - 1786) commander-in-chief of the Cape forces who travelled extensively in the interior of South Africa, that before overgrazing changed the scene, there were considerable expanses of luxuriant grass in the Overberg. In the vicinity of the present-day Kleinmond he spoke of an area "quite overgrown with luxuriant grass" and in the Swellendam district he stated that the vegetation consisted of "virtually nothing but grass and a few shrubs". 18

Fynbos is a sensitive ecological community type which yields easily to aggressive plant invaders. Cultivation and overgrazing soon encouraged the spread of Elytropappus rhinacerotis, commonly known as the rhenosterbos. A visitor to the Overberg in 1860 noted that the "whole veld [was] covered with a low thin scrub about eighteen inches high, called rhenosterbosch" and only dotted "here and there" with a few square miles of corn. 18 The rhenosterbos became known as the "curse of the Western Province" as it spread more widely and more quickly than most exotic plants. It was believed to have been spread by the "Boers of old time" who used it as dunnage in packing the brandy casks on their waggons and also by sheep which carried it in their fleece.

17. J.P.H. Acocks, Veld Types of South Africa, pp.152,153 and M. Vogts, South Africa's Proteaceae. Know them and grow them, p.11.
19. L. Duff Gordon, Letters from the Cape, p.76.
The plant seeded freely and remained in a dormant state in the ground for years. Its presence, however, was not considered an unmixed evil. Although it unfortunately supplanted more valuable fodder plants, it did prevent the blowing and washing away of loose soil and it provided shade and shelter to grasses and other useful minor plants while adding to the accumulation of plant residue in the soil.  

Indigenous grasses rapidly deteriorated in the last decades of the eighteenth century with the spread of white farmers and the increase in stock. Colonel Gordon spoke of luxuriant grass in 1777 but by 1803 the traveller H. Lichtenstein wrote that "pure grass was rarely found and the outspanned oxen would have to be content with heath plants, rushes and even succulent plants". 

Tree growth in the Overberg was limited to the sheltered kloofs on the southern and eastern slopes of the Riviersonderend Mountains where the forests of yellow- and stinkwood were rapidly depleted by the early settlers for the construction of homes and waggons.

As most travellers to the Overberg during the nineteenth century undertook their journeys in summer to avoid the hazards of swollen rivers, they encountered it in the dry season and they described it as "dreary", "burnt up", "naked and rugged", "bleak", "barren" and "treeless".

20. R. Wallace, Farming Industries of Cape Colony, p.82.
22. See J. Fawcett, Account of an Eighteen Months' Residence at the Cape of Good Hope in 1835 - 1836, p.25; R. Gray, Journal of a Visitation through the Cape, p.70; M.D. Teenstra, De Vruchten Mijner Werkzaamheden, Over de Kaap de Goede Hoop etc., p.31; R. Wallace, Farming Industries of Cape Colony, pp.11,12; C.I. Latrobe, Journal of a Visit to South Africa in 1815 and 1816, pp.79, 82.
M.D. Teenstra, an observant Dutch visitor to the Overberg, was one of the few who recorded the wonderful transformation that occurred to the vegetation in spring. He spoke of a "brilliant profusion of heaths and other wild flowers" near Caledon and of a "glorious spectacle presented by the countless varieties of heath and wild flowers" on the route that they took from Caledon to the mouth of the Klein River. 23

Although to European travellers the Overberg presented a somewhat inhospitable appearance, the area soon proved its stability as an area for permanent agricultural settlement. Dr E.J. Prins, who undertook a study of the earliest settlement of the area, claims to have found no documentary reference to a farmer leaving the Overberg because of drought or adversity. 24 Natural conditions favoured settlement, and the absence of a large number of indigenous peoples was also conducive to the spread of white settlers. The San never appear to have penetrated as far south as the Overberg 25 and the Khoi offered no effective resistance to the trekboer. 26 L.L. Tomlinson maintains that the last threat from the indigenous races in the Swellendam district was in 1777 when a number of murders occurred. The Khoi captain Kees and a number of his tribe were arrested and sent to the castle in Cape Town. 27 According to Lichtenstein, it was not until one reached the Gourits River that one began to hear stories of the "horrors" of the "savage Caffres" of the Eastern Cape - "the farther we now went", he states, "the more were similar complaints a

23. Teenstra, pp.316, 323.
principal subject of our conversations with the colonists". By the start of the nineteenth century, and certainly by 1838, the Overberg had become a "midland" region and was no longer the frontier where land and property were continually threatened. The robber gangs of Khoi and deserted slaves in the Hangklip Mountains referred to by Teenstra appear to have been a threat up to about 1825.29 There are no references to them in the civil commissioner's correspondence during the period under study.

During the nineteenth century the Overberg was to develop into an important agricultural area producing grain and particularly wool. The following descriptions, if somewhat eulogistic, show that the area did not fall far short of a land of milk and honey. The civil commissioner wrote in 1860:

Caledon as an agricultural division is second to none in the Colony, thousands upon thousands of muids of grain of various kinds are raised annually without the slightest necessity for irrigation and so well suited is it for cultivation that even the tops of the ridges may be sown with a certainty of obtaining a fair crop. 30

Somewhat later an observer wrote of the Overberg:

29. Teenstra, p. 312.
30. CO 3007 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1860.
Along the mountain ranges of these districts, the homesteads, surrounded with oaks and other shady trees with their gardens full of beautiful roses and the honeysuckle twining over inviting porches, and with their hospitable and kind occupants, remind us of the most pleasant parts of the old country.  

Although the Overberg lent itself to cultivation and the rearing of stock, it must be remembered that the physical barriers which separated it from local markets placed a severe curb on its economic development. The mountains that separated it from Cape Town were steep and dangerous to cross and the difficulty in surmounting them is borne out by the fact that a railway was not built over them until the twentieth century. The Riviersonderend and Langeberg Mountains made communication with the interior equally difficult while the absence of safe ports curtailed communication by ship. Physical and economic isolation fostered social isolation and all three contributed to the milieu of the nineteenth century Overberg.

CHAPTER TWO

LAND - THE BASE OF ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Occupation of the land - forms of tenure, farm size and the division and availability of land have an important bearing on a society and its economy. When land becomes scarce, population density increases. Pressure on the land creates a necessity for improved production methods otherwise impoverishment of the land and its inhabitants are the result. By 1838 there was very little unclaimed territory in the Overberg. Sub-division of farms among heirs which continued until 1874 increased the demands made on the land with the result that it could no longer support the extensive stock-farming of former years. In c.1838, a fairly large group of farmers from certain areas of the Overberg migrated northwards, but those who remained were able to meet the challenges of increased production because of the introduction of the Merino sheep. Wool provided a profitable new crop and because land was scarce, emphasis had to be placed on quality and not quantity. The change in farming necessitated by diminishing land resources is an important theme in this study hence the need for an investigation of land settlement in the Overberg.

White settlement of the Overberg was the result of the fairly rapid accumulation of livestock, obtained from the indigenous Khoi through barter, and later, apparently by coercion.\textsuperscript{1} Originally the white settlers at the Cape secured livestock from the Peninsula Khoi but a series of wars and skirmishes followed which reduced these tribes who were no longer able

to meet the demand for meat.²

In searching farther afield for cattle and sheep, the settlers came into contact with the Khoi of the Overberg, the Chainouquas and Hessequas. The Chainouquas occupied the area closer to Cape Town between the Hottentots Holland Mountains and the Breede River and they were providing the settlement with livestock as early as 1662.³ By 1673 the presence of eleven Chainouqua kraals was known, and by 1707 a Company servant, Jan Hartogh, had located fourteen to sixteen. Less was known of the Hessequas who were found farther east between the Breede and Gourits Rivers. By 1668, sixteen to seventeen kraals had been located and by 1713, some 6 000 cattle and 10 000 sheep had been obtained from these two tribes.⁴ Rapid impoverishment appears to have followed, for reports by Olof Bergh in 1699 and Jan Hartogh in 1707 maintained that the Chainouquas and Hessequas were vastly poorer than in earlier years.⁵ The cattle trade with the whites, R. Elphick believes, was only partially responsible for the poverty in which the Khoi found themselves by the early eighteenth century and was part of a complex of disintegrative factors which included the small, unstable nature of Khoi polities as well as the ravages of European diseases such as smallpox. The epidemic of 1713 which was estimated to have killed nine out of every ten Khoi was only the last of many disasters to befall the Western Cape Khoi.⁶

By 1726 only a few scattered families could be found within 100 kilometres of Cape Town and travellers encountered large

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4. Ibid., p.160.
5. Ibid., p.230.
numbers of Khoi on farms in the Stellenbosch and Swellendam districts. Between the 1730s and 1770s the major group described by travellers was the Hessequas who were in the vicinity of Swellendam. 7

Khoi numbers were so reduced that by the first decade of the eighteenth century there was no effective resistance to the advance of the white settler. Very few Khoi under their own captains remained within the Colony and those that did subsequently tended to be grouped at mission stations. Most of the remaining Khoi were soon scattered about the country as servants of the encroaching whites. 8

Perhaps the years 1700 to 1703 were crucial for future white settlement in the Colony. On 17 February 1700 the cattle trade, which had formerly been subject to restrictions from the Company, was thrown open to the free burghers. 9 Settlers could obtain as many cattle as barter and coercion would allow. Elphick describes it thus, "All strata of colonial society saw easy and attractive pickings in the livestock of a crumbling native society". 10 With the accumulation of cattle, grazing ground between Cape Town and the mountains became scarce. To accommodate the farmers' needs for grazing, the governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, began issuing licences for grazing posts in 1703. By 1705, fifteen licences had been granted for periods ranging from three months to a year. Initially the ground obtained for grazing was purely a supplement to the farm held in freehold nearer Cape Town - they were sporadic concessions intended to meet temporary needs. 11 By 1706 there were a number of farmers

11. P.J. Van der Merwe, Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie 1657 - 1842, pp.67, 68.
among the grazing-licence holders who had no fixed abode and during the eighteenth century many of these cattle posts gradually became the permanent homes of the farming families. Until about 1708 most grazing licences were granted in the area to the north of Cape Town. Expansion eastwards up to this date into the present Caledon district was checked because the governor, W.A. van der Stel, had monopolized the land in this area with his eighteen cattle posts. After his recall in 1707, colonists took over these posts and the trek to the Overberg and beyond had begun.

Permanent settlement on a cattle post was fostered by the presence of water and certain areas of the Overberg answered well to the requirements of the stock farmer, particularly along the Riviersonderend and Breede River, and also along the various mountain ranges where there were perennial streams. As the number of farmers who settled in the interior increased, the grazing licences became more specific in the naming of the locality of the cattle post and it became practice for farmers to erect a beacon where they intended to establish their opstal.

According to documentary evidence, a prominent Stellenbosch farmer, Ferdinand Appel, was the first free burgher to obtain grazing rights east of the Hottentots Holland in 1708. By 1712 various cattle farmers had found their way along the Breede River from the direction of Worcester, and from the Hottentots Holland eastwards along the Riviersonderend.

12. Ibid., p.72.
14. Van der Merwe, pp.72, 73.
15. Ibid., p.74.
17. Schreuder, p.52.
The system of loan farms evolved from the system of grazing licences and from 1714 twelve rixdollars had to be paid as a recognition fee. The Company retained the right to withdraw the grant, but in practice the grantee was assured of permanent occupancy.

According to O.F. Mentzel, a visitor to the Cape in the eighteenth century, a loan farm was authorized at Grootvadersbosch (alongside the Langeberg between Swellendam and Heidelberg) in 1724. The year 1727 has been given by some writers as the date when the vanguard of stock farmers reached the Breede River, but L.L. Tomlinson cites the granting of grazing rights to Cornelis van Roije on 8 March 1725 on the Buffeljachts River which is farther east than the Breede. J.H.D. Schreuder claims that by 1735 stock farmers had reached Mossel Bay and E.J. Prins states that between circa 1730 and 1812, 220 farms were granted in the Overberg. This is evidence that by the start of the nineteenth century, the Overberg had a significant and permanent white settlement.

Land alienation to settlers in the Cape Colony under the Company’s rule was subject to a minimum of control and the British inherited the problem of devising a more satisfactory form of land tenure. Two authorities on land tenure have the following to say about the advance of the white settler into the Colony:

18. Ibid., p.55.
19. O.F. Mentzel, A Geographical and Topographical Description of the Cape of Good Hope (1787), footnote, p.82.
22. Schreuder, p.52.
The expansion of the settlement at the Cape in the eighteenth century was not designed - it was not desired and scarcely controlled......it took place in a haphazard manner, resulting in a straggling colony of subsistence farmers. 24

and

At best the system was a form of legalized squatting. No attempt was made to provide uniform blocks of land or to keep loan farms contiguous with one another. 25

On the loan farm or *leenings plaats* system, land was issued on lease for six months or a year on payment of rent. The farmer selected a suitable locality and applied to government for a permit to allow him to remain there. Generally this was not refused provided that he did not encroach on the rights of others. The government had the right to withdraw the lease at its expiration, but this was seldom done. If the lease was not renewed, the occupier was paid compensation for the opstal or buildings he had erected thereon. The Company owned the ground and the farmer could only sell or bequeath the opstal.26 The limits of a loan place were determined by selecting a central spot and riding for half-an-hour at a walk in all directions. The boundary of each of the earliest farms was thus circular with a diameter of one hour's ride and the amount of ground covered was about 3 000 morgen 27 although in many instances the farmer used a great deal

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more than this. Despite the apparently precarious nature of his tenure, the farmer felt quite safe, and through government laxity, loan tenure acquired many of the attributes of freehold property. The government's power to terminate a lease — even if rents were in arrears — fell into disuse. In 1732 the fifteen year quitrent system was introduced primarily with the idea of making more fertile ground available to grain farmers whose old lands had declined in fertility. Apart from the fact that rents were not uniform in the fifteen year system, and the belief that farmers would become more settled if they cultivated more, there appears to have been no practical difference between it and the loan system.

During its regime the Company had not been able to devise a successful system of land alienation. The loan farm system gave the farmer maximum freedom and the government a minimum of authority. To say the least, land tenure at the Cape was chaotic and the British inherited the problem of, in Duly's words, "making the central authority a partner in the alienation of land in a colony that had long separated itself from its capital". Even after the British occupation, 31 500 000 acres (or 14 886 578 morgen, the equivalent of 4 862 loan farms) was disposed of between 1812 and 1840 for a sum of £46 000 paid at the time of alienation in addition to quitrents amounting to £13 818 a year. This, according to De Kiewiet's calculations, gave an annual rent of about one penny for every ten acres. Land was contributing an exceptionally small fraction to the revenue.

29. Ibid., p.17.
30. Schreuder, pp.55,56.
33. De Kiewiet, pp.40, 69, 70.
First attempts at reform were made by the Earl of Caledon, governor from 1807 - 1811. He decreed that no right to any land would be recognized by his officers unless the grant was accompanied by a formal grant or deed. Caledon wished to put an end to the acquisition of land purely on the verbal promises that had been made by former administrations. Caledon also slowed down the issuance of loan places in 1809. He was in favour of the fifteen year quitrent system but any new grants under this tenure had to be surveyed, diagrammed and recorded, but as Duly remarks, there was no standard measure, nor were there competent surveyors. Caledon sought advice from the Colonial Office regarding land reforms but before he could implement further changes, his term of office came to an end. 34

Under Sir John Cradock, Caledon's successor, a new system of perpetual quitrent was introduced to replace the loan system. Cradock did not favour the loan system which encouraged the "indolent easy life" of the pastoralist and wished to encourage "exertion and industry" through a more permanent system of land tenure. Cradock proclaimed in October 1812 that he would grant land only in perpetual quitrent and in 1813 his plan became law. No land was to be sold. No new land was to be given in loan farm tenure, although existing loan places would be continued until they could be converted to perpetual quitrent. All future grants were to be in perpetual quitrent. The maximum annual rent would not exceed 250 rixdollars (about £50) and the rent was to be based on the location and quality of the land. Each grant was to be properly surveyed and diagrammed and the holder was to be given an official deed. Initially the period of conversion was to be limited to one year, but the time period had to be extended indefinitely because of poor response and

34. Duly, British Land Policy, pp.39, 40, 42, 43.
because Cradock's successors neglected the implementation of his plan. 35

The conversion of a loan farm to perpetual quitrent was no simple matter. An application was first addressed to the governor who referred it to the district landdrost. The landdrost, one member of the board of heemraad and a sworn surveyor (of which there were not many) submitted a report on the farm and suggested an equitable quitrent. Factors such as the nature of the land, the presence of water, distance from Cape Town, ports and markets as well as soil type were taken into consideration. 36 A survey was undertaken and a diagram prepared which accompanied the report to the colonial secretary's office. Subject to the governor's approval, a document was prepared which had to receive the governor's signature and this was transmitted through the landdrost to the applicant. 37

In 1814 Charles D'Escury was appointed inspector of lands and woods. His general philosophy was inappropriate to a sparsely settled colony with a plentiful supply of land. He assumed that by restricting the amount of land put into the hands of the colonists, the government could elevate the worth of the land and foster its development. He favoured high rents, believing that they would prevent greedy applicants from applying for more land than they could economically use. His philosophy brought him into conflict with the local land commissions. Delays of months or even years were not uncommon because of D'Escury's having requested reassessments which cut into the time of the landdrosts. Frequently the deadlock

35. Duly, British Land Policy, pp.49, 52, and Botha, pp.94 - 96.
36. LBD 24 Swellendam Land Reports 1827, preamble to reports upon lands.
between D'Escury and the district official had to be broken by the governor. There was also tension between D'Escury and the governor, Lord Charles Somerset, who sanctioned large grants of land to prominent people such as Sir John Truter without the requests being put into the hands of the inspector. D'Escury was dismissed in 1827. 38

Farmers were unwilling and slow to convert their places to perpetual quitrent as loan farm tenure was secure, and the surveys for conversion were costly. The first conversion to take place was in the Cape District in 1815. 39 In the Swellendam district, the first perpetual quitrent grants were made in 1817 when 17 were sanctioned. In the ten years from 1817 to D'Escury's dismissal in 1827, a total of 326 grants were approved for Swellendam. 40

Following the commission of inquiry into the Somerset regime, a number of important reforms were introduced and a board of commissioners for lands was formed on 13 November 1828 consisting of the treasurer and accountant-general, the auditor-general and the surveyor-general, Major C.C. Michell. 41 The land board did little to improve and regulate the issuing of land and nor did they have power to take final action - matters still had to be referred to the governor for approval. 42 The first Cape land board came to an end in 1834 when it was discovered on the death of the treasurer and accountant-general, J.W. Stoll, that he had

39. Ibid., p.68.
40. LBD 21 - 26 Swellendam Land Reports, 1817 - 1863. The figures were obtained by counting the request forms. In many cases one form combined a request for the original loan farm as well as a piece or pieces of adjoining government land.
41. LBD Swellendam Land Reports, Inventory 1/4/2, preamble.
42. Duly, British Land Policy, pp.101 - 104.
expropriated £15 000 from the treasury. From 1826 to 1834 a further 268 conversions to perpetual quitrent in the Swellendam district had been registered.

During the reshuffle under Sir Benjamin D'Urban, the second Cape land board was created. It was a new institution, an agency solely within the surveyor-general's office. This was the Cape's first land department made up of a staff of professionals who were allowed to act on their own and it operated from 1835 to 1844. Table 1 on page 25 shows that during this period a further 302 conversions to quitrent were registered in the Swellendam district.

The land reports are not necessarily complete and some requests for conversion may have been lost or misplaced. But according to these documents, a total of 948 conversions were made to perpetual quitrent in the Swellendam district between 1817 and 1863. By far the majority of these had been registered by 1844, that is 896. In fact, by 1839, 867 conversions had been made which is an indication that by the start of the period under study most of the Overberg farmers had the title deeds to their farms. It must be remembered that although these documents are filed under Swellendam, by 1863 the Swellendam district had been greatly modified and four new districts had been created within its original precincts. (Caledon 1839, Riversdale 1848, Bredasdorp 1855 and Robertson 1858.) Below is a table setting out the number of conversions for each year.

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44. LBD 21 - 26 Swellendam Land Reports. Figures obtained by counting request forms.
Table 1. Number of conversions of loan farms to perpetual quitrent in the Swellendam district, 1817 - 1863.46

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Conversions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1862</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

TOTAL: 948

46. The number of request forms in the Swellendam Land Reports was counted. In many cases one form contained a request for conversion of the original loan farm to perpetual quitrent as well as a request for a piece or pieces of adjoining government ground. The above figures do not agree with those in the Blue Books as every individual grant of land is taken into consideration in the official figures.
In 1832 an attempt was made by the British government to standardise the land systems of Canada, Australia and South Africa. On 17 May of that year the Government Gazette announced that henceforth the colonial land system was to operate under the spirit of the Ripon regulations which had been framed by the colonial office. All further land alienation was to be by public auction at an upset price. No more grants were to be given in perpetual quitrent. These regulations were not enforced until 1843/44 as the land board was too busy coping with the backlog in requests for quitrent farms. On 15 March 1844, the Cradock regulations of 1813 and the reformed regulations of 1828 came to an end.47

The Ripon regulations were partly an attempt to raise revenue from the sale of crown lands. By 1844, in the Overberg, there was little crown land and what was available was generally poor mountain or coastal dune land. It was often difficult for surveyors to locate these areas and farmers who had been using them, illegally, for years were unwilling to buy them, but no one could effectually prevent these lands from being used. By 1854 when the Cape was granted a representative parliament, the unsuitability of the Ripon code had been realized and parliament urged a return to the perpetual quitrent system which was done by the Act of 1860.48

The size of farms in the Overberg during the period under study varied considerably from area to area and by the end of the period (c.1872) very few farms retained the original circular shape. Reference to Map 4 which is the first detailed survey map of a large part of the Overberg (unfortunately a similar map is not available for Swellendam)

48. Ibid., p.183.
gives a reliable representation of the subdivision of land. Although the map was completed after the period under study, it is undoubtedly a reflection of a situation that had been developing for decades.

The map shows that in the vicinity of the Sout River (spelt Zout), a block of about eight circular to almost circular farms remained. It is also noticeable that the farms in the Caledon district were smaller than those in the Bredasdorp area. In the strandveld particularly, the farms remained large. This is chiefly attributable to natural conditions and the smaller farms of the Caledon area indicate the superior fertility of its shales and a more reliable rainfall. It is not clear when the concept of circular farms with a radius of half-an-hour’s walk developed. It had never been legal and the British government refrained from confirming that each farmer was entitled to the full extent of a circular farm because there were many farms which could not be extended to an hour in diameter without injury to other places. Only on the completion of accurate surveys did it emerge that many farmers were occupying much less than the supposed 3 000 morgen, and yet the amount of land was perfectly adequate. A diagrammatic representation of an earlier survey map effected in 1825 of the Sout River area, (see Fig.1) shows that even by this date many farmers did not have a completely circular farm with 3 000 morgen.

In the Caledon ward, of 25 quitrent grants registered between 1824 and 1846, farm size ranged from 167 morgen to 2 991 morgen. In the Riviersonderend and Goudini wards, grants went up to 3 800 morgen while in the strandveld grants were much larger. In the Zoetendals Valley ward,

49. Van der Merwe, pp.101, 102.
FIG. 1 Plan represents the surveys effected by land surveyor W.H. Hopley in August and September 1825 in the District of Swellendam.
there was a grant of 6 774 morgen, and in the Elim area, one of 9 866 morgen. 50

According to the Blue Books, the whole of the original Swellendam district was estimated to be 7 616 square miles. By converting this to acres and dividing by the total number of quitrent registrations between 1817 and 1863, that is 948, one obtains the average size for farms for the whole district. The figure obtained is 5 141,6 acres or 2 448,3 morgen. At the end of the nineteenth century 5 000 acres (about 2 400 morgen) was still considered the minimum area required for the maintenance of a family in most parts of the Colony. 51 By 1863, when the last quitrent requests were registered in the Overberg, and probably long before, the area already had what was considered an optimum population. With the exception of infertile mountain land and small, scattered and, in many cases, unidentified blocks of crown land, unoccupied land was scarce.

Although the whole of the Overberg enjoyed a fairly uniform climate, there were certain prime areas and this was chiefly determined by the presence of water. The pioneers of the area followed water courses wherever possible and it was natural that the Riviersonderend valley would attract permanent settlement. Lichtenstein commented as early as 1803 that on leaving Genadendal they travelled along the widespread valley of the Riviersonderend. He found the countryside fertile and pleasant and there were many neat farms with the lands well cultivated. 52 Some three decades later J.W.D. Hoodie commented on the fertility of the land and the presence of running streams along the mountains between

50. 1/CAL 5/1/2/3 Civil Commissioner Caledon, Return of Places in the Division of Caledon, 1856 – 1859.
Genadendal and Swellendam, which formed a "striking contrast" to the aridity of the intervening pasture grounds.  

The writer, E.H.Burrows, speaks of the trekboer's ambition being a strip of land either in the Sweetmilk valley (along the Riviersonderend) or near the Grootvadersbosch skirting the foothills of the Langeberg near Swellendam. These areas were considered the "choicest plums" of the Overberg. In these areas all kinds of grain and pulse could be grown without artificial irrigation, although for fruit trees and some vegetables, a running stream was necessary. In circa 1848, an English immigrant to the Eastern Cape, George Nicholson, who had experienced the drought, locusts and hail of the Graaff-Reinet district, regarded the Swellendam district as "the best district in the Colony for a settler to locate in with a view to profit if he had sufficient capital". Almost every valley in this area had extensive tracts fit for the plough and all kinds of garden fruits grew well. Not all areas were equally well adapted for pasturage and cultivation. Where grazing was good, the soil was dry and springs scarce. Although much of the strandveld was well suited to the Merino sheep, there were many areas without permanent water, and rainfall was less than near the mountains. Compared with the rest of South Africa, however, the whole of the Overberg was, from an agricultural point of view, a favoured area, and during the nineteenth century was to develop more intensified agricultural activities than many other areas of the Colony.

It has been mentioned above that by 1863 when the last quitrent grants in the Overberg were registered, the area was

probably already supporting an optimum population with the average size of farms being about 2,400 morgen. What is not revealed in the above figures is that a farm of this size may have been supporting more than one proprietor. Boer families were large and according to the Dutch law of succession, property both real and personal had to be divided equally among all the children. To the Boer the possession of land was the hall-mark of social status and influence, and when he could no longer obtain new land by trekking to unoccupied territory it was only possible to maintain the position of the family as members of the landowning class by the subdivision of the land already in the family's possession. A certain amount of subdivision was not injurious, for as Teenstra had noted in circa 1822, the rapidly increasing population would ultimately necessitate greater exertion on the part of the farmer, and a more stringent economy and more intensive cultivation. In fertile parts of the world, with nearby markets, sub-division of land may be a perfectly economic adjustment, and the economic historian, D.M.A. Goodfellow, believes that on the whole the process of sub-division in the south-western Cape was beneficial and led to better farming. It is quite clear, however, that in some areas sub-division was carried to uneconomic lengths which led to hardship, particularly in poor years. A desire for land rather than ideology and dissatisfaction with British rule was the main reason for the migration of a substantial number of farmers from the Swellendam district between 1836 and 1838. Although the the poor white problem never reached serious proportions

58. Knowles, p.41.
59. Teenstra, p.344.
61. See below, p.36.
in the Overberg, it was probably during these years that the phenomenon of the bywoner (sharecropper or sub-farmer) began to make its appearance. Descendants of farmers whose portion of land was too small to make a living cultivated the land of more prosperous farmers, giving up a share of the crop in payment.

Early in the period under study, the field cornet of Swart River (near Caledon) complained that he could not give an opgaaf (statistical return) of the farms and ground as the people themselves could not sort out what they owned. Eight to nine farmers who owned one farm could not say how much ground they each had.\textsuperscript{62} This was no isolated incident and an official return of the farms in the Caledon and Bredasdorp districts shows that of 331 quitrent grants registered between 1814 and 1848, only 129 had a single proprietor. Of the balance, 185 had from two to four proprietors and 37 had five or more proprietors. The total number of proprietors for these 331 farms was 804. On an average, therefore, each farm had 2.4 owners.\textsuperscript{63}

The pressure that was being placed on land by the early thirties is also abundantly evident in the Swellendam land reports. There are numerous instances of a farm having to support more than one adult male. This is revealed in the comments of the land commissioners on the requests for conversion to perpetual quitrent. A few examples may suffice:

David de Villiers and two others - 4 418 morgen, granted 1 November 1832, "the family.... is large, and their joint stock is more than the place will support..."

\textsuperscript{62} 1/SWM 11/43 Field Cornet Otto to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 24 October 1838.

\textsuperscript{63} 1/CAL 5/1/2/3 Civil Commissioner Caledon, Return of Places in the Division of Caledon, 1856 - 1859.
Four Janse van Rensburg sons - 2 871 morgen, granted 1 November 1837, "the scantiness and sourness of the pasture occasions the calves to get sick .......

Louis Fourie and two others - 1 607 morgen, granted 15 October 1839, "scanty pasture, very difficult to rear cattle..."

Jacobus Cronje and two others - 1 686 morgen, granted 1 November 1832, "by no means adequate ...." 

Nine children of Frans Cronje - 2 900 morgen, granted 1 November 1832, "the farm cannot support their stock...."

Samuel Odendal and two others - 5 960 morgen, granted 1 November 1833, "their place cannot support the stock....."

Carel Lots - 624 morgen, granted 1 September 1831 "he is a poor man with a numerous family...."  

It was becoming increasingly important to make use of every bit of land. The pieces of government ground for which farmers were applying to increase their grazing were described variously as "rocky and precipitous", "barren sand hills", "destitute vegetation", "marshy", or "interspersed with sour heath and reed".  

With regard to the sub-division that was taking place, the civil commissioner for Caledon reported in 1860:

64. LBD 21 - 26 Swellendam Land Reports. These are comments on request forms for conversion to quitrent.  
65. LBD 21 - 26 Swellendam Land Reports. Comments regarding quality of land applied for.
The subdivision and sale of farms (once large enough for a farmer to do well upon) into small patches of a few hundred acres each (barely sufficient for a family to raise bread for their own use), is another evil which is apparent, and which for many years past has been on the increase. In many cases families grow up, and small plots of ground are either sold or allotted to members of it, and upon these they struggle on, with perhaps an increasing family, seldom or never able to produce anything beyond what is absolutely necessary for a bare subsistence.66

The somewhat ludicrous position that had developed through sub-division is illustrated in advertisements for the sale of land. In one example, M. Janse van Rensburg of Dassen Klip in the lower Duiwenhoks area was selling:

Quarter share of Dassen Klip (2 530 morgen); quarter share of perpetual quitrent land (2 159 morgen); eighth part in three pieces of quitrent land known as Wagen Drift (4 076 morgen); eighth part of Kilands Drift (1 583 morgen); half part of Mossel Fontein (2 938 morgen) and sixteenth part of quitrent land (3 080 morgen.)67

Another advertisement reveals sub-division into even smaller parts. Peter C. de Jager who was leaving the Swellendam district wished to sell one-half share of Kransfontein, half a share of Watergat, one forty-eighth share of Klipfontein and one twenty-fourth share in an adjoining piece of quitrent land.68

68. Government Gazette, Advertisement, 2 October 1840.
The persons who were selling this land had not necessarily inherited all the various sections themselves. Entrepreneurs such as Joseph and Thomas Barry and J.D.K. Reitz bought out smaller farmers who found their inherited portion uneconomical and companies were formed for their management with the entrepreneur providing capital for investment in Merinos. By 1838 the firm of Reitz, Breda and Joubert held about 830,000 morgen with title deeds to 30 different farms or parts thereof.

It was not until 1874 that the Roman Dutch law of sub-division was legally abolished.

There can be no doubt that little land was available in the Overberg and population figures show that it was more densely settled than many other parts of the Colony. It is very difficult to form an accurate impression of population density from the figures given in the Cape of Good Hope Blue Books, because not only are most of the figures estimates, but magisterial districts were continually changing in size and the figures given were often representative of vastly differing geographical areas which happened to fall within the same magisterial boundaries. For example, the Swellendam district in 1838 included the more densely settled Overberg as well as the very sparsely settled Karoo area to the north of the Langeberg. A few comparisons, however, are revealing. In 1838 the population density figure for Swellendam was 2.2 per square mile while those for Worcester and Graaff-Reinet were .43 and 1.1 respectively. If the figure for Swellendam could have been calculated on the Overberg density alone, the

69. I/SWM Civil Commissioner Swellendam to ?, 26 October 1864.
figure would have been a good deal higher. The figures for Swellendam, Bredasdorp and Caledon in 1872 enable one to gain a more accurate picture of the situation in the Overberg itself. Swellendam is given as 6.64 per square mile, Caledon as 3.47 and Bredasdorp as 5.82. The figure for Caledon is suspect, for a glance at Map 4 will show how much smaller the farms in the Caledon area were in circa 1880 and this definitely suggests that the figure should be higher than that for Bredasdorp. One cannot draw accurate conclusions about the increase in density in the Overberg between 1838 and 1872 because the figures for the two dates are not comparable. The increase must have been significant, however. By 1872 the Worcester area was still only supporting 1.42 persons per square mile and Graaff-Reinet 2.75. Population density for the whole Colony on the eve of being granted responsible government was 2.82 persons per square mile. The Overberg was thus well above the average.

Where there is ever greater subdivision, overcrowding and exhaustion of resources, a situation of over-population develops which can lead to the Malthusian checks of famine and starvation. An anomalous situation existed in the Overberg, for while by 1838 pressure on land was so great in certain areas that a large number of families left the Swellendam district, the population continued to increase, and by 1872 there was no famine and starvation, but a

73. W.M. Macmillan gives population density figures for 1911 which substantiate the belief that Caledon supports a denser population than Swellendam and Bredasdorp. He gives Caledon as 10 per square mile, Bredasdorp as 6 and Swellendam as 7.4. See The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development.


thriving agricultural community. It was primarily the change to the wool sheep that made it possible for greater intensification to succeed in the Overberg.

Land pressure in the Overberg was reaching critical proportions by 1838. The area was successfully producing grain, but markets for produce remained small, unreliable and expensive to reach. It was not worth cultivating more land for grain production. The market for mutton was equally erratic. There was no shortage of meat and local markets were limited. With the growing population it was clear that future generations of farmers would not be able to maintain the stock necessary for a living.

Although by 1838 wool was proving its economic worth and may have been sufficient incentive to the struggling farmer to stay, an important event in South African history at this time, the Great Trek, relieved much of the pressure that was building up on the land. Although it is popularly believed that there was no great migration from as far south as Swellendam, official records show that economic pressure was the incentive for a very significant removal from this area. If one bears in mind that 948 quitrent farms had been registered for the whole of the Overberg by 1863 with an average size that was considered the minimum for survival in the Colony, and that this accounted for probably all the productive land, it is revealing to find that 359 adult males, mostly with large families, left the Swellendam district between 1828 and 1843. It has already been shown that on average each farm had 2.4 proprietors and many had a great deal more than this. Therefore it must not be assumed that with the removal of 359 farmers that an equal number of farms was vacated. The great majority of these men were already impoverished bywowers.

77. See section on grain farming.
The figures below show the exact numbers who left the Swellendam district in each year.

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Some significance can be attached to the fact that the register in which the above figures are recorded was begun in 1828. Ordinance 50, which gave coloured and white equal legal status, was passed in the same year. The Ordinance was the culmination of the work of the philanthropist of the London Missionary Society, Dr John Philip, whose activities in the Colony aroused a great deal of opposition from the white, and particularly the Dutch colonists. It is possible that the government was expecting a migration of colonists in protest and wished to keep a record of those leaving. There is a temptation to blame Ordinance 50 but on closer examination it will be found that of the 29 who left in 1828, only seven went to the Eastern Cape which was the springboard for emigration from the Colony (five to Graaff-Reinet and two to Uitenhage) - the rest went to Western Cape areas such as Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Worcester and also to George. One cannot thus draw the conclusion that dissatisfaction with Ordinance 50 was responsible for this migration. In 1829, only five of the twenty who left went to Graaff-Reinet and Uitenhage. Many were moving to the large Worcester district which was not as densely settled as the Overberg. A desire for land and not ideology and dissatisfaction with British rule appears to be a more likely cause for their departure from the Overberg.

78. 1/SNM 12/77 Register of Requests to leave Swellendam District 1828 - 1847.
People continued to leave the Swellendam district in fairly noteworthy numbers after 1829 but a marked increase is noticeable in 1837 and 1838. In 1837, 23 of the 32 who left went to Graaff-Reinet and Colesberg, and in 1838, 67 of the 80 who left went to Colesberg, Graaff-Reinet and Uitenhage. As it was in these areas that the trekkers gathered before heading farther into the interior, there can be little doubt that they planned to join up with the emigrants, although they tended to be secretive and non-committal about their intentions when questioned by officials. Notes made by the civil commissioner leave little doubt that the farmers leaving the Swellendam district were doing so in the hope of obtaining more land elsewhere. They owned very little stock and they had large families. Their only hope lay in emigrating. The civil commissioner's comments about those leaving are elucidating:

Has no stock himself - takes his family, has eight children,

Takes his wife and seven children - 45 oxen and breeding cattle,

Takes his wife and six children - 60 oxen and breeding cattle,

Takes his wife and five children - takes only waggon and two horses,

Takes his wife, waggon and span of oxen.

Wife and six children, waggon and oxen. 78

The correspondence of Harry Rivers, civil commissioner for Swellendam, provides further evidence of the state of the trekkers and of their intentions. He mentions issuing "certificates of removal" for those with the "supposed

79. 1/SWM 12/77 Register of Requests to leave Swellendam District 1828 - 1847.

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intention of emigrating beyond the Land Boundaries of the Colony". With very few exceptions they were married and accompanied by their wives and children. They had wagons and draught oxen but no other stock. Only two are listed as being men of landed property; the others were "poor"; some young men with young children. One group that left had 100 wagons and 1500 draught oxen, but "no other stock". According to Rivers, the increase in emigration in 1837 and 1838 was directly attributable to the massacre of the trekkers in Zulu territory and the subsequent defeat of Dingane and the prospect of obtaining land in Natal. Dr William Robertson, the Dutch Reformed Minister of Swellendam, in writing to John Fairbairn, the editor of the South African Commercial Advertiser, in 1836, stated that the colonists had been given "the most extravagant notions" of the fertility of the soil and the beauty of the climate in Natal. William Dunn, the customs controller at Port Beaufort, throws a good deal of light on the circumstances surrounding the emigration of Dutch farmers. He claimed to have had twenty years experience in dealing with them. He stated that he believed that only one reason predominated for their trekking. Their children had formerly been supplied with farms, gratis, by government. The land was now generally distributed and they resisted sending their children into service, as they would be exposing them to hardships which they themselves had never encountered. Furthermore, the situation in Natal held out exciting prospects. Two months after the defeat of Dingane at Blood River, Dunn wrote:

All have served in the Caffer Wars (sic) and the account they now publish of killing 6 000 Zoolas with scarcely any loss (however impossible) the little courage that they think it requires to take up an advanced position the same as their Fore

80. CO 2776 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 12 May 1838.
Fathers (sic) and their contempt of people of colour qualifies the enterprise and they even delude themselves with mixing up Religion in this undertaking. 82

Dunn added that the number of children in Boer families was enormous and they either had to practice agriculture (which they would not), trek or starve.

The above information shows that there was a definite land shortage in parts of the Overberg. The writer, S.D. Neumark, claimed that a desire for new land was the result of a scarcity relative to the human and animal population. He maintains that there is not much evidence to prove that there was actually pressure of humans or of animal population on the land. 83 This may have been so in the Eastern Cape, but the foregoing evidence can leave little doubt of the pressures on land in the Swellendam district. Opinions still differ on the lack of ground being a cause of the Great Trek. Some writers believe that the age old land hunger was no explanation for the "splinternuwe Voortrekker-verskynsel". C.F.J. Muller maintains that no conclusive statement about land shortage as a cause of the Trek can be made, but he believes that it must have played a fairly important role with some farmers. 84 Although other reasons, such as the colour prejudice and religion which Dunn mentions, may have been adduced by the trekkers from the Overberg, the main reason for their removal was an urgent need for more land in order to continue the lifestyle to which they had grown accustomed. Further evidence of the pressures on farm land was the frequent occurrence of lamsiekte which was closely related to overgrazing and which will receive more attention in a later section.

82. CO 2784 Dunn to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 20 February 1839.
84. C.F.J. Muller, Die Britse Owerheid en die Sroot Trek, pp.54, 55 and C.F.J. Muller, Die Oorsprong van die Groot Trek, pp. 183 - 185.
If the Merino sheep had not by 1838 already proved that it could provide the farmer with a highly profitable crop of wool on land that had formerly raised only mutton sheep and an uneconomic grain crop, it is highly probable that many more farmers would have had to leave the Overberg in search of land. Although wool provided an attractive income, it required a great deal more effort than raising only mutton sheep, and possibly those who were accustomed to a living from herding only, preferred the option of trekking. Those who remained accepted the challenge of better and more intensive farming.

The availability of land in a rapidly growing agricultural economy encourages speculation. By about 1840 it had become clear that wool farming could be a highly lucrative business in the Colony and many British investors were attracted by the prospects of rapid profits. Land speculation reached more serious proportions in the Eastern Province where a great deal more land was available, but land prices in the Western Province were also affected by the wool boom. Because less land was available, there was less opportunity for wild speculation and this is one of the important reasons why the Overberg suffered less than the Eastern Cape during the economic collapse of the sixties. The extent to which British investors obtained a foothold in the Overberg will be examined below.

The Cape became a permanent British colony at a time of much unemployment in Britain following the close of the Napoleonic wars. The Colony, like Canada, Australia and New Zealand, offered prospects for emigrants although it was not greatly favoured and the numbers that came to the Cape were small in comparison with those that went to the other colonies. The evidence below shows that limited numbers of British immigrants became landowners in the Overberg. It is possible

85. De Kiewiet, pp.70, 71.
that some of these settlers obtained perpetual quitrent grants from government, but it is impossible to tell from the official returns whether they were government grants or whether they had been purchased from former owners. However, of the 331 quitrent places registered for the Caledon - Bredasdorp district between 1814 and 1848, only 23 of the 804 proprietors had English-sounding names. Of these 23 British immigrants, eleven settled in the wards of Palmiet and Bot River which today is the Grabouw-Elgin area and which is excluded from this study. Thus only twelve immigrant farmers obtained farms in the rest of the Caledon - Bredasdorp district between 1814 and 1848.

With one or two exceptions, the names of these immigrant farmers occur regularly in the history of the district and despite their small numbers, and the relatively short time that most of them spent in the area, they played a leading role in the introduction of Merino sheep and had an influence on the district which was disproportionate to their numbers. They evidently recognised the potential of the Overberg long before wool exports reached the heights of the fifties. In the Swart River ward, for example, William and Daniel Birmingham had *Uitvlugt* registered in their names in 1829; Thomas Butterworth Bayley by 1831 had *Elzieskloof* and *Hartebeestekraal* (which was renamed *The Oaks*), John Rainier had *Ziekenhuis* and *Droogekloof* by 1831 and Herbert Vigne appears to have obtained the farm *Greyton* at about the same period, although no date is given. Bayley and Rainier also had land in the Riviersonderend ward. In the Caledon ward, William Shaw by 1831 owned three farms - *Diepe Gat, Tryntjies River* and *Hartebeestekraal*, and by 1833 William Holmes Dutton was the owner of *Roedebloemskraal*. In the strandveld wards of Uilenkraal and Zoetendals Valley, Cholmeley and Westcott Morris had become extensive landholders by 1831 as did Matthew John Blake in 1837 and 1839. An even earlier
immigrant farmer was Robert Stanford, (later Sir) who was granted Zylvermynbosch in 1816 and subsequently various other pieces of land in the strandveld near the present town of Stanford. The Swellendam land reports contain evidence of William Dickson having bought Koude River in the Zoetendals Valley ward in 1839 and William Henderson bought Tyger Haek on the Riviersonderend in 1838. Both were also granted extensive pieces of marginal government land as they were investing large sums in woolled sheep and other stock. John Malcolm Stewart was farming with 1 400 Saxon and Merino sheep at Quartel River near Caledon by 1839. In the Swellendam district, Benjamin Moodie who arrived in 1817 with his settler mechanics, obtained land at Grootvadersbosch near Swellendam and Joseph Barry was, by 1834, buying up shares in several farms in the Swellendam district as well as government waste land.

T. Kirk claims that it was after 1840 that a new class of wealthy immigrant started to arrive from Britain with capital for investment in sheep farms. There is evidence in the Moodie correspondence that the interest in investment in sheep farms in the Colony began five years earlier. In 1835 sheep farming was considered likely to be a "good thing" and anyone seriously contemplating such a venture was wise to purchase land then, that is in 1835. By 1838 the interest

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86. 1/CAL 5/1/2/3 Civil Commissioner Caledon, Return of Places in the Division of Caledon, 1814 - 1848.
87. LBD 27 Swellendam Land Reports 1820 - 1845, requests of Dickson, 25 December 1838 and Henderson, 27 December 1838.
88. S.A.C.A., Advertisement, 18 December 1839.
89. Burrows, Overberg Outspan, p.220.
in the Colony had aroused a speculative mania. The merchant W. Venning in London wrote to Moodie (presumably Benjamin) in October 1838:

We have letters today from the Cape to the 28 August. (sic) The rage for speculation there amounts to a mania. A Bank started by the Dutch, several new companies, Marine Insurance are much in favour and command a high premium before a single pound is paid up. The "Cape of Good Hope Bank" share, £33 paid up, have been sold as high as £95.93

By 1840 the Colony was offering favourable prospects for intending immigrants. Among the Moodie correspondence is a letter from a certain Mr Guthrie in England who had a nephew who was desirous of "pushing his fortunes" as a settler in the Colony. An elder brother was prepared to provide £500 either to be invested in land or flocks - with "patronage" from Benjamin Moodie.94 Another letter gives evidence of a John Burnett and his wife who were "going out to the Cape to push their fortune".95

Only a very few British investors appear to have acquired land in the Overberg after circa 1840. One example is Captain Duncan Buchanan who purchased the farm Rotterdam near Swellendam in about 1840 to engage in farming with Merinos. H. and C. Taylor also obtained land in the Swellendam area at about this time. They purchased the farms Bontebokskloof and Compagnies River where they

93. Ibid. A29/123, Venning to Moodie, 26 October 1838.
94. Ibid. A29/126, Guthrie to Hamilton Ross, 19 March 1840.
95. Ibid. A29/128, Guthrie to Moodie, 2 February 1841.
produced fine Merino wool until 1864. It is likely that these investors in sheep farming paid high prices for their land. This is substantiated by the fact that many of them left as the depression of the sixties intensified. More attention will be given to land prices later. Two maps in A.J. Christopher's *Crown Lands of British South Africa 1835 - 1914* reveal how little land was available in the Overberg after 1835. Map 1.1 shows that no new land grants were made between 1835 and 1844 and Map 1.2 shows minimal land sales between 1844 and 1856. Many, if not most of the English immigrants left during the drought and depression of the sixties and this confirms the belief that many of their purchases were speculative in nature. The *Overberg Courant* reported in 1861 that many English farmers had sold out and were retiring or removing to occupy themselves in other pursuits.

The infrequent occurrence of advertisements for farm sales in the *Government Gazette* and *South African Agricultural News*, suggests that farms were not often available for private sale in the Overberg. The occasional advertisements in the press emphasized the highly desirable nature of these farms. Wording such as "an excellent sheep farm", "that very desirable estate ... well known as one of the best sheep walks in the colony", "they are well known as excellent sheep farms well adapted for Merino sheep" accompanied the advertisements and such farms plainly required substantial capital.

If a newcomer to the Overberg was unable to purchase a farm,
he was unlikely to obtain satisfaction with a grant of crown land. Even by 1838 the crown land in all three districts must have been limited although surveys had not been completed and it was almost impossible to identify appropriated and non-appropriated crown land. Once surveys were completed, it emerged that most of the crown land was inaccessible mountain land or poor quality dune land which was used by farmers as extra grazing. In 1858 the civil commissioner of Caledon was approached by the immigration commissioners to report on the availability of crown land in the Caledon area. A Scotsman, Joseph Carruthers, believed that the Cheviot sheep which did well on mountain land in Scotland would do well on the sour mountain areas of the Overberg. He tried to promote the breed as part of an immigration scheme devised at a time when the governor, Sir George Grey, was attempting to encourage large land proprietors to receive small farmers and agricultural labourers upon their estates, who would buy or lease a portion of their land and share in bringing it under cultivation or in stocking it upon mutually advantageous terms. The civil commissioner reported that there were about 100,000 acres (about 48,000 morgen) of mountain crown land in the division of Caledon and he believed that if the whole was measured off into farms of from 1,500 to 3,000 acres, they would meet with a ready sale. Nothing came of the scheme, however, and H.M. Robertson believes that it was perhaps fortunate that young Scots farmers were not persuaded to buy the mountain tops and emigrate with their Cheviot flocks. The heaths of the Cape mountains have no food value owing to the phosphate-deficient soils in contrast to the Calluna vulgaris of the Scottish Highlands.

99. Robertson, pp.393,394.
100. 1/CAL 5/1/2/3 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 4 October 1858.
101. Robertson, pp.393, 394.
102. Wallace, p.82.
The crown land that was available in the Overberg was of more value to the long-settled farmer as most of it was considered waste land and was only valuable as an adjunct of an economically viable unit. Until these lands were officially surveyed and charted and either sold or leased, it was impossible to prevent people from using them and they thus provided no revenue. By 1862 it was clear that the Cheviot experiment had failed but the amount of crown land in the Caledon district was "considerable" and if put up to auction was likely to realise good prices. A return dated 4 October 1867 shows that there was a total of 53,000 morgen in the various mountain ranges and 27,000 morgen in the strandveld wards of Uilenkraal and Goudini. The civil commissioner recommended that it be leased rather than sold, however, as there would be difficulty in pointing out each lot. This was likely to cause endless disputes with neighbours. There was a fair demand among farmers for these lands for extra grazing and by 1872 most of them had been leased under the provisions of Act No. 19 of 1864 for periods of up to 21 years and were yielding an annual rental of about £300.

By 1870 in the Swellendam district there were apparently only a "few lots" of crown land available and they were not large enough to form independent farms. Not much interest had been shown by the local farmers in leasing them (possibly because

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103. CO 2847 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 7 April 1848
    and 1/CAL 5/1/2/3 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 4 October 1858.
104. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 4 October 1867 and Return respecting Crown Waste Land in Division of Caledon, 4 October 1867.
105. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1862.
the Colony had experienced a decade of drought and depression) and the civil commissioner recommended that they be sold off as they were not providing much revenue.108

The amount of crown land available in the Bredasdorp district by 1870 was equally limited. In that year a total of only 6,707 morgen was leased for periods of 21 years under the Act of 1864. 109

It has emerged that there was little unsettled or unused land in the Overberg during the nineteenth century. Inability to obtain land prevented an influx of speculative newcomers and although this may have prevented an inflow of valuable capital to the area, in the long run it was to the advantage of the Overberg as it limited the amount of land that changed hands at unrealistic prices. When depression arrived, the Overberg was in a far better situation than the Eastern Cape where speculation had been rife. In the vicinity of Graaff-Reinet and Port Elizabeth, land changed hands at absurd prices, with a "speculative mania" being reached by 1848.110 S. Dubow cites an example of a farm that was bought for £900 being sold a few years later for £5,190.111 A piece of land near Port Elizabeth, which had cost £22 10s thirty years previously, was sold in 1859 for £500.112 Such prices were vastly inflated and did not yield realistic returns on capital investment, particularly after world wool prices dropped drastically and there was no longer a demand for the poor quality and poorly got up wools of the Eastern Cape.

Land prices in the Western Cape were affected by the wool boom but fewer speculators had the opportunity of obtaining land purely because it was not available. Charles Bell, the colonial secretary, commented on the Swellendam land reports in 1845 that the "present market value in freehold afford[ed] no criterion of the just quitrent to be imposed..." Land had, at the height of the boom, reached the "fictitious" value of £2 10s a morgen. Writing in 1864 when there was widespread depression, the civil commissioner for Caledon stated that the price of land had dropped to £1 per morgen. This was considered a "reasonable rate" which would enable purchasers to obtain a margin of profit on their farming ventures whereas their predecessors had "bought so dear that they worked only to bring up the interest of the capital invested". The high price paid for land caused a number of insolvencies during the sixties as the land could not provide the return required on such inflated prices. While there was not much farm land available, the speculative spirit present in a thriving wool farming area was apparent in the villages. In 1854 when prospects from wool farming were reaching a peak, 25 erven were put up in the village of Caledon. The upset price was £5 and all the lots were sold at from £10 to as much as £69 15s, the latter being considered a "high" price. In the same year, when the speculative spirit was obviously high, the proprietors Van der Byl and Denyssen who owned land on either side of the Breede River near the river port of Malagas had this land surveyed into 421 building lots with adjacent common

114. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1864.
116. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1865.
117. 1/CAL 5/1/2/2 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Surveyor-general, 25 October 1853 and Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 25 February 1854.
pasturage. The belief that such a large number of people could make a living on small pieces of land purely because of proximity to a partially navigable river demonstrates to what an extent expectations had been raised. Agriculturally the land could not support so dense a settlement and industries and other urban development were almost non-existent. Malagas never developed into the flourishing river port that had been envisaged. The division of the farm Bushman’s Kloof near Genadendal into lots by Herbert Vigne at much the same time also reflects the belief that money was to be made by engendering village development. The plan did not turn out as advantageously as expected and by 1869, the town which had been named Greyton was deserted and had no more than five or six families.

It would appear that it was in about 1862 when land prices in the Overberg began to plummet. Swellendam municipality found that certain land was unsaleable because of the "great depression" in the price of landed property. In 1864 the civil commissioner at Caledon reported that land had fallen very much in price within the last two years owing to general depression. The property market began to improve again by about 1866 and prices became more realistic. A farm of 2 625 morgen in the Bredasdorp district in 1870 was valued at £1 000 or about 8s per morgen and land between the Ratel and Buffeljachts Rivers sold for as little as 4s per morgen in 1869.

119. CCP i/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Granting Land in Freehold to Hottentots, 1856 and 1/CAL 5/1/2/6 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 20 May 1869.
120. CD 3037 Swellendam Municipality to Civil Commissioner, 7 October 1862.
121. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1864.
122. 1/SWM 14/9 Civil Commissioner Swellendam, Report for Blue Book, 28 January 1869 and 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 24 January 1868.
123. 1/BRE 6/6/1 Papers Relating to Erven, Document 935, 5 June 1869, signed P. Wodehouse.
By 1838 the Overberg was more densely settled than many other parts of the Colony. Most of the inhabitants were the original Dutch settlers and in many cases the land had been in one family for generations. Because the farmers had large families and because of the Dutch system of inheritance, pressure was being placed on the land and by 1838 it was becoming clear that it could not go on indefinitely supporting the progeny of farmers with grain and mutton production only. The trek to the interior alleviated the pressure somewhat when a large number of farmers left the Swellendam district during the thirties. By this time, however, wool had already proved its economic worth and by merely changing from the purely mutton sheep to the dual purpose Merino, farmers could increase their incomes considerably. It was difficult for British immigrants to obtain land in this part of the world and only those with considerable capital were able to do so.

As whites, Dutch and British, were not the only inhabitants of the Overberg, the following chapter will be devoted to an investigation into the distribution of the coloured population and the policies adopted with regard to land settlement and ownership by these people.
CHAPTER THREE

LAND AND POVERTY

On occupying the Cape permanently, the British government was left with little option but to endorse a situation of land ownership that had been developing for more than a century and a half. Whites had laid claim to large areas of land and until the spread was checked in the east by the Xhosa, their growing domination of the countryside had been but poorly disputed. The granting of farms in perpetual quitrent, placed on statute in 1813, signified that the British government approved white ownership. By 1872 the whites of the Overberg had emerged as a prosperous land-owning society and coloured proletarianisation was almost consummate.

In contrast to the French who, since the Revolution, had supported peasant ownership of land, the British government had since 1752 (and perhaps earlier) approved the system of enclosure in England. This, essentially, meant enclosing land so as to extinguish common rights over it, thus putting an end to all common grazing. The enclosure and engrossing (amalgamation) of land were regarded as part of a sensible

1. See R. Ross, "The Rise of the Cape Gentry," Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol. 9, No. 2, April, pp. 193, 208. As explained in the introduction, the terms landowners and landlords are used in preference to landed gentry.

2. As explained in the introduction, the term coloured is used in preference to Khoi, as by 1838 the varying admixtures of Khoi, slave, free black and white blood made it almost impossible to make an intelligible distinction between the progeny of the various elements, although the Census of 1865 still referred to "Hottentots", "Kafirs", and "Other", the latter being, presumably, the products of miscegenation.
and reasonable plan of agrarian improvement and acts for this purpose were passed at regular intervals up to 1869. Enclosure affected the poor commoner, or peasant, the most. It led, in places, to the eviction of whole villages and compelled their inhabitants either to seek employment elsewhere or to swell the army of vagrants. Even by the late seventeenth century it is estimated that there were 30,000 vagrants in England. A displaced rural population squatted on unused waste lands and many small peasants were forced into becoming wage-workers. The local demand for labour was mainly seasonal and many of the workers were intensely poor squatters. It has been estimated that 6,000,000 acres (about 2,800,000 morgen) of common pasture ground, once enclosed, gave rise to 5,000 private properties. A considerable number of former peasants had to look for other employment. Enclosures increased land usage through the adoption of new methods but they drastically curtailed access to land and the common rights of the rural poor who were gradually shut out from all personal and direct interest in the produce of the soil and were thrown wholly upon wages. In England, after the mid-eighteenth century, agriculture was increasingly regarded as an alternative investment for capital, with labour seen strictly for its productive potential. As a result of enclosure, which massed the lands in the hands of the English landlords - "those who could develop it best" - agriculture made rapid

developments, and capitalist class relations were developing as nowhere else.\textsuperscript{10} R. Brenner, writing on agrarian class structure in pre-industrial Europe, believes that it was the absence of property rights for the rural population which fostered the onset of real economic development in Britain while France lagged behind because land was left in the hands of peasants.\textsuperscript{11} Whatever the merits or demerits of enclosure, the historian E.P. Thompson, writing on the period of enclosures, argued:

\begin{quote}
Enclosure, when all the sophistications are allowed for, was plain enough use of class robbery, played according to fair rules of property and law, laid down by a parliament of property-owners and lawyers.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

In the light of the above, British policy towards land ownership at the Cape was merely a perpetuation of a philosophy already well entrenched in Britain. Land was the prerogative of the aristocracy and the gentry who had capital and incentive to make the best use of it, while the proletarianised peasant was to provide labour for wages.

As will be seen below, in 1838 there was still a certain amount of land in the Overberg settled by the hybridised Khoi who obtained permission to remain on the land, yet invariably quitrent deeds were either not issued or lost. A limited number of farms also passed into the hands of coloureds who were the offspring of white farmers. Where land had been legally willed to coloureds, the authorities were powerless to interfere, and yet in a white dominated society, official connivance at white encroachments were not unlikely. There was an incident, however, of strong official support for the right of coloured ownership to a farm

\begin{footnotes}
\item[11] Ibid., p.75.
\item[12] Cited in Dubow, p.83.
\end{footnotes}
in the Caledon district.¹³

Although the term coloured is used, there was a significant difference between those of predominantly Khoi blood and those with varying degrees of white parentage. The strong herding and pastoral instincts of the former were long in dying,¹⁴ and with diminishing land resources the colonial state could not provide them with the vast reserves capable of perpetuating their way of life. Large areas were required to continue the practice of transhumance, and gregarious, tribal habits militated against the success of limited land grants. A unit which might have supported one family failed to support the many squatters that tended to congregate on such a grant.

Although there were exceptions, by 1838 the proletarianisation of the majority of coloureds had been a fait accompli for more than half a century. P.J.van der Merwe believed that by the 1770s, when there were still many more pure Khoi, the majority were living on the farms of colonists¹⁵. J.S. Marais put the date somewhat later, claiming that by 1795 most of those who had remained in the Western Cape had been compelled to enter the service of farmers.¹⁶ More recent writers also acknowledge that by the start of the first British occupation (1785) the coloured community, which still had a strong Khoi element, had been

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¹³. See below, p. 71.
¹⁴. See R. Elphick and R. Shell, *Intergroup Relations: Khoikhoi, settlers, slaves and free blacks, 1652 - 1795*, Elphick and Gilliomee, {eds.}, 1st edition, p.156. The Khoi only gradually adopted white culture, and were slowly incorporated into the colonial economy and society. They, unlike the slaves who were emancipated in 1838, had a homogeneous culture and solidarity of family structure which remained relatively undisturbed.
incorporated as wage labourers in a white dominated society. Certainly by the turn of the century only a very few coloureds maintained an independent existence on lands that had not been claimed by white farmers. In 1812 the commission on circuit reported that "excepting the kraals at the Slange River in the district of Swellendam and the Hooge Kraal in the district of George, they [the Khoi] have not anywhere an independent subsistence" and are "spread far and near in the country in the service of farmers".

With the rise of missionary zeal at the end of the eighteenth century, it appeared that a practicable way of dealing with the problem of the landless remnants of Khoi tribes was to create mission stations where an attempt would be made to convert the nomadic pastoralists into agriculturists. The alternatives to settling at a mission station were either to find accommodation on the land of a farmer and be bound in service or to continue a nomadic life and be dubbed vagrants. It appears that well into the period under study a substantial number shifted as vagrants collecting "veldkos" or stealing the odd sheep and finding occasional succour at the mission stations. The refuge which the mission stations provided for a large number of coloureds who were not regularly employed created antagonism amongst the white landowners which led to an attempt in the forties and fifties to have the institutions broken up. Three mission stations featured prominently in the history of the Overberg and they deserve closer scrutiny. They were Genadendal and Elim, both Moravian missions, and Zuurbraak which was under the aegis of the London Missionary Society.

18. Tomlinson, p.16.
19. Marais, pp. 109, 123.
The first attempt at missionary work had been attempted by the Moravian, Georg Schmidt, who arrived in Cape Town in 1737. He first settled at a place called Hartebest's Kraal and from there he moved to a Khoi kraal, a remnant of the Chainouquas, on the Riviersonderend. He subsequently relocated six miles farther along the Riviersonderend at the entrance of the glen called Baviaanskloof, which became the site of the present Genadendal. Schmidt aroused ecclesiastical opposition from the established Dutch Reformed church and was obliged to return to Europe in 1743. Half a century elapsed before the Dutch East India Company once again gave permission for three Moravians, Marsveld, Schwinn and Kühnel, to re-establish the missionary effort at Genadendal in 1792. A document dated 1847 relates that the "Hottentots flock[ed] to them in great numbers for instruction [and] a native village soon sprang up, beside the missionary premises".20 Before the end of the century there were 1 200 Khoi at Genadendal. According to C.I. Latrobe, superintendent of the Moravian Missionary Society, Genadendal also attracted remnants of the Hessequa tribes.21

Genadendal was initially granted as a loan place by a resolution of the Council of Policy on 19 December 1792. The missionaries were merely granted permission to settle and work there and a request for a more secure title was refused.22 Genadendal was officially surveyed in 1814 for the first time 23 after Governor Cradock received instructions from Downing Street dated 20 December 1813 to

secure the missionaries from possible future ejectment or disturbance. Following this survey Genadendal’s ground was increased from 3 500 to 4 923 morgen and farmers who lost land in the transaction were compensated with grants elsewhere. Cradock did not grant a full title after the land had been surveyed, being opposed to a mortmain where the residents would lose the possibility of appeal to government and where government would lose the control which loan tenure still afforded it.

Population figures for Genadendal reveal that there was uncertainty as to the exact numbers living there. This is understandable as the inhabitants were free to come and go as they pleased and many were seasonal workers on surrounding farms. By the start of the nineteenth century the number was estimated at about 1 200, although the circuit judges of 1813 reported the number to be 1 157. The opgaaf for 1826 puts the number at 1 515. In 1838, before emancipation swelled the mission stations with liberated apprentices, Genadendal had 1 719 inhabitants but with the influx during the next two years it increased to 2 187, an increase of 468. By 1864 the station was supporting a population of 3 600 “mixed characters of all descriptions” and there

24. CCP 1/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots 1856, p.60.
30. Raum, Appendix B, p.147.
31. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 7 October 1864.
were evidently very few, if any pure Khoi remaining. The population appears to have stabilised at about this level for in the 1880s it was much the same. Herbert Vigne, a farmer-politician of the Caledon district, believed that about half of the coloured population of the district was living at Genadendal in 1855.

In the forties there was an outburst of antagonism from white landowners against the mission stations. They were regarded by some as "revolting segregations and conglomerations of people who led a useless and lazy life" and because they "isolat[ed] classes and impoverish[ed] the country by unprofitably absorbing the operatives of what would otherwise be active and accumulative industry". It was believed that the position could be improved by granting the legitimate inhabitants their plots of land in freehold and by expelling the idle elements. The question of granting land in freehold to coloureds will receive more attention later in this chapter. Suffice it to say that commissions were appointed to inquire into the desirability of such a move and they presented their reports in 1854 and 1856. The outcome for Genadendal was that in 1858 the missionaries were granted in freehold the land on which they had their buildings while the rest of the farm, an extent of 5 598 morgen, was placed in charge of the superintendent of the Moravian missions to be

32. L. Duff Gordon, Letters from the Cape, p.69.
33. Raun, p.25.
34. CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots 1856, p.26.
36. Ibid., p.222.
37. CCP 1/2/2/1/1 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots, 1854 and CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots, 1856.
held in trust for the coloureds. 38

The establishment of the Moravian station, Elim, near Cape Agulhas, was evidently the outcome of a desire on the part of the missionaries to relieve congestion at Genadendal 39 as well as to accommodate the entreaty of the Khoi captain Absalom Pommer who had requested that a mission station be established nearer to Swellendam. 40 The farm Vogelstruiskraal on the Nuwejaars River was purchased from Petrus Johannes Schonken and the request that it be converted from loan tenure to quitrent in the name of the Moravians was acceded to on 29 July 1824. 41 The approval of a perpetual quitrent grant, which was tantamount to freehold title, was a deviation from the normal government policy regarding the granting of lands for mission stations. Krüger maintains that it was because Colonel Bird, the colonial secretary, who had insisted in the past that missionary societies were not to own property, was no longer in office. The governor, Lord Charles Somerset, who was under philanthropic pressure from Dr John Philip, approved Elim as a quitrent grant. 42 In 1831 the station was enlarged by the purchase of the adjoining farm Platterug and in 1854 a piece of government ground was acquired to improve the water supply. 43 The Moravians, being owners of the land, could exercise stricter control over coloureds who settled there and they later took the precaution of converting the farms that made up Elim into

38. Raus, p.63.
41. LBD 22 Swellendam Land Reports, 1821 - 1822.
42. Krüger, p.152.
43. Schaidt, p.199.
freehold by paying the required amount of £26 5s.44

Because of the tighter control at Elim and the exclusion of vagrant elements, the population was kept smaller than at Genadendal. By 1827 it had about 100 inhabitants45; by 1838 about 40046 and by 1854 between 1 200 and 1 300.47 As the station was owned by the Moravians, Elim did not come under discussion when the dissolution of the missions was considered.

Zuurbraak, also known as the Caledon Institution, was located between Swellendam and the Tradouw in the Langeberg. It has been given little attention by historians possibly because it never received the favourable reports from travellers that Genadendal did, nor did it create as negative an impression as did another of the London Missionary stations, Bethelsdorp, in the Eastern Cape. Fame and notoriety attract the notice of scribes, mediocrity seldom does. A lack of documentary sources also makes it difficult to verify certain details.

Information regarding the establishment of Zuurbraak is vague. L.L. Tomlinson claims that an area of 5,842 morgen was granted to the remains of the Hessequa tribe in 1809, although he does not cite his source.48 By that date the British had been in occupation of the Cape for three years. W.M. Macmillan states that in 1811 the London Missionary Society was given permission to establish a

44. CO 2818 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 12 February 1844.
45. Krüger, p. 156.
47. 1/2/2/1/1 Report of Select Committee on Granting Land in Freehold to Hottentots, 1854, p. 8.
48. Tomlinson, p. 22.
station at Zuurbraak, although he claims that it was among the remnants of the Attaquas. There is evidence, however, that the Khoi at Zuurbraak had some claim to the land even before the second British occupation. The civil commissioner at Swellendam, Richard Southey, advised the colonial secretary that he understood that in the days of the Dutch government a Khoi captain named Moos was living in the vicinity of Zuurbraak. The Swellendam landdrost had given him a document stating that he and his family were allowed to live there unmolested. The Dutch government evidently never intended to grant the land to Captain Moos, but merely gave permission for him to occupy it as a "tenant at will". The favour of allowing the Khoi to settle there was also evidently a reward for military service, but whether this was to the Dutch government or the British is not clear. However, when the British government allowed the London Missionary Society to settle there in 1811 the land was vested in the Society as trustees for the Khoi. When the land was granted in quitrent, the deed was issued in the name of the Superintendent of the London Missionary Society.

The missionaries of the London Society were not as meticulous in recording information about their stations as were the Moravians, and not many details regarding the population of Zuurbraak are available. James Backhouse states that there were 850 Khoi at the station in circa 1838 and the census figure for 1865 is 1,207. Zuurbraak also received a large number of liberated apprentices after 1838 and this

49. Macmillan, p.149.
50. CD 2067 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 2 March 1850.
51. 1/SWM 14/10 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 13 September 1870.
52. Backhouse, p.108.
53. CCP 4/11/1 Census 1865, p.6.
caused resentment among the "old Hottentot party". When the question of granting the lands of the mission stations in freehold to the inhabitants arose in the fifties, the descendants of Captain Moos claimed the lands, and should they be granted the title deeds, they intended to eject all "slaves, bastards, etc." as they claimed that there were too many residents for the quality of the land. 54

A controversy developed in the forties over the mission stations as there were many who felt that they should cease to be closed communities and that the land should become the freehold property of the inhabitants. 55 The wrangling lasted for many years and as can be seen below, the question was finally settled for the Moravian stations in 1858 and for the London Missionary Societies in 1872.

After emancipation, large numbers of liberated apprentices settled at the mission stations. This influx of outside elements created problems for the missionary societies as these communities became too large and complex for the missionaries to handle. At the same time there was a labour shortage and the white landowners felt that they had been deprived of a former source of labour while the mission stations harboured large numbers of unemployed. The antagonism amongst many whites led to the appointment of select committees which heard evidence from a wide variety of persons. The evidence which was gathered showed that there were, essentially, two conflicting opinions. There were those who held the intrinsically capitalist or free-enterprise view that the inhabitants should be granted legal titles to their ground, as such a measure was likely to make them more provident and would act as an inducement to property accumulation. It was believed that a large portion

54. CO 2867 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 2 March 1850.
of the coloureds were sufficiently intelligent to be entrusted with the uncontrolled possession of landed property. The less provident elements would be weeded out and there would be a move towards the moral and social improvement of the coloured community. The opposing view was that too many of the coloureds did not yet appreciate the value of owning landed property and because of an inability to withstand various temptations such as alcohol, they would soon be in debt and the land would be taken over by land-jobbers. Undesirable white elements would be introduced and the positive influence of the missionaries would be at an end.

The superintendent of the Moravian Missions, C.R. Kolbing, put a strong case for retaining the missions intact and this was supported by a petition from the inhabitants themselves. The outcome was a resolution of the legislative council in February 1858 that Genadendal be given to the superintendent and his successors for a nominal quitrent with the estate of the brethren remaining the permanent property of the mission.

The decision in favour of maintaining the Moravian Missions as they were had much to do with the communal philosophy of the United Brethren and a humanitarian concern for the weaker members of society. While their genuine concern for their charges was commendable, the retention of large groups in a state of semi-dependence had created the anomalous situation that while constitutionally and juridically the coloureds were considered to have come of age, socially and

56. CCP 1/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots, 1856, pp.2, 4, 39.
57. CCP 1/2/1/1 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots, 1854, p.17 and CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots, 1856, p.55.
58. Ibid., Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots, 1856, pp.33 - 57.
The problem regarding the Moravian stations had been settled but the London Missionary Society held a different view. As early as 1848 an open debate had developed on proposed changes at London Missionary stations and missionaries such as W.Elliot, Robert Moffat, David Livingstone and George Barker advocated private ownership as an essential encouragement for progress in civilizing the indigenous people. The idea coincided with financial problems of the London Missionary Society whose directorate were in favour of withdrawal from the Cape Colony. The matter received little further attention between 1858 and 1868, the main reason being the serious and prolonged depression and drought of these years and if the London Missionary Stations were to be divided up, there would be the costs of survey and transfer which neither the state nor the inhabitants were in a position to bear. By 1868 the economic situation in the Colony was improving and in November of that year the London Missionary Society held a meeting at which there was agreement that it was desirable to transfer the erven at the stations to the inhabitants in freehold.

The Zuurbraak residents were initially against the move as they too, as in the case of Genadendal, feared that the land would soon pass from their own hands into those of men of more “energetic habits”, which, in the words of the civil commissioner for Swellendam, was a “consummation much to be desired”. Zuurbraak, too, had received much criticism

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61. Ibid., p.24.

62. 1/SMW 14/10 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 27 September 1870.

63. 1/SMW 14/10 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 13 September 1870.
because of the large number of idle inhabitants that resided there and because a large tract of fertile land was scarcely cultivated. It was believed that if private transfer were enacted, these lands were likely to become the property of a more industrious population who were able and willing to pay for the social privileges which at that time were being enjoyed but abused by many. Because the London Missionary Society were themselves in favour of the move to private ownership for the inhabitants the protests of the latter went unheeded. A committee from the London Missionary Society presented a report to the governor in December 1868 and this became the basis of the London Missionary Society's Institutions Act 12 of 1873. It provided for gratis surveying of the land and the issue of individual title deeds to the legitimate owners in all the stations including Zuurbraak.

It is not within the scope of this study to determine whether the conversion of certain mission stations to individual freehold for the inhabitants was beneficial to the coloured community or not. Mission stations had undoubtedly played an important role in providing a refuge for the proletarianised Khoi. They were a stepping stone in the gradual acculturization of a pastoral people. The weak link in the system was that for the diligent, those who rose to the challenges of a more advanced society, there was little opportunity for upward mobility in the social scale. The mission system functioned with a fair degree of success up to 1838, but the failure on the part of the state to make better provision for the emancipated slaves made the mission stations the collection points of widely differing elements. Free from the control of their former masters, and in many

64. 1/SWM 14/10 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 26 August 1870.
cases without the restraints of familial or religious bonds, these people created problems for an ordered society. If these elements could have been more widely distributed the negative influence of a mass of unemployed people would have been reduced.

In 1829, a year after Ordinance 50 became operative, one of the commissioners into the Somerset regime, W.M. Colebrooke, had suggested that the land of the stations be divided amongst the inhabitants. He believed that it was time to do so since the Khoi had become citizens with equal rights. If plots could be purchased, colonists would buy plots and mixed villages would come about. This, in his view, would lead to the civilization of the coloured people. The missionaries had objected to the idea as it was felt that the spiritual and temporal fellowship of the missions would be destroyed. The principle which Colebrooke had suggested should have been given more attention. Perhaps the mission stations could have been kept intact as small communities for those who respected the authority of the missionaries. Provision could have been made, particularly after 1838, for the emancipated slaves as well as for those who had graduated beyond the need of mission protection to obtain land in and around the white villages. Why was it that after 1828 when coloureds could legally obtain land that so few succeeded in doing so? L.C. Duly believes that one could hardly expect government to assist a people of "low economic strength" to acquire land. There was little to show that the Cape Government recognised the intention of the 50th Ordinance and once it had been passed there was the assumption in London that it had solved the "Hottentot Question".

Having appeased the philanthropists with an equal rights

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ordinance, London did little to see it applied. R. Ross claims that there was a deliberate policy to the contrary. In 1837 when Governor Napier broached the question of making "small grants of land to Hottentots whose industry and good conduct has enabled them to acquire a certain amount of property in cattle and sheep" the idea of creating an independent Khoi peasantry was rebuffed in London. Any move away from a capitalist system of agriculture was not desired. In his reply, Glenelg, British secretary of state for the colonies stated:

I am much disposed to question the expediency of the policy of settling Hottentots on land of their own ... the most desirable result would be that they be induced to work for wages as free labourers. Whatever tends to counteract that object seems to me inadvisable...

There were exceptions, but British government policy did not support coloured ownership of land as they were not considered, in a capitalist system, to be the ones who "could develop it best". To what extent was this policy justified? Were there not instances where the coloured had proved his ability to compete in a free enterprise system?

Not all coloureds in the Overberg could be accommodated on the mission stations. The census for 1865 shows that less than half of the 12,739 coloureds of the Caledon, Swellendam and Bredasdorp districts were living at Genadendal, Zuurbraak and Elim. The number settled on the three missions totalled 5,652 which meant that 7,087 were accommodated elsewhere. A large number were undoubtedly living on white farms, but

69. CCP 4/11/1 Census 1865, p.6. Coloured includes the census categories Hottentot, Kafir and Other.
there are no figures available to give an indication of how many. The census figures also show that in 1865 there were 1,564 white farmers in the Overberg and 71 coloured farmers. Presumably to be designated a farmer meant being in possession of land. There are few records attesting to land being in coloured hands and those that do exist show that with few exceptions the land was occupied by far more persons than it could economically support. A propensity for communal living tolerated the presence of persons who did not contribute to the general welfare of the group. Added to this was the inherited preference for herding above cultivation. This led to overstocking with subsequent deterioration in the quality of the land and an increased inability to support its inhabitants, particularly in times of drought and depression. The proximity of white farms made stock theft a means of survival for some which brought opprobrium on all occupants of a coloured farm, whether guilty or not. Although there is little evidence as proof, it appears that subsequent pressure from white farmers led to the break-up of the last remnants of coloured ownership.

This appears to have been the case in the Slang and Salt River areas. Although the former is in the present district of Heidelberg and the latter near Bredasdorp, the two areas are not far removed from one another and the white farmers in both areas are likely to have acted in concert. Twenty Khoi were granted 1,311 morgen in the Slang River area by Sir George Napier on 15 March 1838. The land had been a Khoi kraal, and one couple, Piet Hoogbaard and his wife, had been there since about 1762. Partly owing to the drought of the late fifties and early sixties, the owners of this land had become "quite helpless and destitute". Their crops had failed and all their stock had died. Under such

70. CO 3007 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 29 December 1860.
72. CO 3007 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 29 December 1860.
circumstances theft of neighbouring stock was not unlikely. Pressure to disposses coloureds of their land undoubtedly increased in proportion to growing stock thefts. A petition from the occupants of the farm in 1870 reveals that some of their ground had been sold without their knowledge or approval. The petition reads:

We wish to know why is it that the ground can be sold - their (sic) are three pieces already sold we wish to know how must the children of those parties that are deceased do. We got Slang River through [because of?] the Farmers ill treatment and now it can be sold. I wish to know if it can be so....

It would appear from the above extract that white farmers had used their influence with the authorities to buy land that had been granted to the Khoi. As the latter were seldom given title deeds to the land they occupied, they had no proof of ownership when it was sold to white farmers.

A month prior to the receipt of the above petition, the Swellendam civil commissioner had received a letter signed by twenty white farmers. They were complaining of a group of "squatters" near the Salt River in the division of Bredasdorp whose only assets were about 50 sheep and goats and 24 horses. It is not clear whether these people had any claim to the land, but whether it was crown land or not, white farmers were clearly not prepared to tolerate congregations of coloureds where their claim to the land could not be proved. The farmers had traced a number of stock thefts to this particular spot but had not been able to prove them because there was no resident justice of the peace. They stated that the place was of "great trouble and grief" to them and they therefore requested the civil commissioner to use his influence "to get the piece of ground leased or sold in order to break up the nest of squatters and

73. 1/SWM 11/46 Petition signed by Philip Klynhans et.al., 21 February 1870.
There can be little doubt that white landowners influenced the authorities to prevent coloureds from acquiring land because it was believed that such grants tended to create a "nucleus for a set of vagabonds". An application by Joseph Vister and others for a grant of 200 morgen near Bot River in 1867 was turned down as the Caledon Divisional Council were of the opinion that such a grant would become an annoyance to the surrounding farmers.

Although the government usually favoured white landowners, and apparently more so after the granting of a representative government in 1854, there is also evidence that it supported deserving cases of coloured ownership. A certain Domingo van der Heyden, who was described as that "well-known, old and industrious Bastard Hottentot" had become the proprietor of the farm Hout Kloof in the Uilenkraal ward at some date prior to 1793. The farm had been granted in perpetual quitrent to his ten heirs on 1 February 1841. The owners of the neighbouring farm Drooge Kloof had been granted a servitude in 1793 which allowed them to graze their cattle to and on the farm Hout Kloof. At the time of the arrangement the proprietors of Drooge Kloof only had a few cattle and rarely made use of the servitude. The subsequent proprietor of Drooge Kloof, P.V. van der Byl, had thousands of sheep which grazed on Hout Kloof and so impoverished the land (according to Van der Heyden's heir) that the farm was worth almost nothing. Van der Byl, an opulent land proprietor, had already purchased several of the adjoining and neighbouring places and Van der Heyden's heir believed that Van der Byl's herds were totally destroying Hout Kloof and that they would

74. I/SWM 11/46 Twenty white farmers to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 7 January 1870.
75. I/CAL 5/1/2/4 Report on application of Joseph Vister and others, 11 December 1867.
be obliged to sell to Van der Byl at his own price. The civil commissioner requested the surveyor-general to make some proposal as Jan Cloete van der Heyden (the heir) was an "industrious and deserving man and worthy of favourable consideration". The board of land commissioners considered the servitude as "preposterous as unjust and ruinous to the possessors [of Drooge Kloof]" and it was cancelled.

Drooge Kloof is one of three examples in the Caledon district of farms passing into coloured hands as a result of miscegenation. Another case was the farm Koppies in the vicinity of Genadendal. The farm had been left to the coloured offspring of two farmers, Klinck and Duminy. Herbert Vigne attested to the commission on the granting of lands to Khoi that he had seen papers signed by the executors regarding the transfer. The third example is the farm Hartebeeste River, seven-ninths of which was left to the seven coloured progeny of J.J. Tesselaar in 1841 and which today is known as Tesselaarsdal and still remains the property of Tesselaar's descendants.

The government's attitude to the retention of land in coloured hands was influenced greatly by the extent to which the occupants made use of it. The Khoi kraal at Spitskop which was still part of the Swellendam district in 1872, although it was not strictly part of the Overberg, was an

76. LBD 27 Swellendam Land Reports, Memorial of Jan Cloete van der Heyden, 3 August 1837.
77. LBD 27 Swellendam Land Reports, Civil Commissioner to Surveyor-general, 12 December 1837.
78. LBD 27 Swellendam Land Reports, Report 8 September 1840, signed C. Michel et al.
This farm has remained in the hands of the descendants of Van der Heyden to the present.
79. CCP 1/2/2/13 Select Report on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots 1856, pp. 21, 28.
80. Deeds Office, Swellendam Quitrents, Vol. 6, Folio 53, 6 June 1831 and Sunday Times, Land Row, 14 November 1982. This mixed settlement of white and coloured became a matter of controversy because of the Group Areas Act and has only recently been settled. Most coloured owners have remained in possession of their land.
example of dispossession following unproductive use of the land and squatting that was troublesome to whites. A Captain Kees and his family had been allowed to occupy the area as a reward for military service, but any documentary evidence of the grant had long since disappeared. As in most cases of grants to Khoi, the availability of land had attracted undesirable elements and surrounding farmers complained bitterly of the conduct of the inhabitants of the kraal. They would not take to "steady and industrious" habits and the chief constable for Swellendam reported that inhabitants of the kraal had cut off the tails and ripped open the skins of several oxen belonging to a neighbouring farmer by the name of Grissel. By the seventies only a few of the occupiers had any claim to live there.

Those who could establish an admissable claim were few and it was felt unreasonable that an extent of 8 000 morgen should be assigned to them.\(^8^1\) Regrettably in instances where grants were made to deserving cases for military service, the grantees failed to exclude elements which ultimately operated to their detriment. The colonial state was also weak in that it could not bring justice to bear in certain remote parts such as at this kraal. Apart from numbers of idle squatters, the kraal also sheltered two notorious stock thieves. The kraal was so distant from Swellendam that the civil commissioner complained that it was quite beyond his surveillance and was so situated that it formed an excellent hiding place for cattle.\(^8^2\)

The policy adopted in approving coloured access to land was reflected in a letter from the surveyor-general to the commissioner of crown lands. It was considered quite justifiable for the state to take possession of land that was

\(^8^1\) Cape of Good Hope, Correspondence on the Hottentot Kraal Location in the Division of Swellendam 1876, pp.6 - 8.

\(^8^2\) Cape of Good Hope, Correspondence on the Hottentot Kraal, pp.22, 23.
providing a refuge for squatters who were quite clearly not making a living from the 8 000 morgen which constituted the kraal. The state did, however, feel some obligation to Klaas Kees and his descendants as emerged in the letter:

...it appears to me equitable, that the descendants of Klaas Kees and others, who have been on the land and who have proved themselves qualified to exercise the privileges of ownership, by availing themselves in a reasonable degree of the capabilities of the soil, (my emphasis) should be recognized as entitled to receive grants of suitable lots, with a proportionate share of commonage [at Zuurbraak]. By adopting this course it is probable that before very long all but the really industrious, respectable, and thrifty of the allottees will dispose of their lots, [and] that a better class of people will be introduced, and thus the place weeded of objectionable characters.83

There were certain sections of the coloured population who were not able to meet the challenges of changing circumstances. Many of those who retained a strong strain of Khoi blood retained too, the habits and traditions of the pastoralist. Those who had access to land could no longer survive purely by herding as their allotments were limited and there were those who could not adjust to the increased industry required for more intensive and productive use of the land.

The policy of approving land for those coloureds, who in the opinion of the government, indicated a willingness to accept the norms of capitalist white society was also revealed in the willingness of government to sanction grants of plots in the villages to liberated apprentices who were "hardworking and productive", qualities that would probably require the

83. Cape of Good Hope, Correspondence on Hottentot Kraal 1876, p.19.
testimony of their former masters. In Swellendam, several apprentice labourers applied for permission to occupy some small plots in and around the village on the expiration of their apprenticeship. They wished to have their children instructed at the public school and they also wanted to attend church without being obliged to settle at the mission stations. They preferred settling in the village as they could always then obtain employment, not only for themselves but for their children before and after school. Harry Rivers, civil commissioner at Swellendam, believed that a “cautious compliance” with their request might be “advantageous to them and to the inhabitants at large”. There were numerous small plots in and about the village and Rivers was in favour of their being granted to those who had “good characters and industrious habits”, provided that they enclosed the ground, built a house, conducted themselves correctly and saw to it that their children attended school. Such action was likely to reduce idleness and vagrancy in the adults, and would promote moral improvement in the rising generation. Congregation at the missionary institutions would be prevented and they would mix with a better class and would be under the more immediate surveillance of the magistracy. Rivers’s attitude was in keeping with British liberalism which saw the need to encourage work for wage incentives among the freed slaves and to inculcate habits of ‘diligence’ after emancipation but with the objective that they might remain compliant labourers.

It is not clear how many plots were granted, but the request was acceded to for two manumitted slaves, Eva Susa and her husband, owned a property in Swellendam by 1841 and within

84. CO 2776 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 22 November 1830.
86. CO 2801 Evidence of Eva Susa before Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 6 March 1841 and CO 2793 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 23 June 1840.
ten years another 120 erven on the south side of the village were surveyed specifically for poor people, "particularly the coloured class". The only opposition to acquisition of land by coloureds in Swellendam was to grouping too many "of a particular class" together in one spot as this could lead to irregularities and it was considered better that they be interspersed among people who would set an example of industrious habits.

Although the Caledon village management board did not prevent coloureds from purchasing land in the village, they made less provision than Swellendam to assist poor labourers, the majority of whom were coloured, to obtain a plot of their own. A petition shortly after the expiry of the period of apprenticeship for slaves signed by John Ogilvie and 36 others who termed themselves the peasantry or Caledon, appealed to the civil commissioner for small plots of ground in Caledon. The petitioners included four whites (two constables, a pensioner soldier and a shoemaker), seventeen ex-apprentices and fifteen Khoi, the majority of whom classified themselves as labourers. Caledon had 39 white property owners in 1840 and 42 in 1845. There were thus almost as many adult male labourers living in the village who had little prospect of owning their own property. They were having to rent accommodation which was expensive and inadequate as the following extract from the petition suggests:

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87. CO 2638 Municipal Commissioners to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 24 June 1847.
88. CO 2638 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 30 June 1847.
89. 1/SHW 11/45 Petition of John Ogilvie et al. The petition bears no date but appears to have been written in c.1843.
...or otherwise it is impossible for we (sic) poor people to live in such a place as this, it is as much as we can do to make as much money as will pay our House Rents and what have we to give our Wifes and Children or even to cloth them the most part or the whole of us is almost naked and it is impossible for us to pay Such a High rent and there is not Houses enough for us to live in .... there is upwards of Thirty Six of us .... we are much in need of some place to live in as it is impossible to live in the way that we are now living in ...

There is no evidence in the minutes of the village management board or the civil commissioner's correspondence to suggest any compliance with their request.

The central government was not averse to making plots available for coloureds where the local authorities desired it, but there was no consistent policy which encouraged the integration of coloureds in white villages. Whether or not coloureds obtained plots seems to have depended upon the attitude of the local village management board and the civil commissioner. There were instances where it was considered advantageous to integrate the coloureds in the villages as this held out the prospect of raising their status in life through intercourse with more industrious classes. Even after the granting of representative government in 1854, influential members of society such as Richard Southey, who was civil commissioner for Swellendam at the time, wrote of the "importance of enabling [coloureds] to acquire a fixed residence in our towns and villages".

There was quite clearly a fair percentage of coloureds who were both eager and able to cope with the responsibilities of owning property. Theodore Osterloh, a prominent businessman

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91. 1/SWM 11/4 Petition signed by John Ogilvie, et.al., c. 1843.
92. CO 2911 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 9 January 1855.
in Caledon, who gave evidence to the commission on the granting of land to coloureds in 1856, stated that some of the residents at Genadendal had repeatedly told him that they wished to have a grant of erven as under the mission system they derived no benefit from improving their buildings and gardens. Osterloh stated that the "more respectable Hottentots" wished to have a piece of ground of their own, were it ever so small. He stated that in the village of Caledon there were several enterprising coloured men who owned landed property. Herbert Vigne also testified before the commission to both the desire and financial ability of coloureds to purchase plots. When he had divided his farm Bushman's Kloof (which is near Genadendal) into lots in 1854 at least one-eighth of the erven had been bought by coloureds. Six months after the sale Vigne still had constant applications from coloureds to sell to them.

The dispossession of the Khoi, a process which began soon after white settlement at the Cape in 1652, was far advanced by 1838. The Cape became a British colony in 1806 and apart from the protest of a small but powerful group of philanthropists, British policy regarding land ownership was essentially capitalistic. Broad parallels can be drawn between the system of enclosure in Britain and the process by which the nomadic Khoi and their coloured descendants were excluded from the land at the Cape. Although one cannot completely exclude the factor of race, the process was one of amassing land in the hands of a more powerful class and the proletarianisation of the pastoral herders. With the increasingly capitalistic relations that were developing in the Colony after the introduction of the woolled sheep, land resources were at a premium and the colonial state was unequivocal in its support of "those who could use it best",

93. CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots 1856, p.9.
94. Ibid., pp. 16,17.
but it showed itself prepared to support industrious coloured farmers as well as white. The process of acculturization was slow and many of the descendants of Khoi were unable to make adjustments to changed conditions. Land that they either under-utilized or overpopulated with squatters became an irritation to white landowners who had the support of the colonial state to wrest it from them. Government did not prohibit coloureds from acquiring land and there are instances of official encouragement for acquisition of plots by ex-slaves but inadequate provision was made for these people, many of whom settled at the missions, creating social problems which incensed white landowners.

By 1872 very few coloureds owned farmland in the Overberg, but significant numbers were living in the villages either on plots of their own or in rented accommodation although the majority were settled either on the three mission stations or on the land of white farmers.
Economic and social change within an area is closely related to the extent to which that area can communicate with the outside world. In a region of quasi-subsistence farming the transformation to commercial or capitalistic production is dependent on three major factors - an improved use of natural resources, availability of markets for agricultural produce and expedient communications between the place of production and the market. The third factor is particularly important and an early South African economic historian, M.H.de Kock, saw the importance of communications thus:

Communication is closely related to the production, consumption, exchange and distribution of wealth. By means of transportation commodities are brought to the places where they are used. Transportation brings producer and consumer together. By rendering a larger quantity and variety of commodities accessible to the consumer, in view of the reduction in the cost of obtaining these articles, it raises the standard of living and this leads to increased physical and mental vigour, efficiency, ability and intelligence. On the contrary, the lack of transportation facilities tends to promote stagnation and a low standard of living. ¹

In Chapter One the microcosmic nature of the Overberg was discussed. Communications to and from the area were complicated by the presence of mountains to the west and north and by an inhospitable coastline to the south. Communication with the east was not hampered by any major physical barriers but the area between Swellendam and the

¹ M.H. De Kock, Economic History of South Africa, p.37.
Eastern Cape was sparsely populated and in the period under study, there were no major towns and therefore markets in this direction for the produce of the Overberg.

After 1840 communication lines throughout the Colony developed rapidly. It was largely due to the efficiency of the new colonial secretary, John Montagu, who arrived in the Colony in 1843,\(^2\) that the scheme of improving roads, passes and bridges was implemented. The realisation by about 1838 that the Cape Colony had a viably exploitable agricultural product in the form of wool must have provided a powerful incentive for John Montagu and others to pursue the scheme of making markets more accessible to the areas of production. The governor, Sir George Napier (1838 - 1844), had seen the need for improvements to roads, bridges and harbours but the secretaries of state for the colonies in the late thirties and early forties, Lord John Russell and Lord Stanley, gave instructions that there was to be no public expenditure until the colonial debt had been paid off.\(^3\) When Montagu was appointed colonial secretary, he received instructions to place the finances of the Colony on a sound footing. With the "vigorous application of the colony's available resources" the system which Montagu engineered enabled the Colony to liquidate its debts within two-and-a-half years. There was a steady increase in revenue which by 1852 had doubled that of 1834. The sale of guano from the west coast islands was a fortunate addition to the Colony's resources which helped to liquidate a substantial part of the colonial debts.\(^4\)

Confidence in John Montagu's ability to control the finances of the Colony and to make funds available for road building

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is reflected in the fact that the legislative council sanctioned an ordinance for the creation of a central roads board in November 1843, the year of his arrival. The ordinance also made provision for divisional roads boards. Road construction was to be financed by a tax on immovable property, the proceeds from tolls and ferries as well as by annual grants from the legislative council. Convict gangs were to provide the labour.\(^5\)

The improvement in communication between the eastern and western parts of the Colony was regarded a priority and the first two major obstacles were considered to be the sandy road across the Cape flats, and the Cradock's Kloof Pass in the George district. The latter, when completed, was beneficial to the Overberg in that it channelled Karoo traffic to George and along the Overberg route to Cape Town. The hard road that was constructed across the Cape flats from the foot of Sir Lowry's Pass to the harbour city\(^6\) was of even greater significance to the economy of the Overberg for it greatly reduced the time and the number of oxen that were required for crossing it. It was completed at the end of 1845\(^7\) and the editor of the *South African Commercial Advertiser* reported early in 1846 that a trip that had formerly required twelve mules and two days was reduced to one day with eight mules - "It would be difficult to represent in money the gross amount of labour saved to the farmers..."\(^8\)

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8. Ibid., Editorial, 17 January 1846.
Although the completion of the hard road was undoubtedly of great benefit to farmers transporting agricultural produce to Cape Town, the route from the Overberg to the city remained an arduous one if it is taken into account that the Overberg had to compete for markets with the Cape and Stellenbosch districts which did not have to negotiate formidable mountain passes. Overberg farmers travelling to the city had to cross both the Houw Hoek and Sir Lowry’s Passes which, with heavily laden waggons, remained a time-consuming process. While the chief mode of transport for agricultural produce remained the ox-waggon, the improvement of mountain passes was limited in effect. Sir Lowry’s Pass had been much improved in 1829 by the surveyor-general Major C. Michell and it was claimed that within about eight years, twice the number of waggons and twice as much grain were crossing the mountain to Cape Town. An improved route over the Houw Hoek had been completed in 1831 at the time of Sir Lowry Cole and under the newly created roads board it again received attention in 1845.

These various improvements to overland communication between the Overberg and Cape Town were undoubtedly of significant economic importance, but that this route was not ideal is evident in the attempts to find harbours along a coastline hostile to shipping from which grain and wool could be shipped from the Overberg.

The question of creating a shipping trade along the south-east coast of the Colony, and thereby reducing transport costs, had received attention during the regime of the Dutch

East India Company when European visitors such as Anders Sparrman, as early as the 1770s, advocated the establishment of harbours at Mossel Bay and elsewhere. Mossel Bay was used for the shipping of grain in 1788 and it was believed that the opening of this port would stimulate agricultural development in the area but this hope was not fulfilled. The Company’s demand for wheat was too erratic and in good years wheat from as far afield as Mossel Bay was not required.  

Although the possibilities of a port at the mouth of the Breede River were considered during the Batavian Regime, it was not until 1816 that Lord Charles Somerset had the river re-examined and it was found that small vessels could enter from the sea in fine weather, and that the river itself was navigable for 50 kilometres upstream. Somerset named the east bank Port Beaufort, in honour of his father. In the following year the Scottish colonizer, Benjamin Moodie, settled in the Swellendam district about 40 miles from the mouth of the Breede River, hoping that Port Beaufort would be frequented by coasters. Seven years elapsed, however, before he succeeded in raising a subscription from the neighbouring farmers which enabled them to build a grain store at the mouth of the river in 1824. According to E.H. Burrows, Moodie claimed that a considerable trade was carried on, but the Scottish laird’s efforts were soon eclipsed by those of the more commercially-minded, Joseph Barry, who had also arrived in the Colony in 1817 from England.

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15. Muller, p.12.
Barry's first trips to the mouth of the Breede were occasioned by severe crop failures in the Overberg from 1820 to 1822 which obliged Lord Charles Somerset to alleviate the distress by making grants of seed wheat, provisions and money. Barry, in offering to convey goods to the mouth of the Breede, recognised the opportunity of providing a service which also had the potential of becoming a profitable business. Burrows dramatically describes the arrival of the chartered cutter, *The Duke of Gloucester* at Port Beaufort in 1822 (not 1819 as stated by Burrows):

The arrival of Joseph Barry's cutter.....was a red letter day for the Overberg. It carried food to the starving population and its presence signified that the Overberg had achieved its own gateway to world markets. Five- to six- hundred waggons had come to the mouth of the river to buy wheat and rice.

The success of this and subsequent trips led to the opening of a small trading store at Port Beaufort in 1823.

According to Buirski, in 1817 there had only been one coastal vessel that plied the east coast. By 1824 there were seven, and in 1847 thirteen ships were listed as calling at Port Beaufort. By 1855 the number had increased to 30. By the end of the fifties, however, only ships belonging to the Barry firm were still calling at the mouth of the Breede

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River. By 1864 Port Beaufort was no longer considered a colonial port.

Port Beaufort survived as an outlet for products from the Overberg for barely half a century and the reasons for its demise are not difficult to ascertain. When the first trips from Cape Town to the Breede mouth were made, the dangers of an overland journey via the Hottentots Holland Kloof (later Sir Lowry's Pass) and the Houw Hoek were as great as a trip along the hazardous south east coast. The latter was notorious for its shipwrecks which tended to be more newsworthy than the loss of waggons and oxen. The entrepreneurial spirit of Joseph Barry was equal to the risks presented by the sea voyage, which was at least, very much faster. Barry's phenomenal success was undoubtedly the incentive for others to attempt the risky sea voyage and to cross the treacherous bar at the mouth of the Breede which was the cause of numerous shipwrecks. It was indicated earlier that internal routes began to improve considerably after 1845 thanks to the efforts of the roads board, and even if the ox-waggon could go no faster, at least the properly constructed mountain passes made their journeys safer. The loss of a ship could wreck a business venture and persons without a direct stake in the Overberg began to avoid the perilous port which served what had virtually become the outlet of a Barry monopoly. The firm Barry and Nephews had shown growth as phenomenal as that of the wool trade and the Breede outlet remained a valuable part of their empire.

22. Buirski, pp.16, 36, 83, 120.


24. W. Porter, The Porter Speeches 1839 - 1845, pp.xxx, xxxi. Porter refers to Cape Agulhas as this "disastrous spot" and the S.A.C.A. reported on 14 December 1850 that between 1835 and 1850, fifteen wrecks had occurred at Agulhas. (Cited in Buirski, p.125.)

25. This receives attention in a subsequent chapter.

Figures for 1843 show that exports from Port Beaufort, of which wool accounted for more than half, totalled £27 439 while imports were valued at only £3 917. That Port Beaufort's survival rested upon Barry initiative is confirmed by the fact that activities at the port almost ceased following a series of personal tragedies to the Barry family. Joseph, who had run his business in partnership with his two nephews, died at the age of 70 on 26 March 1865. This was followed eight months later by the wreck of their craft, the Kadie, a speedy screw steamer with sails, which had been acquired in July 1859. Between that year and 1865 she performed regular trips up and down the coast, providing a particularly valuable service at a time of drought which had drastically reduced the number of draught animals. The Kadie was wrecked in November 1865 on striking the west bank of the Breede. The years 1865 and 1866 saw the height of an exceptionally severe cycle of drought and depression. Although research has revealed no official documents relating to the purported bankruptcy of the Barry firm, it is quite evident that a series of unfortunate incidents at a financially stressful time struck the death knell of Port Beaufort.

Even without the involvement of the Barry firm it was natural to expect a falling off in trade through Port Beaufort during the depression of the sixties. It could perhaps have been expected to show a revival from the early seventies with the improvement of the economy, but by this time important new routes into the interior had been opened up. The discovery of diamonds in the interior, which by 1872 had proven a lasting

27. CCT 176 Customs, Port Beaufort and Mossel Bay, Imports and Exports, 1843.
29. Buirski, p.130.
30. Buirski had access to liquidation accounts and states that a number of demands against capital from c.1860 indicated a "reckless credit policy" which had caused extensive losses of capital, (p.152) and see also Civil Commissioner of Swellendam's Report for the Blue Book 1866, Appendix p.111.
and profitable source of income irreversibly re-directed
the traffic of the Colony to the north, and Karoo products
which might have been channelled to the Overberg with the
opening of mountain passes, found a more profitable and more
easily accessible market to the north.

Before examining the opening of passes to the interior and
the development of the railway system, both of which, in the
long run, were detrimental to the economy of the Overberg,
brief attention will be given to the sanguine belief in 1838
that the mouth of the Bot River could be used for the export
of grain from the Overberg. It is also perhaps an
indication of the unsatisfactory nature of the overland
route, as the mouth of the Bot River can barely aspire to the
name of port. Permission was granted to W.Homewood, in
partnership with Messrs Keyter and Otto of Caledon, to build
a grain store at the mouth of the river, and 26 lots were
surveyed and were to be put up for auction. Part of the
adjacent land was to be kept vacant for use as an outspan in
the event of any "mercantile establishments" being formed.
No subsequent references to the venture were found and it
was quite clearly not a success.

In 1847 it was believed to be quite feasible to divert the
wool of the Roggeveld and Nieuwveld areas to the Swellendam
district by the opening of certain mountain passes. Interest
was particularly focussed on the Sewe Weeks Poort in the
Swartberg (near Ladismith) which would enable the Barrys and
others to trade with the Roggeveld and Nieuwveld graziers who
migrated to the warmer Karoo in winter with their flocks. In
1849 the poort was visited by the colonial secretary, John
Montagu, who appreciated the value of reducing a four to six

31. Cape Argus, Editorialis, 23 July 1870 and 4 August 1870 and
day journey to three hours.\textsuperscript{32} Those who had the interests of Swellendam at heart also desired the diversion of traffic to the south-eastern Cape. The civil commissioner believed that by such a move, the "immense expense of transport to find a market at Port Elizabeth and other distant places [would] be prevented".\textsuperscript{33} In 1847 wool exports were still rising sharply and there was keen competition among areas to divert the traffic for their own benefit. Another pass which merchants and officials of the Swellendam area were anxious to have opened was the Tradouw in the Langeberg which would direct the produce of the Little Karoo through Swellendam. If the Sewe Weeks Poort were to be opened and not the Tradouw, Swellendam was likely to "dwindle into comparative insignificance".\textsuperscript{34} The roads board clearly had other priorities as it was not until July 1854 that the civil commissioner at Swellendam, Richard Southey, accompanied Thomas Bain on a tour of inspection to ascertain the practicability of constructing good roads over these two passes.\textsuperscript{35} Swellendam's fears about the Sewe Weeks Poort were realised as it was opened in 1862\textsuperscript{36} while construction on the Tradouw under Thomas Bain only began in 1870\textsuperscript{37} once the depression had lifted. It has already been mentioned that by this date economic focus had been centred on the diamond fields and the importance of the Breede River mouth as a trading outlet had virtually ceased. Swellendam did not benefit from the opening of the Sewe Weeks Poort for traffic from this direction which still wished to use Port Beaufort, used the Platte Kloof Pass (the present Garcia Pass in the Langeberg) and went via Riversdale to the port. Karoo traffic

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{32. Breitenbach, p.245.}
\footnote{33. CO 2838 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 3 December 1847.}
\footnote{34. CO 2891 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 15 September 1853.}
\footnote{35. CO 2899 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 21 July 1854.}
\footnote{36. Oral communication, Jose Buraan, 2 September 1989.}
\footnote{37. 1/SWH 14/10 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 28 November 1870.}
\end{footnotes}
was also directed away from the Overberg by the opening of Meirings Poort which increased trade between the Karoo and Mossel Bay which was described in 1860 as a "fast rising place". 38

The physical barriers which militated against successful road communication with the Overberg were also an obstacle to rail links between this area and the rest of the Colony. These physical barriers could, in time, be overcome but the discovery of minerals in the north created a whole new emphasis on the routes that railroads were to take. It was not until 1899 that construction was commenced on the railway over Sir Lowry’s Pass 39 and even towards the end of the twentieth century, the Overberg remains poorly supplied with rail links.

The commission into railway communication in 1855 recognised the importance of railways for the whole internal economy, stressing such matters as the greater ease in transporting produce to markets and the release of labour normally engaged in transportation for other purposes. However, the investigation was largely the result of interest in the mineral riches of Little Namaqualand where "immense quantities of copper ore" existed40 which led to the copper boom of 1854/55. 41 That the Overberg was not even considered during this first investigation is borne out by the fact that the committee agreed to limit their investigations to the

38. William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, A 214 f Account of a Journey in 1860 by Passenger Cart from Cape Town to Oudtshoorn via Caledon and Swellendam.
39. J. Buraan, Waters of the Western Cape, p.91. Buraan suggests that the Overberg grain was likely to increase in significance in the event of war. The Anglo-Boer War broke out shortly after the commencement of the line and it could not be completed till after the war.
40. CCP 1/2/2/1/2 Report of Select Committee on Railways, 1855, p.v.
country within the Hottentots Holland and French Hoek Mountains. Act No. 20 of 1857 provided for the construction of the first railway in the Colony from Cape Town to Wellington via Eerste River, Stellenbosch and Paarl. Ironically, the railway committee of fourteen which was formed was chaired by the prominent Overberger, John Barry, and included two other persons with interests in the Overberg - D.G.van Breda and H.T.Vigne. They were to undertake the construction and working of the line and parties desirous of taking out shares were to contact the secretary. Work commenced on the line in March 1859.

With the completion of the section of line from Cape Town to Eerste River, Overberg farmers no longer had to transport their goods all the way to Cape Town by wagon. The major part of the journey still had to be accomplished with the old form of transport, however, and the new railway line was of much greater value to the Koeberg and Malmesbury districts which were considered the "great granary of the Colony". Thus an area already advantaged by easier access to Cape Town was further assisted by the construction of a rail link. This materially disadvantaged the Overberg grain farmers as it became even more difficult for them to compete with the grain producing area which is known as the Swartland. When railway construction was again examined in 1862, it was not even considered feasible to extend the line from Eerste River to the foot of Sir Lowry's Pass (an almost entirely flat area) as the engineer of the Wellington line, W.G. Brounger, considered the traffic over the pass too erratic to make it pay. Some days there would be 20 wagons and on others none.

42 CCP 1/2/1/2 Report of Select Committee on Railways, 1855, p.25.
43 CCP 6/2/1/1 Acts of Parliament, 1854 - 1858.
45 S.A.C.A., Editorial, 2 April 1859.
46 CCP 1/2/2/1/6 Report of Select Committee on Railways, 1859, pp.iii, iv.
Examination of the Sir Lowry’s Pass toll records showed that 800 wagons had passed through the toll in one year. This was the equivalent of little more than two wagons per day on average which does not indicate a great deal of communication and interaction between the Overberg and Cape Town. The initial lines had not been financially successful chiefly because of the sparsely settled country through which they had been constructed and contractors were cautious of extensions. In the section on grain production, more attention will be given to wheat production and the relation of its growth to the problems of transport and markets.

The depression which began at the end of the fifties and lasted for a decade put a check on railway building and it was not until September 1871 that a bill was passed for a line in the Eastern Cape from Port Elizabeth to Uitenhage. By this time the economic strength of diamond mining had been proved with subsequent rapid development in the interior of the country and there was little chance that the Overberg would feature in any future rail extensions. The line to Wellington was continued to Worcester and subsequently to Kimberley while the line from Port Elizabeth was also continued to the diamond fields. C.W.G. Schumann illustrated how insignificant railway building was in the sixties compared with the subsequent expansion in the seventies and eighties. Between 1860 and 1863, an almost purely agricultural economy had stimulated the building of only 63 miles of rail. Purely agricultural areas could clearly not command priority when, during what Schumann calls the diamond period, (1875 - 1885) 1,713 miles were opened and in the gold period (1886 - 1895) a further 1,462 miles were

47. CCP 1/2/1/9 Report on Railway Bills, 1862, pp.24, 176.

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Initially physical barriers had prevented the Overberg from receiving rail links with major markets and subsequently the mineral discoveries sealed the nineteenth century isolation of the area by stimulating rail development elsewhere. Macmillan, writing in 1919, commented that no part of the country was so badly served by the railway system as the south-western Cape, and he commented on the stagnation of Swellendam. He believed that if it had not been for the mineral finds, railway development would have followed the natural lines of the country's agricultural development which would have been of great benefit to parts that became neglected.

The foregoing will have served to show that the Overberg was not greatly favoured with regard to communications with other areas. Improvements to certain mountain passes, instead of diverting traffic and trade to the south, merely opened up routes to the north where the main markets of the country began to develop. Railway development in the nineteenth century was also of minimal value for the Overberg and made it even more difficult for its farmers to compete with more favoured areas. The absence of convenient and cheap communication with markets was to have a more telling effect on the grain production of the Overberg than on wool. Wool remained a product with a world market, and although bulky to transport, it was much lighter and brought a much higher return than grain.

In discussing the development of communications in the Colony which was to lead to economic isolation for the Overberg, attention has been diverted from the fact that the Overberg experienced remarkable economic growth between 1838 and 1872. It was only towards the close of the period under study that improved communications throughout the Colony tended to detract from the economic advance of the area. There were certain aspects of improved communication which were of great benefit to the Overberg and undoubtedly played a major role in the economic growth of the period.

At the time when the roads board began its communication improvement project in the 1840s, the roads in most parts of the Overberg were in good condition and they apparently remained thus without a great deal of expense. What was of great value to the Overberg was the construction of various bridges which prevented long delays in winter when rivers were swollen. The bridge across the Bot River was opened in July 1845, at the same time as the opening of bridges over the Eerste and Lourens Rivers. The *South African Commercial Advertiser* reported that work had also commenced on various other bridges with the object of removing "all obstacles" between Cape Town and the Gourits River. In April 1852 the bridge over the Palmiet River was completed. The Breede River remained one of the greatest obstacles in winter and although Southey reported from Swellendam in 1850 that a bridge over that river was receiving attention, there was disagreement over the best situation. Southey felt that the matter should be deferred otherwise it might be put in the

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52. CO 2812 Civil Commissioner Swellendam. Answers to circular from colonial office, 7 July 1843.
53. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1862, and 1/SWM 11/8 Civil Commissioner Swellendam, Report, January 1862.
54. S.A.C.A., Roads and Bridges, 21 June 1845.
55. Burman, p.91.
wrong place as many new roads and passes might make changes in routes desirable. In summer the river was shallow and could be forded without difficulty and early in the nineteenth century a pontoon had been provided which was capable of transporting a wagon and eight oxen. J.A. Stopforth records that in 1838 there were two pons on the Breede although all official documents after that date refer to the pont. It became operative from about the middle of May and was used most from July to September. The disagreement over the position for a bridge near Swellendam continued for over twenty years. In 1874 it became necessary to launch a new pont and there is no mention of a bridge.

The main route through the Overberg had been much improved by the provision of bridges, and similar improvements throughout the Colony made a vast difference to the efficiency of the postal service. The attention which the postal service was receiving can be seen in the increase in colonial expenditure on this branch of communication which is indicated in the following figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1845</th>
<th>1855</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1863</th>
<th>1865</th>
<th>1866</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure on Postal Communications (in pounds sterling)</td>
<td>6 537</td>
<td>26 709</td>
<td>32 950</td>
<td>47 621</td>
<td>34 526</td>
<td>38 450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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56. CO 2867 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 19 March 1850 and 14 May 1850.
58. Van Reenen, p.35.
60. 1/SWM 12/89 List of Tariffs for Breede River pont, c. 1828.
61. 1/SWM 1/21 Roads Inspector to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 30 January 1874 and 16 June 1874.
62. CO 1/2/2/1/13 Report of Select Committee on Retrenchment of Public Expenditure, 1866.
In 1844 there had been only one weekly post between Cape Town and Grahamstown of which the contract time was 135 hours, but owing to unbridged rivers and bad roads, it usually took longer. The postage on letters was necessarily heavy and ranged from 3½d to 1s 2d. In 1845 the governor proposed to introduce a uniform rate on letters and at the end of December of that year to introduce a post twice a week between Cape Town and Grahamstown which would be accomplished in 70 hours owing to the improvement in roads and bridges.

In 1849 the postal service between the Western and Eastern Cape was increased to three times a week, and owing to the increased postal revenue due to the introduction of the uniform rate of 4d, the governor felt justified in recommending a further reduction to 1d.63 By 1854, in the Overberg itself, there were eleven towns and villages with post offices with a regular postal service. 64

An important advance in communication in the nineteenth century was the introduction of the electric telegraph. In 1850 England was connected by telegraph across the Dover Straits with the most important capitals of Europe and the editor of the South African Agricultural News speculated that it would only be a matter of time before they reached the Colony.65 The Commercial Advertiser reported in September

64. LCA 28 Legislative Council, Colonial Estimates for 1854.
1858 that the Atlantic Telegraph Company was having great success and that Europe and America were in the process of being connected. A connection with India through the Cape and Mauritius was also being contemplated. 66

The report of the select committee into telegraphic communication in 1861 advised the immediate commencement of the line from Cape Town to Grahamstown as this would "materially advance the commercial and social condition of the Colony". 67 The line was completed in 1864 68 and the civil commissioner for Swellendam reported in January 1865 that the establishment of a telegraph station at that town had greatly accelerated their means of communication and was much used by the commercial community. 69

Before concluding the section on communication, modes and cost of transport will be examined briefly. In a farming economy that left no farm accounts, it is difficult to calculate in real terms the cost of a waggon trip from the Overberg to Cape Town. Examination of transport costs to the ordinary individual and government officials will, however, give some indication of how costly transport by waggon was, particularly in years of stock disease and drought when draught animals were scarce.

66. S.A.C.A., Editorials, 22 September 1858 and 25 September 1858.
67. CCP 1/2/2/1/8 Report of Select Committee on Telegraphic Communication, 1861.
68. Rabin, p.123.
69. 1/SW 14/8 Civil Commissioner Swellendam, Report for Blue Book, 23 January 1865.
Much had been done to improve routes in the Colony but while the chief mode of travel remained the waggon, transport was slow and costly. There is evidence that horses and mules were favoured above oxen in the Overberg. Since most of the internal routes of the Overberg were good by contemporary standards, the lumbering ox became less necessary. In c.1825 when Teenstra journeyed through the area, he had joined a group of farmers in Cape Town who were returning to their farms. The train consisted of thirteen waggons, ten drawn by horses, and only three by oxen. As they were a great deal faster, horses and mules were preferred to oxen. Because of severe losses in horses during the horsesickness epidemics of 1855/56 and 1862 the number of mules used in the Overberg increased considerably between 1856 and 1865. Mules were favoured not only because of superior strength, but because of a greater resistance to horsesickness, a characteristic inherited from the highly resistant South African ass. The census figures for 1865 show that while numbers of draught oxen in the Caledon and Bredasdorp area remained almost static between 1856 and 1865 (from 4,175 to 4,186) the number of mules increased during the same period from 1,084 to 2,450. A similar trend is noticeable in the figures for Swellendam. The greater use of horses and mules for

70. Teenstra, pp.312, 313.
71. I/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1860.
72. M.W. Henning, Animal Diseases in South Africa, pp.765, 786. During the severest outbreak on record in 1855/56, 70,000 horses, comprising more than 40% of the entire horse population of the Cape died from horsesickness.
73. CCP 4/11/1 Census of the Cape Colony 1865, p.x.
74. Henning, p.790.
75. CCP 4/11/1 Census of the Cape Colony 1865, p.x.
transport would have been encouraged by the improvement in the roads, bridges and passes, which no longer required the slower but stronger ox.

The cost of travel by waggon was high and was partly due to the scarcity of draught animals which periodic epidemics and droughts occasioned. A clerk of the peace who moved from George to Caledon in 1838 (the year of a serious outbreak of horsesickness) had to pay £11 5s for the hire of a waggon. This was more than the monthly salary of someone in this office which was a little over £10. In 1856 shortly after the horsesickness epidemic, a move from Colesberg to Caledon for a government official whose monthly salary was £16 13s 4d cost £94 3s. In the present age it is difficult to appreciate the serious nature of disease among draught animals. The Colony was not only affected by horsesickness, but in 1854 lungsickness was introduced to the Colony by an imported Friesland bull which was landed at Mossel Bay. Within two years more than 100,000 animals in South Africa had succumbed. The shortage of draught oxen is reflected in the sharp rise in the price of these animals. Between 1787 and 1846, a period of 59 years, the price of oxen remained fairly consistent at from about £1 to £1 15s. Within twelve years, between 1846 and 1858, the price jumped to £10 per ox. This was a result of the devastation caused by lungsickness. The situation was compounded by drought and by 1863 oxen were still fetching

76. CO 2784 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1839.
77. CO 2838 Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 29 January 1847.
78. I/CAL 5/1/2/3 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Resident Magistrate Bredasdorp, 25 June 1856.
79. Henning, pp. 204, 205.
80. Henzel, p. 201; Van Breda Journals 1817 - 1847, Inventory and Tax Return for Zoetendals Valley, 23 March 1830; Moodie, p. 135; CO 2838 Civil Commissioner Caledon and Swellendam, Vendu Roll, Sale 20 December 1846.
81. CCP 1/2/2/1/5 Report of Select Committee on Railway from P.E., 1858, p. 51.
£15 per pair. Where horses were concerned, their availability and prices were not only affected by disease and drought, but wars on the eastern frontier made them scarce and costly. In 1847 the Swellendam field cornets complained that horses which could be procured some years previously for £3 15s were selling for £30. During an epidemic, horse-owners were loath to let their animals out of their charge and officials found it difficult to carry out their duties and to maintain the postal services. Both the Swellendam and Caledon civil commissioners complained of the difficulty of hiring horses and the expense. Joseph Barry, merchant of Swellendam, when questioned by the select committee on railways in 1862, stated that he could not procure sufficient transport for produce and goods. In former years there had not been any difficulty in hiring waggons, but he complained that the rate of transport from Swellendam to Cape Town had risen by 200%.

Despite the improvement in communications between the Overberg and available markets, commercial traffic through the area was increased for only a limited period. Routes were opened up around the Overberg which tended to return it to the isolation that it had experienced before the building of easily traversible mountain passes. It was fortunate for the Overberg that by 1838 it was producing wool which for many

82. 1/SWM 14/6 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Treasurer-general, 12 March 1863.
83. CO 2838 Field Cornets to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 3 September 1847.
84. 1/CAL 5/1/2/2 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 24 April 1855 and CO 2992 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 5 June 1860.
85. CCP 1/2/2/1/9 Report of Select Committee on Railways 1862, p.8.
years had a ready and profitable overseas market. Such was the demand for wool, and the ability of the Overberg to produce a fine product, that the handicaps imposed by difficult communications were to a large extent overcome. Even the dangers of shipping at Port Beaufort were braved for half a century in order to ship this valuable product. It is almost impossible to overstate the role of wool in the economic development of the area, for there was no other product which could enable it to compete successfully with other areas. It will be seen later in the sections on grain and wool that the production of grain, especially wheat, remained fairly static in the period under study, while wool production soared. The emphasis was unlikely to change while the Overberg remained without rail links.
CHAPTER FIVE

LIMITED HORIZONS FOR CULTIVATION

At the end of Lord Charles Somerset's regime (1826) the Swellendam district, which at that time was a vast area, was producing a good deal less wheat than the smaller Stellenbosch district and just over half that of the Cape district. The Swellendam district was producing about 27,000 muids of wheat annually compared to the 35,000 muids of the Stellenbosch district and the 46,000 of the Cape district. D.J. van Zyl claimed that the opening of Port Beaufort (c. 1823) led to a remarkable increase in the grain production of the Overberg. Although this may have been so, the Overberg continued to find it difficult to compete with the Stellenbosch and Cape districts which were nearer the main market of Cape Town. Wheat production in the latter two areas increased more rapidly and more steadily than in the Overberg. When R. Ross speaks of "great expansion of wheat production" in the rolling hills along the south and west coasts, he appears to include the Overberg. Yet wheat production in the Overberg was not sustained at the tempo that may have been expected.

Although the opening of Port Beaufort encouraged farmers to believe that they had an outlet for their product which led to an initial spurt in production, wheat failed to be sufficiently remunerative to sustain rapid growth. R. Ross believes that there was sufficient capital being generated at the Cape to allow continual investment in agriculture,

2. Ibid., p. 261
particularly in wheat and wine. Although this may have been so for the Cape and Stellenbosch districts, growth in wheat production in the Overberg could not compare with the former two districts. In 1826 the Swellendam district was producing about 27 000 muids of wheat. Some 70 years later the greater part of the Overberg was producing about 48 000 muids while the Cape district and the areas to the north west were producing a very much more impressive 224 000 muids. The expansion of wheat production in the Overberg had thus not even doubled over a period of 70 years whereas in the Cape and Stellenbosch areas it had almost trebled. The improved road over the Hottentots Holland made the journey to Cape Town a little safer for Overberg farmers, but not shorter, and a fair amount of risk was involved in the export of wheat from the Breede River mouth. Neither of these outlets made grain farming sufficiently profitable to encourage large-scale cultivation. Figures from the Blue Books indicate that production did increase gradually from 1838 to circa 1870 but there was no dramatic increase to suggest that an improved market was making cultivation worthwhile. The increase seems rather to have kept pace merely with a growing local population which necessitated increasing intensification.

The problems presented by transport put a severe check on the expansion of grain farming in the Overberg. Until shipping was commenced from Port Beaufort in the twenties and the Hottentots Holland Kloof was improved in the thirties, the production of grain was primarily for subsistence purposes. At times there was scarcely sufficient wheat for local consumption. The comments of travellers, even as late as

6. Van Reenen, p.19; Schreuder, pp.41, 45 and Van Zyl, p.175.
In 1860, support the idea that only small scattered areas were cultivated for grain. In 1815 the Caledon area was a "barren waste, excepting a few green spots of cultivation in the vale"; in the twenties there were only "scattered wheat fields" between Bot River and Caledon; in 1848 there were only a few patches of cultivated ground and in 1861 the whole veld around Caledon was just "dotted with a few square miles of corn here and there". In the 1840s the extent of grain cultivation in the Overberg was not considered sufficiently extensive to warrant the use of threshing machines and horses could be obtained more cheaply. A random sample of forty farmers from various parts of the Overberg shows that most cultivated between ten and forty morgen until about 1845:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morgen cultivated</th>
<th>Number of farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 50</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 60</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 - 70</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 - 80</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 - 90</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 - 100</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Latrobe, p.76.
11. Duff Gordon, p.76.
13. LBD 24 and 27 Swellendam Land Reports, 1827 and 1828 - 1845.
Calculating the increase in acreage under wheat in the Overberg from the Blue Books for the period 1838 to 1872 presents problems. There are glaring errors in the estimates for the various districts while the continued creation of new magisterial districts makes it difficult to select figures that give a reasonably accurate picture for Caledon, Swellendam and Bredasdorp. In 1838 the figure given for the Swellendam district (including Caledon, Bredasdorp and Riversdale) for acres under wheat was 12 000 (5 671 morgen). The figures for 1872 were given separately for the four districts mentioned above, and the total was 11 777 acres (5 282 morgen). Although the figures must be treated with caution, it is safe to conclude that the amount of land cultivated for wheat remained fairly static; certainly there was no large-scale increase between 1838 and 1872. There was a gradual increase in the yield of wheat in this period but this was more likely due to the use of improved varieties and methods. The census figures for 1865 corroborate that in the nine-year period, 1856 - 1865, there was a decrease of about 2 000 morgen in the land sown to wheat in the Caledon and Bredasdorp areas. The census also shows that a very inconsiderable amount of the total area of the districts under consideration was cultivated. For Caledon it was 2,92%, for Bredasdorp 1,03% and for Swellendam 1,84%. The Van Breda journals also substantiate the belief that the amount of wheat sown did not rise dramatically. Throughout the forties between ten and thirteen muids were sown. During the drought of the sixties which affected the interior most, there was a considerable market as far afield as Bloemfontein for Overberg grain. Zoetendals Valley sowed the

14. CCP 9/1 Blue Book 1838, p.244.
16. See below, p.106.
17. CCP 4/11/1 Census 1865, p.xiii.
18. Ibid., figures calculated from data on pp.164, 165.
exceptional amount of 24.75 muids in 1863 but it was down to 16.25 muids in 1865. In 1866 when conditions were approaching normal again, the amount sown was 11.5 muids.\textsuperscript{20}

Although the amount of ground cultivated to grain apparently remained static, the yields of wheat, and more notably of oats, did increase. In attempting to draw conclusions about the production of the various grains, the Blue Book figures for 1838, 1865 and 1875 have been selected. The year 1838 was the start of the period under study and as 1865 and 1875 were census years, these figures are probably more accurate than for interim years.

Wheat production for Caledon, Swellendam and Bredasdorp for these years was as follows:

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{cccc}
\hline
 & 1838 & 1865 & 1875 \\
\hline
PRODUCTION OF WHEAT FOR SWELLENDAM, CALEDON AND BREDASDORP (BUSHELS) & 95 080 & 129 945 & 137 850 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

The actual increase in production between 1838 and 1865 was 34 865 bushels which represents an increase of 36.67% over a period of 27 years, or an annual average rate of increase of 1.36%. The increase in production for the period 1865 to 1875 was 7 905 bushels. This was only a 6.08% increase with an annual average rate of increase of 0.6%. For the whole period, 1838 to 1875, the annual average rate of increase for

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., pp.19, 25, 30.

\textsuperscript{21} CCP 9/1, 9/28 and 9/38 Blue Books 1838 p.244; 1865 pp. BB 2,3 and 1875 pp. BB 2,3. The figures for 1865 and 1875 were obtained by adding the figures for the three districts.
wheat production was 1.2%. This very low annual average rate of increase, particularly after 1865, indicates that there was no rapid expansion in wheat production.

The picture presented in the production of oats was significantly different. While wheat was used primarily for human consumption and required densely settled (generally urban) areas to provide a good market, oats were used as stock feed, both as hay and as a grain. In the following chapter the growing importance of wool farming will be examined and it appears that farmers were concentrating on producing stock feed rather than wheat. From the figures below, this definitely appears to be the case.

PRODUCTION OF OATS FOR SWELLENDAM, CALEDON AND BREDASDORP (BUSHELS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1838</th>
<th>1865</th>
<th>1875</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>41,004</td>
<td>67,952</td>
<td>98,594</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the 37 years from 1838 to 1875, oats production had increased by 57,590 bushels. This represents an increase of 140.45%, or an annual average rate of increase of 3.79%. Oats production thus had a considerably higher rate of increase than wheat.

The production of barley, which is also used for stock feed (although it is possible that some was being used for beer brewing) remained fairly static:

22. CCP 9/1, 9/20 and 9/38 Blue Books 1838, p.244; 1865, p.68 2,3 and 1875, p. 68 2,3.
PRODUCTION OF BARLEY FOR SWELLENDAM, CALEDON AND BREDASDORP
(BUSHELS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1838</th>
<th>1865</th>
<th>1875</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58 044</td>
<td>50 614</td>
<td>66 782</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The actual increase over the 37 year period was 8 738 bushels, or an increase of 15,05%, or an annual average rate of increase of 0,40%. Although this increase appears insignificant, if one adds the total production of oats and barley for 1875 it will be found to total 165 376 bushels which was 27 526 bushels more than total wheat production. This can leave little doubt of the greater importance of stock feed.

Rye was grown in small quantities but was clearly of little economic significance. In 1875 the three areas produced a total of 6 649 bushels.24

The census of 1865 gave figures for that year as well as for 1856. On examining the increase in the production of wheat, oats and barley over this nine year period, it will also be found that the annual average rate of increase for wheat was 1,2%, for oats it was 6,6% and for barley 2,5%.25

The predominance of oats over the other grain sorts was also illustrated in the journals of Zoetendals Valley and of J.J. du Toit of the Bredasdorp district. The figures below give an indication of the extent to which oats predominated:

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23. CCP 9/1, 9/28 and 9/30 Blue Books, 1838, p.244; 1865, p.BB 2,3 and 1875, p.BB 2,3.
24. Ibid.
25. Percentages calculated from data in Census 1865, p.xiv.
### GRAIN SOWN AND HARVESTED AT ZOETENDALS VALLEY

#### WHEAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Muids sown</th>
<th>Sheaves reaped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>10,5</td>
<td>1,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>9,5</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### OATS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Muids</th>
<th>Sheaves reaped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### BARLEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Muids</th>
<th>Sheaves reaped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>8,75</td>
<td>16,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>7,5</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>6,5</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6,000 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. Van Breda Journals II, 1840 - 1944, pp.4 - 6. The poor oats crop for 1848 was a result of a severe and "over moist" winter (p.6).
The amount of oats and barley reaped at Zoetendals Valley was far in excess of wheat.

A similar preference for oats, although not as marked, can be seen from Du Toit's figures. He does not record muids sown, but only sheaves harvested.

**GRAIN HARVESTED BY J.J. DU TOIT, BREDASDORP DISTRICT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sheaves harvested</th>
<th>Wheat</th>
<th>Oats</th>
<th>Barley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>1 960</td>
<td>3 000</td>
<td>1 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>3 210</td>
<td>2 735</td>
<td>1 149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>1 800</td>
<td>3 000</td>
<td>2 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>2 500</td>
<td>3 500</td>
<td>2 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>2 200</td>
<td>3 500</td>
<td>1 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1 800</td>
<td>2 000</td>
<td>2 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>2 800</td>
<td>6 300</td>
<td>4 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The various statistics provided will have served to show that wheat was losing and not gaining ground as a farm crop. In the next chapter it will be seen that Merino sheep were proving a far more viable venture. What were the difficulties involved in wheat cultivation and marketing which limited its production in the Overberg?

At the start of the nineteenth century W.S. van Ryneveld predicted that wheat would never become an article of export for the Colony. It required too many hands, it caused much

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27. Du Toit Journal 1866 - 1869, pp. 2, 9, 21, 29, 39, 49. The figures for 1872 show a large increase which was due to the hiring of ground from a neighbour. Oats enjoyed marked preference over the other two grains.
trouble with regard to transport and because of the "extraordinary expense" involved, it could never be marketed in Cape Town at a price which would make export viable.\(^{28}\)

Although the merchants of Cape Town supposed that farmers were wanting in industry, an observer argued in their favour that grain could not be transported to the mother city profitably from distances greater than 70 miles. The prices they received barely defrayed the costs of cultivation and what the farmer earned was equivalent to a labourer's wages. It was not profitable to transport wheat to Cape Town and as almost the whole population of the Overberg were producers, there was little demand for any surplus.\(^{29}\) The opening of Port Beaufort, with the possibility of shipping grain to Cape Town, undoubtedly provided a stimulus, albeit brief, for grain production in parts of the Overberg. It was claimed that between about 1823 and 1835, three times more grain was being produced which showed the "absurdity of taxing the Dutch farmers with indolence when the principle of self-interest had no scope for being brought into action".\(^{30}\)

Transport costs appear to have been the major obstacle to more extensive wheat production in the Overberg.\(^{31}\) Because of the enormous rate of transport, wheat was being imported from America much more cheaply in the forties.\(^{32}\) Some twenty years later the situation had not changed. Robert Hare, a politician who supported farming interests, contended that farmers were not receiving a remunerative price for their wheat at 12s 6d a muid while a merchant claimed that in America wheat was made to pay at 9s per muid. It was inferred


\(^{29}\) Moodie, pp. 125, 331.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 332.

\(^{31}\) The better returns to be had from wool receive attention in chapter six.

\(^{32}\) S.A.C.A., Agricultural Interests, 12 November 1846.
that parliament should do something to assist the farmers as the free enterprise merchants who were dubbed "verneukers" imported immense quantities of foreign grain which made local grain unsaleable. 33

Although the shortage and ineffectiveness of labour was often put forward as a reason for low grain production, 34 by the sixties the Overberg, and particularly the Caledon district, was producing abundant harvests in excess of local needs but transport still remained a problem. The civil commissioner for Caledon felt that shipping from some of the bays should be investigated as the Hottentots Holland route was still one of "great trouble and fatigue" to heavily laden waggons. 35 By 1864, owing to increased efforts at production, the Swellendam farmers were producing "bountiful harvests". Unfortunately when harvests were good prices fell to "ridiculously low rates" and there were no outlets for the surpluses. 36 In 1870 in the Swellendam district grain of all kinds was abundant and cheap and in the Bredasdorp district it was so plentiful that prices had dropped to an almost nominal rate. 37 Although prices are not given, they were clearly less remunerative than ever and probably well below 12s 6d per muid. Farmers hoarded wheat in the hopes of obtaining better prices and the result was that merchants imported grain which compounded the problem. 38 There were times when the Overberg farmers received abnormally favourable prices for their grain, but this was rare. 39

34. The question of labour will be discussed in a later section.
35. 1/Cal 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1860, 3 January 1863 and 13 January 1864.
37. CCP 9/33 Blue Book 1870, Civil Commissioners' Reports, Swellendam and Bredasdorp, pp.11 10.
39. See page 152.
Eastern frontier wars tended to create a greater demand and dry conditions in the interior also favoured the Overberg. In 1865 during severe drought throughout the Colony and beyond its borders, Zoetendals Valley shipped the exceptionally large quantity of 236 bags of wheat from Struys Bay. Although some harvests in the Overberg were less favourable than others, complete failures were unknown. This can be seen in the consistent figures for the harvests of Zoetendals Valley and J.J. du Toit. The harvest of 1865/66, however, appears to have been exceptionally bad in certain areas. In both the Bredasdorp and Caledon districts, many farmers were obliged to obtain seed elsewhere for their following sowing.

It appears that the Overberg was quite capable of producing an abundance of grain well in excess of its own requirements. It was the unremunerative price caused chiefly by the high costs of transport that prevented expansion of this branch of farming. Even towards the end of the century transport remained a problem. An agricultural expert from Scotland, R. Wallace, commented in the 1890s that the development of wheat growing in the Caledon district was retarded because of the defective means of transport. He noted that a railway was being agitated for and was certainly needed if the district was to be cultivated at all. Transport was not seen as the only problem however. Wallace believed that the area could never be a "truly great grain-growing district" as the soil was not considered rich enough; it was often less than twelve inches to the hard underlying clay.

40. S.A.C.A., Agricultural Interests, 12 November 1846.
42. See above pp.109, 110.
43. CCP 9/28 Blue Book 1865, Civil Commissioner's Report Bredasdorp, p.33 and J/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 8 January 1866.
44. Wallace, p.11.
Although not within the period under study, it is worth noting that grain production expanded considerably once the railway line was completed to Caledon after the second Anglo-Boer war. Sowing was described then as a "relatively new and expanding development" in the Caledon area. The increased possibilities of tillage could be seen in the "great" development in Caledon and Bredasdorp since the opening of the railway over Sir Lowry's Pass which put an end to the "long and costly journey by waggon". It was becoming sufficiently profitable to produce excess grain and in these areas bijpaaiers were helping to bring large areas under cultivation.45 Despite these developments, however, the Caledon area continued to lag far behind the Swartland as a grain producing area as the following figures reveal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA CULTIVATED TO GRAIN 1912 (MORGEN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caledon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malmesbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piketberg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before concluding the section on grain cultivation, the experiments with new varieties, progress in methods, and the gradual swing to mechanisation will be examined briefly.

45. Macaillan, The South African Agrarian Problem, pp.52, 70.
Rust or mildew in grain which was caused by a parasitic fungus, *Puccinia graminis*, became a serious problem after 1820. It was more troublesome in particularly wet years and it was thought that the only effective way of overcoming rust was to develop vigorous strains as some varieties were more resistant than others. Bengal wheat was commonly used for although it ripened late and was not as productive as other grains, it appeared to be more resistant than most varieties. T.B. Bayley of *The Oaks* experimented a great deal with new varieties. He imported Aragna wheat from South America in 1849 to secure an early, hardy variety which was likely to withstand the moister conditions of the Riviersonderend valley. A variety known as Victoria wheat had proved very successful in withstanding disease and Bayley believed that Aragna and Victoria were the same. Unfortunately it appeared that all imported varieties eventually lost their resistance to rust. In the early sixties the Cape of Good Hope Agricultural Society was active in importing and promoting the cultivation of numerous new types of grain in the hopes of overcoming mildew. At the

47. Wallace, p.453.
48. Van Zyl, p.245.
49. Van Breda Journals II, 1840 - 1944, p.4 and I/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 10 January 1867.
53. Ibid., State of the Crop, 6 December 1849 and T.B. Bayley on Aragna Wheat, 7 March 1850.
55. S.A.C.A., Cape of Good Hope Agricultural Society, 8 August 1864 and 20 December 1865.
agricultural exhibition in Swellendam in 1864, M.J. van Breda exhibited fifteen wheat varieties, all from imported seed. 58 Five varieties are mentioned in the Van Breda Journals between 1863 and 1867, being Midian, English, Indian, Egyptian and barley wheat. 57 Rust continued to be a problem, however, and even by 1895 no method of spraying the wheat or the seed had been of any avail in combating the disease. 58

In the production of grain, there were three major procedures. These were the ploughing, the reaping and the threshing. Change was slow and the old methods continued to prove adequate for many. But the period under study saw a gradual acceptance of the superiority of imported ploughs and at least some farmers began to acknowledge the advantages of mechanised reaping and threshing.

During the forties and for some time thereafter, the merits and demerits of imported metal and wooden Cape ploughs became a matter of controversy in agricultural circles. Contention over ploughs had commenced during the first British occupation (1795 - 1803) when William Duckitt had introduced the metal plough. 59 Although the metal plough was successfully adopted by many leading farmers, it was more suited to land that had already been cultivated and it required a blacksmith to sharpen the share after half a day’s work. For grain farmers who still had virgin soil to break and who did not have the services of a blacksmith, the old wooden plough still answered best. 60 The wooden frame and triangular iron cutter of Cape ploughs were described by

60. Van Zyl, p.239.
Teenstra as being of the rudest description and yet in 1857 they were still in common use in many parts of the Colony. The Cape plough was heavy and clumsy but even English farmers had reverted to it in localities where it proved more practical. Its use was decreasing however. In 1846 the Commercial Advertiser noted that the "crust of prejudice" was being broken and Fairbairn, the editor, predicted:

The old farmer on the Zonderend River....when he sees and hears that not only in his neighbourhood but elsewhere, and not only by Englishmen, but by Cape born youths, the same work can be executed easily by one man with two horses, which he himself accomplishes grievously [with] ten oxen and two men ... will feel disposed to allow his sons to at least try the experiment.

By 1872 the wooden ploughs had almost disappeared and had been replaced by Ransomes and Howards, the latter having been first imported by T.B. Bayley. The American Eagle plough was much used in the western divisions and ploughs were also imported from Sweden. The most rapid change appears to have taken place as a result of the grand agricultural exhibitions, held in 1859, 1861 and 1864 at Caledon, Worcester and Swellendam respectively. Ploughing matches were arranged which not only aroused a lively interest but provided much entertainment. At the second great agricultural exhibition held at Worcester, an English ploughman using a Ransome's single furrow plough soon attracted an immense number of farmers around him - a larger attendance of farmers

61. Teenstra, p.341.
62. Reitz, Cape Agriculture in Two Lectures, p.27.
63. S.A.C.A., Editorial, 4 March 1846.
64. Cape Argus, Obituary T.B. Bayley, 2 January 1872.
65. CD 783, Letters Received from Sundry Committees, Second Annual Report of Western Cape Agricultural Society, 10 July 1861, p.17 and Reid, (ed.), South African Agricultural News and Farmers' Journal, p.146.
than ever seen anywhere. All were delighted with the man's work and did not believe that ploughing could be brought to such perfection. One of the chief obstacles to the increase in the use of imported ploughs was their cost - between £8 and £12. It would appear that as farmers obtained a greater cash income from wool production they could more readily afford imported machinery. A sharp rise in imported agricultural implements between 1856 and 1858, the height of the wool boom, can be directly correlated to the improved income of farmers. In 1856 implements to the value of £5,591 had been imported; in 1858 the figure was £19,304, a 245% increase over two years.

Although the harvesting of grain precedes threshing, machines for the latter process were developed long before mechanical reapers. In Britain, the 1830s had seen an important watershed in farm mechanisation and by the 1840s threshing machines were widely used in southern and eastern England. Between 1850 and 1880 the use of steam engines in the threshing process spread rapidly. By the early thirties a few threshing machines had been imported to the Colony but the common method of driving horses around a circular threshing floor, reminiscent of the Scriptures, was found "much cheaper" and "more expeditious."

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68. Ibid., Editorial, 1 January 1859.
72. Moodie, pp. 117, 120.
forties it was felt that the importance of agricultural machinery must be obvious to everyone because of the labour shortage following emancipation, and the occasional threshing machine was offered for sale. The feasibility of introducing threshing machines was discussed by the Swellendam Agricultural Society with "great zeal" in 1842 but the minutes showed that a large majority were of the opinion that the "old colonial plan" was cheapest. Grain culture was not carried on extensively in that district and horses were easily and cheaply obtainable.

As in the case of ploughs, it was the efforts of the agricultural societies that ultimately helped to convince farmers of the effectiveness of machinery, although early attempts were disappointing. The exhibitions that were held in Cape Town up to 1857 had not produced the desired result as very few farmers had attended. Agriculturists had shown much indifference to the operations of the Cape of Good Hope Agricultural Society and it was decided that it was necessary to "take the mountain to Mohammed", hence the decision to hold grand agricultural exhibitions in the country. But even after the second exhibition at Worcester in 1861 the president, P.B. Borcherds, maintained that many importers of machinery had been disheartened as they could not cover their costs. Despite the successes of the threshing and winnowing demonstrations, Borcherds claimed that a great deal more still had to be done before the majority of farmers

73. S.A.C.A., Advertisements, 22 January 1840 and 15 February 1851.
75. Cape Argus, Agricultural Society, 14 March 1857.
appreciated the value of machinery. Although farmers were astonished at the speed at which threshing machines operated, (it took 40 horses to tread out 12 muids per day while a threshing machine could thresh 440 muids in three days) there were few, particularly in the Overberg, who could justify spending £100 and more on an operation that brought in little if any profit. The *Cape Argus* reported (14 March 1857) that it cost £100 to land a threshing machine in the Cape District. Transport to the Overberg would have increased costs considerably. Between the late fifties and mid-sixties, however, imports of agricultural machinery gained considerable momentum and in 1861 the civil commissioner for Caledon reported:

*I think that the use of the reaping and threshing machines by the Dutch farmers is a sure sign of progress . . . . Their use may be taken as one of the many good results produced by the Grand Agricultural Show which was held in November 1859.*

While the agricultural exhibitions undoubtedly did much to foster the use of new machinery, the increasing literacy of the Colony helped to disseminate knowledge and information. In the late fifties the *Cape Argus* reported a "great improvement" amongst the inhabitants of the country districts. Where post carts ran, newspapers were finding their way and the rising generation of farmers were becoming a "reading people". In 1858 more money was spent on newspapers in the Paarl district alone than in the whole of

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76. CO 763 Sundry Committees 1861, Second Annual Report of the Western Cape Agricultural Society, 10 July 1861, p.5.
77. *Cape Argus*, 14 March 1857.
78. See also Reid, (ed.), *South African Agricultural News and Farmers' Journal*, Correspondent, 2 May 1850, p.147.
79. S.A.C.A., Editorial, 22 September 1858 and Advertisements, 31 April 1860 and 1 June 1864.
80. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 11 January 1861.
the country districts ten years earlier. Caledon and Swellendam which were both on the direct postal route to the Eastern Cape would have experienced a similar benefit.

The threshing machine was introduced onto the Van Breda farm Zoetendals Valley sometime prior to 1862. The frustrations of innovations are abundantly clear from the journal entries:

- Thrashing (sic) machine smashed.
- Sent the drum of the machine to Cape Town on the Mail Cart.
- Commenced to work the threshing machine - it broke.
- Machine out of order again. Tried machine - it broke.
- Threshed barley with machine. It broke again.
- Machine broke when about to tramp the rye.
- Took the machine into store house.

Only by 1872 do the teething troubles of the threshing machine appear to have been overcome. A diary entry on 24 November of that year reads: "Threshed barley. Machine went well". The necessity of taking a machine to Cape Town to have it repaired would have prevented farmers from buying so fickle a machine, but by 1872 many of the country villages had their own mechanics and Zoetendals Valley, at least, could have its machinery repaired at Bredasdorp.

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81. Cape Argus, The Agricultural Society, 10 January 1858.
82. Journal entries ceased between 7 September 1849 and 7 January 1862. The first reference to the threshing machine is on 14 January 1862.
83. Van Breda Journals II, 1840 - 1944, pp. 10, 43, 44.
84. Ibid., p.56.
85. Ibid., p.52.
The production of a successful reaping machine took somewhat longer than a thresher. With the single exception of the threshing machine, only by the end of the century, even in England, did machinery begin to have any real impact on production. Apart from threshing, the methods employed at harvest time were little different in 1850 than in 1750.\textsuperscript{86} With such a situation in the main country of manufacture, conditions were unlikely to be different in the colonies. It was reported in 1852 that a successful American reaping machine had been exhibited at the Great Exhibition in London. It was drawn by two horses and could cut fifteen acres in ten hours. One man drove and one raked.\textsuperscript{87} Dr Henry White of the Swellendam district is purported to have been the first to import a reaping machine to South Africa some time prior to 1857\textsuperscript{88} but as early as 1847 a Mr Walker was experimenting with two reaping machines. A Mr Van Reenen of Ganzekraal and Captain Rainier of Nethercourt both owned such machines by 1849.\textsuperscript{89} In 1858 the \textit{Commercial Advertiser} reported that Cape farmers were disposed to give the reaper a fair trial in the hopes of rendering them less dependent on a "somewhat capricious labour market".\textsuperscript{90} In 1861 a Mr Beale from Ransome and Sims of Ipswich visited the Colony on his way home from Australia to ascertain the nature of the machinery required for colonial conditions.\textsuperscript{91} By 1864 a reaper for the Colony was being worked upon but it was not ready for the

\textsuperscript{86} Morgan, p.15.

\textsuperscript{87} S.A.C.A., Reaping Machine, 20 March 1852.

\textsuperscript{88} Burrows, Overberg Outspan, p.162


\textsuperscript{90} S.A.C.A., Editorial, 20 November 1858.

\textsuperscript{91} CO 783, Sundry Committees, Annual Report of the Cape of Good Hope Agricultural Society, 1861, p.7.
agricultural exhibition at Swellendam in that year. In 1865 and 1866 trial demonstrations were given in Mowbray (Cape Town) for farmers to become acquainted with the "extraordinary powers" of this machine which did "excellent work". The first reference to a reaping machine in the Van Breda Journals is on 23 October 1865. The machine had evidently been acquired some time before this date but because of the dry years in the sixties the oats had not grown to any length and the machine could not be used. Towards the end of the century it was reported that the self-binding reaper was being extensively used in harvesting ripe crops in the chief grain-growing districts of the Colony. The machine was expensive, however, (£45 - £55) and beyond the reach of the small-scale cultivator.

It has been shown that grain, and particularly wheat, were not remunerative to the Overberg farmer until the completion of the railway and it is therefore safe to assume that not many farmers could invest in machinery during the period under examination. Because Swartland farmers cultivated grain more extensively than the Overbergers, it was probably they who were the chief pioneers of the new forms of machinery.

Although the Overberg could successfully produce grain in excess of its requirements, the incentives for extension in this branch of farming were lacking. Markets were inadequate and transport difficult and costly. Wool was to prove a much more viable product than grain. The great increase in wool

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94. Van Breda Journals 11, 1840 - 1944, p.28.
95. Wallace, pp. 445, 446.
production and its value to the farmer as a stable and irreplaceable part of the farming economy of the Overberg will be examined in the following chapter.

Cultivation of crops apart from grain were of little commercial value to the Overberg farmer. Viticulture was an important activity in the areas nearer to Cape Town and until wool superseded it in the forties, wine had been the chief export of the Colony. In the Overberg, however, vineyards were planted almost exclusively for home use and by 1865 only one-tenth of the wine consumed in the Caledon district was produced locally. The Overberg did not depend on its grape crop for commercial gain and when the vine disease *Oidium* reached serious proportions in the sixties it was not considered of much consequence.

In the early sixties the Cape of Good Hope Agricultural Society gave much encouragement to the cultivation of tobacco. In 1864 varieties were obtained from India, America and Europe and distributed throughout the Colony. Although it grew well in parts of the Overberg, it obtained a low price which discouraged cultivators of the crop. It was used, however, to a large extent by the farmers themselves for the treatment of scab in sheep. By 1867 it had proved unremunerative and was "not persevered in".

97. CCP 1/2/2/1/12 Report of Select Committee on Bushman's Kloof Road, 1865, p.18.
98. 1/SMK 14/8 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, January 1862.
100. CCP 9/28 Blue Book 1865, Civil Commissioner's Report Caledon, p.31 10.
101. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 10 January 1867.
The chief obstacle to any form of summer cultivation in the Overberg was the long, hot and dry summers. Until irrigation could be practised effectively and extensively it was unlikely that any cultivated crop could prove successful. F.W. Reitz was an enthusiastic advocate of irrigation and in 1849 wrote that it was "the only thing we have to look to if ever we hope this colony to be pretty densely populated ....there are thousands of acres capable of irrigation".102 Construction of large dams required a great deal of capital and this was beyond the means of most farmers. In the sixties the majority of farms still only had small dams and tanks for household use103 and only tentative experiments with pumps were carried on throughout the period under investigation.104 Irrigation, even in the relatively advanced fruit-growing areas of Western America, was still in its infancy at the end of the nineteenth century.105

No attempt has been made to draw a distinction between the production of coloured and white farmers. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, by 1838 there was very little farmland in the possession of coloureds. Most coloureds were settled either at the three mission stations or on the farms of whites. Secondly the statistics in the Blue Books do not provide separate figures for coloured and white production. In the sources consulted there is also no indication of coloured farm labourers cultivating land on the farms of their employers. Produce from the few farms belonging to coloureds apparently did not warrant separate mention in the

103. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Questionnaire on Irrigation, 26 May 1862.
official records and their produce would have been included with that of white farmers. There is evidence that the land of the two Moravian mission stations, and particularly Genadendal, was well utilised, but the extent of these stations was no more than the equivalent of two or three white farms, and therefore the contribution to the economy would not have been great. The early opgaaf statistics for Genadendal are recorded up to 1826. In that year the station produced 128.5 muids of wheat, 61.5 of barley and 29 of oats. There can be little doubt that the inhabitants of the institutions made an important contribution to their own subsistence, and late into the century there were still more than 1 000 well-cultivated gardens at Genadendal.

In the Tradouw area of the Swellendam district an extent of 8 000 morgen, known as the Hottentot’s Kraal, was occupied by 55 coloureds. Of these 55 inhabitants, three were classified as farmers. Cultivation of the land was minimal and only seven occupants were recorded as having “very small” gardens in 1874. The chief source of subsistence was apparently goats, there being 1 771 among the various inhabitants. The contribution of coloured farmers to cultivated produce in the Overberg was clearly minimal.

By 1838 the potential of wool farming for the Colony had already become evident and was soon to prove a great deal more remunerative than grain. The advantages and the rewards of wool production were many and they will be examined in the following chapter.

108. Cape of Good Hope, Correspondence on the Hottentot Kraal Location in the Division of Swellendam, 1876, pp. 2,3,4,5,9.
CHAPTER SIX

STOCKBREEDING YIELDS TO THE MERINO

In 1849, when wool sales were soaring and prospects for Merino farming seemed unlimited, the editor of the *South African Agricultural News and Farmers' Journal* commented that it was difficult to name a domestic animal that contributed more to the support and comfort of man than the sheep. Even the fat-tailed Afrikaner which bore no wool had provided the early stockfarmer with his staple diet, skins for clothing and bedding, and an abundance of fat for soap and candles. The advent of the Merino with its valuable fleece furnished the farmer with a cash income which formed the nexus between him and a more advanced society and the prosperity that accompanied increased wool sales revealed itself in all facets of life. It will be seen that the Merino almost completely ousted all other stock in the Overberg, not only because of its profitable clip, but because both horses and cattle were drastically reduced by disease in the mid-nineteenth century.

By 1838, the Merino had made great strides since the end of the eighteenth century when Colonel Gordon had made the first attempts to foster this Spanish breed in the Colony. In 1789 the *Hollandsche Naatchappij tot nut van het Algemeen* had sent out a number of Merino rams and ewes for trials at the government farm, *Groenkloof*. Although Gordon was asked to return the sheep a few years later, he retained several purebred progeny. The Van Reenen brothers acquired three of Gordon's rams in 1782 and they began cross-breeding with selected Cape ewes on a fairly large scale. By 1804,


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one of the brothers, Jan Gysbert, had 2,700 crossbreds and in that year sold 4,000 lbs of wool. Two years later the Merino crosses had reached the Overberg and were being bred by Johannes Tesselaar of Agter Swarteberg, Landdrost A. Faure of Swellendam and by J. Dupré, who appears to have farmed alongside the Krombek River in the vicinity of the present Heidelberg. The distribution of Merino rams throughout the Colony in the early years of Merino breeding was largely due to the efforts of the Kommissie vir Veeteelt en Landbou under the aegis of Willem Stephanus van Ryneveld during the Batavian occupation. When the British re-occupied the Cape in 1806, there were about 11,000 Merinos and Merino crosses in the Colony.

Of the wool farming pioneers of the Cape, J.F. Reitz and Michiel van Breda require special mention. In 1812, Reitz, first director of the firm Reitz, Van Breda and Joubert, bought the farm Zoetendals Valley near Cape Agulhas where he began breeding Merinos. He bought the best ewes that he could find in the Colony and imported some of his own rams. Within three years he had a strong flock with highly serviceable wool. Owing to ill-health, he offered his first business partner, Michiel van Breda, a share in the farming venture in 1816 which was taken up in the following year. Van Breda took a lively interest in the venture with the result that breeding went ahead by leaps and bounds. By careful

3. F.W. Reitz, Observations on the Merino, p.3
selection and systematic breeding the partnership had, by 1830, 4 256 sheep. Eight years later there were 10 908.\textsuperscript{10} The Zoetendals Valley farm journal gives evidence of large numbers being sold annually and there were regular advertisements for sales in the press.\textsuperscript{11}

Despite successful crossbreeding by the Van Reenen brothers, it took time before the colonists were convinced of the advantages of the Merino. During the first decade of crossbreeding in the Colony, (1795 - circa 1804) only a "few industrious people" were cured of their prejudices against the new breed. Even a leading farmer near Cape Town decreed the promised profits from wool farming. He declared, "I am a man of means and do not need it. I prefer to adhere to my old ways."\textsuperscript{12} It appears to have taken another 30 years before the majority of farmers were sufficiently convinced of the value of wool to convert their indigenous flocks by the introduction of Merino blood. Dramatic increases in the numbers of woolled sheep occurred in the thirties but even by 1834, F.W.Reitz, the son of the director of Zoetendals Valley, felt that insufficient progress had been made.\textsuperscript{13} Part of the resistance to change can be attributed to an inherent obstinacy,\textsuperscript{14} but there were sound practical reasons why many farmers regarded change with suspicion. Despite Van Ryneveld's propaganda to the contrary, the crossbreds were found to be susceptible to disease and the young lambs were less hardy than the Cape breed. The wool sheep also required a great deal more specialised labour. A more

\textsuperscript{10} Van Breda Journals 1, Inventory and Tax Return, 23 March 1830, and also pp.68, 69.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp. 69, 81, 87, 89, 90 and Government Gazette, Advertisements, 5 June 1840, 5 November 1841 and passim.

\textsuperscript{12} Thom, (ed.), Van Ryneveld, pp.77 - 81.

\textsuperscript{13} Reitz, Observations on the Merino, pp.3,4.

valuable type of sheep demanded more care and the wool would have to be despatched to Cape Town, which for many farmers involved a long trip. Most farmers were leading a comfortable existence without having a highly marketable product such as wool. Overberg farmers, and even those who settled farther in the interior, lacked little in their everyday needs and they had not yet been exposed to the luxuries that became the necessities of later Victorian materialism. Changing their Afrikaner sheep for Merinos not only involved capital, of which there was little, but also the extra trouble of shearing and transporting the wool. Their experience of markets for farm produce had done little to convince them of the rewards to be had for greater effort. Isolated and uninformed, they knew little or nothing of the expanding demand for wool in England and were quite justifiably suspicious of the munificent returns held out by the advocates of change.

Considering the size of the Colony, the sparseness of the population, poor communications and the generally low level of education of the farmers, the results that were achieved by about 1838 were little short of remarkable. Within half a century the great majority of Cape sheep had been bred to being wool bearers. A strong swing to the wool sheep in the Overberg occurred during the years from 1833 to the end of the decade as the following figures indicate:

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15. Louw, p.248.
NUMBERS OF SHEEP IN THE SWELLENDAM DISTRICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Merino</th>
<th>Afrikaner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>7 577</td>
<td>42 419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>14 977</td>
<td>56 690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>30 480</td>
<td>54 374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>92 380</td>
<td>45 757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>187 603</td>
<td>36 087</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Export figures for wool also show that there was a rapid change from the Cape sheep to the Merino in the decade of the thirties:

WOOL EXPORTS FROM CAPE COLONY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Weight in pounds</th>
<th>Value in pounds sterling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>6 789</td>
<td>3 356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>256 629</td>
<td>18 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>351 824</td>
<td>22 164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>490 754</td>
<td>26 627</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The growing importance of wool exports to the economy of the Colony is also revealed in figures representing wool as a percentage of total exports. In 1830 wool formed a mere 0.7% of total exports; in 1836 6.8% and in 1842 20.0%.

In 1840 the *South African Commercial Advertiser* claimed that it was between 1832 and 1838 that the fine-woolled sheep had shown its suitability for the Colony and that it was proving an inducement to capitalists to come to the Cape, something which wine and wheat had failed to do.\(^{19}\) Agriculture in the Colony is believed to have gone into a decline after 1838 following emancipation, and this is borne out by the striking drop in wine and grain exports. J.S. Marais believes that this may have been one of the incentives for change to the wool sheep.\(^{20}\) The production of homemade soap from the tail of the Afrikaner sheep which was an important source of income for the stockfarmer, had also begun to decline well before emancipation. Competition from commercially produced British soap became too great. Soap exports from the Cape had reached 31,050 lbs in 1822. By 1833 they had dropped to 14,114 lbs while the price of imported British soap had decreased from £74 per ton in 1801 to £48 in 1841.\(^{21}\) In the light of such competition, not even the most stubborn of farmers could argue for the commercial value of the Afrikaner sheep. Furthermore, the demand for colonial wool in England appeared to be unlimited and from about 1816 took as much as the Colony could export.\(^{22}\)

It was more particularly the farmers of the interior who were resistant to change, but the undoubted value of wool to even the most remote farmers soon became evident. The example of newcomers such as the 1820 settlers and other immigrants infused activity and energy into livestock breeding and agriculture, coming as they did (in F.W. Reitz’s words) from “highly civilized England”. Much was also done by older

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20. Marais, p.19f
22. See export figures in Thom, 1816 - 1835, p.171.
colonists in the Western Cape and F.W. Reitz claimed that they had not received their fair share of praise for the improvements they had brought about. Being better informed than the farmers of the interior, they were less prejudiced about change. Nevertheless, there were farmers in the Swellendam district who objected to the shape of the Merino and the absence of a tail. Reitz himself did a great deal to remove prejudice through regular communications to the press and by lecturing on various aspects of farming. In 1834 he confidently predicted that the breeding of Merinos was "likely to be carried on with much spirit", because of the exertions of certain colonists. He mentioned in particular the names of Proctor, Daniel, Korsten, White, Cloete, Van der Byl, and the firm of Reitz, Breda and Joubert, the latter three being Overberg landowners. An observer in the Overberg remarked that by 1839 all farmers were wise enough to prefer the woolled sheep. This was not a gross exaggeration for by 1839 there is evidence that farmers were rapidly converting their indigenous sheep to wool-bearers and by 1841 the latter had completely outstripped the former in numbers. It was in 1834 that F.W. Reitz published his Observations on the Merino and within five years the weight of his arguments, together with the success of the converted, had clearly removed any remaining vestiges of doubt. Reitz had argued that the Merino was a more economical feeder than the native sheep and that the Colony could support 7 000 000 Merinos compared to only 3 000 000 Afrikaners. Working on the assumption that each sheep would average 2 lbs of wool with each pound being worth about 9d, Reitz calculated that the Colony would then be able to export £525 000 worth of produce more than it was at the time.

24. CO 2784, Dunn to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 20 February 1839. See table on p.130.

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Although certain of the older colonists were contributing to the change, the arrival of a fairly small number of British immigrants with capital played an extremely important role in the success of wool farming in the Overberg. An immigrant to the Eastern Cape wrote in c.1843 that the wool business had been "considerably augmented" in the Western Province by the accession of "several Indian capitalists". Chief among these were Major William Shaw who had been a lieutenant-colonel in the East India Company and who also served in the Madras Native Infantry and T.B. Bayley who had left the Bengal Civil Service because of ill-health. Shaw settled at Muirton in the Caledon district in 1838 and Bayley settled at The Oaks in 1844, although he appears to have arrived in the Colony before that date. The military titles of other breeders also suggest that they were ex-Indian army officers with capital to invest.

There can be little doubt that capital, together with an informed approach, were vital ingredients in productive wool farming. Besides Reitz, Breda and Joubert (who inherited capital from the Van Reenen family's initiative in the early Cape meat market) and Van der Byl and Company, the fine wool from the Overberg on the London market came from flocks of nabobs such as T.B. Bayley, Colonel William Dutton, Captain Stanford, Major Shaw and Captain J. Rainier. This list comprised the "principal flocks of established character"

27. C.P. de la Harpe, "Grootplaas se Mense", p.51.
at this end of the Colony". The Moodie family in the Swellendam district also contributed greatly to the consolidation of wool farming in the south west and were "by far the largest producers of wool in the district".

Without liquid capital, it was difficult for the established farmers of the Colony to convert to the new wool breed. Lending establishments were few and of the three banks in Cape Town in 1840, capital totalled only £150 000. The Australian sheep farmer of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land had five banks to choose from with capital of £1 720 000. Joseph Barry, an astute business man, who began trading in the Overberg in 1823, rendered a valuable service to the Overberg by providing various local farmers with the capital and opportunity to farm with good stock. A.P. Buirski describes the kind of contract that he drew up with several farmers. Barry provided ewes and rams (as well as cows and horses) and at the termination of a five year period, Barry was entitled to two-thirds of the increase and the farmer to one-third. The farmer was to use only the male stock provided by Barry. Barry, who had familial connections with the firm of Reitz, Breda and Joubert, also played an important role in disseminating the Merino race to the ordinary farmer. The Van Breda journals give evidence of a regular trade in stock between the breeders and the merchant with the latter owing Reitz, Breda and Joubert 15 004 rixdollars (£1 125) in 1845 for stock, chiefly Merinos. This represented 43.9% of the total income for 1845 from the farms belonging to Reitz and company.

33. S.A.C.A., Money Market, 12 February 1840.
34. Buirski, pp.101 - 103.
35. Van Breda Journals I, pp.89, 90.
Where large amounts of "Indian" or merchant capital were not available, the principle of the joint-stock company must have made it possible for certain farmers to obtain sufficient capital to invest in one or two Merino rams. One example is that of the young J.J. du Toit who formed a company with his own father and his father-in-law. The progeny of a first cross could be shorn and 450 sheep could be expected to provide 1,400 lbs of wool. Experiments had shown that the clip from a crossbred improved by 25% each year and it took five crossings, that is five years, before genuine wool was obtained. Half a decade to convert to a wool-bearing flock was not long, considering the financial rewards that it entailed.

Agricultural societies undoubtedly played a role in lauding the advantages of the Merino and in encouraging selection of superior stock, but in the early years these societies tended to be associations of the converted. The concept of agricultural societies grew rapidly in England in the nineteenth century, numbers mushrooming from a mere 35 in 1800 to about 700 in 1855 and the arrival of the 1820 settlers stimulated the creation of societies at Somerset (1826), Uitenhage (1827) and Graaff-Reinet (1832). Eastern Cape example was soon taken up by leading farmers in the Western Cape where the Cape Town Agricultural Society was...

formed in 1831, apparently on the initiative of Michiel van Breda. The society offered a cup for competition among the wool growers who in 1837 were showing "industry and perseverance". By 1832 Swellendam had its own society with the indefatigable F.W. Reitz as secretary and Harry Rivers as chairman. Stock fairs, the first of which was held on 5 October 1832, and shows organised by the society, helped to "dispel indifference engendered by the ease with which a man [could] obtain a mere livelihood in this Colony". On 11 March 1843 at a meeting of farmers in Caledon, it was decided to establish a "Genootschap, de aanmoediging van den Landbouw en de verbetering van het vee in het Caledons District ten doel hebbende". Despite the Dutch name, the society's chief supporters were overwhelmingly the British newcomers. T.B. Bayley was chairman and farmers who offered "a large number of prime Merino wethers, breeding ewes and lambs" for sale at the annual fair in 1848 were Dutton, Shaw, Rainier, Stanford, Bayley, Vigne, MacKay, Bourhill and Metcalf. Names of persons who had been in the district for a long time who were also offering stock, were the progressive J.Linde and J.G.van Helsdingen. In the annual report for the society for 1846 a marked improvement in the quality of the stock exhibited at the show was noted and sheep were more numerous and better selected. Although the presenters of stock for sale at the fairs were mainly the British capitalists, the 10 000 to 15 000 sheep which they offered would have become well distributed throughout the district and would have led to a rapid improvement of the general stock.

42. Botha, Cape History and Social Life, p.302 and Government Gazette, Advertisement, 5 January 1838 and passim.
44. Overberg Courant, 9 November 1859 and Buirski, p.106.
45. Thom, pp. 81, 82.
46. S.A.C.A., Caledon Agricultural Show, 10 February 1846 and Caledon Sheep Fair, 1 January 1848.
By 1839 the swing to the wool producing Merino had been accomplished in the Overberg and the activities of a relatively small group of prominent agriculturists was leading to a rapid improvement in the quality of the breed and therefore also in the quality of the wool.

The breeding of fine wool had been developed to perfection during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Spain where the government had placed a rigid embargo on the export of Merinos from the country. Merinos were not allowed out of the country on penalty of death, but a few European monarchs obtained these prized animals as gifts from the Royal House of Spain. The Elector of Saxony, for example, obtained permission from his brother-in-law, the King of Spain, Charles III (1716 - 1788), to introduce Merinos into Saxony. The sheep were a present from the King and were shipped from Cadiz in 1765. In 1776, King Louis XVI of France obtained 200 sheep from the King of Spain. King George III of England (1760 - 1820) who was a keen agriculturist, was less fortunate. As there was no legitimate way for him to obtain Merinos from Spain, they were eventually smuggled out of the country through Bilboa and Lisbon and shipped to Portsmouth in 1789. It was not until the Napoleonic wars which convulsed Europe from 1796 to 1815 that the Spanish sheep became more generally distributed throughout the world. 47

The foremost strain as far as quality was concerned was the Royal Escorial flock which produced the finest wool but was deficient in body development. It was progeny of this breed that was imported into Saxony in 1765 and gave rise to the Saxon Merino. Another strain was raised by Count Negretti of Spain, a strain which played an important part in the establishment of the Australian Merino flocks.

In France in 1783, Louis XVI established a Merino stud at the Domaine de Rambouillet where the original Spanish Merino was altered into a distinctive strain known as the Rambouillet. The Rambouillets were larger than the Saxon Merinos and they produced a longer staple wool that was also fine, soft, strong and abundant.48

The animals which Michiel van Breda bred initially at Zoetendals Valley were the small-boned, fine-wooled Saxon Merinos and their fleece was short of staple. They were thus not ideally suited to mass production as the weights of carcase and fleece were small.49 F.W. Reitz believed that the short stapled wools were the finest and that if one bred for a longer staple, the fineness would suffer. Reitz was not in favour of the French crosses for he believed that quality and quantity could not be combined and that such a cross would ultimately deteriorate into one or the other character.50 Long staples were not in favour with wool manufacturers in the thirties and Reitz continued to advocate the Saxon, not only for its finer, short wools, but because a smaller framed animal fared better on the natural pastures of the Colony which at times were scanty.51

During the thirties the chief imports of Merinos to the colony were of the Saxon strain. An organisation known as the "Society for the encouragement of the breeding of Merino sheep and the production of wool for export" was founded in Cape Town in 1831. In association with the Cape of Good Hope

48. Hanekom and Jacobson, pp.37, 40, 41, 42, 47.
51. Ibid., pp.21, 22.
Agricultural Society, 50 Merinos were imported from London in 1834. In that year an ex-Royal Navy officer, George Robb, imported 32 Saxon Merinos from New South Wales. In 1839 another 30 purebred Saxon rams arrived from Australia. The Negretti strain which was imported into Australia does not seem to have found favour in the Colony as no references to imports of this breed were found. Although many of them went to the Eastern Cape, fairly large numbers of sheep from the latter area were brought to the Western Cape by traders who thus helped to distribute improved stock. In 1840 62 Saxon rams and 80 ewes were imported from Germany. It was considered of "vital consequence" for the farmer to obtain rams of pure Saxon breed or of recent Saxon origin in order to produce a wool of such uniform fineness of texture as should "befit it to compete with the German and Australian fleeces". Importations apparently diminished towards the end of the forties and it was claimed that the Colony's wools were declining in quality. Some breeders believed that the woolled sheep had a natural tendency to deterioration in the South African climate with the hairy propensity of the indigenous sheep re-establishing itself. It was therefore necessary to obtain a constant supply of imported stock. The farmers of the Caledon district continued to import good stock and "both English and Dutch" were experiencing the benefit. It was claimed that the wool of this district

52. Hanekom et al., p.108 and Burrows, Overberg Outspan, p.114.
53. S.A.C.A., Editorial, 1 January 1859.
54. Government Gazette, 14 June 1839.
55. Ibid., 24 December 1841.
56. S.A.C.A., Advertisement, 11 February 1840.
57. Government Gazette, 14 May 1841.
surpassed in length and fineness any that was raised in other parts of the Colony.\textsuperscript{61}

In about 1860 the French Rambouillet became popular. Tweeds were in vogue at this time and there was a demand for a slightly coarser wool than that produced by the Saxon Merino.\textsuperscript{62} Major Shaw of the Caledon district appears to have been one of the first to import the long-woolled French breed for by 1862 he was advertising rams for sale that he had bred from imported stock.\textsuperscript{63} During 1862 Barry and Nephews imported thirteen Rambouillets and disposed of them in the Colony at high prices despite drought and depression, one ram fetching £107 10s.\textsuperscript{64} Ten years earlier the average price for imported rams had been £55.\textsuperscript{65} In 1864 Barry and Nephews again offered 20 French Merinos for sale at the Grand Exhibition held in Swellendam that year.\textsuperscript{66} A highly critical correspondent, reporting on the exhibition in Swellendam in 1864, stated that the importations of purebreds in the previous five years were doing good service. Sheep breeding was making excellent progress in the west and the flockmasters were showing more enterprise than any other portion of the community.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{61} I/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 11 January 1861.
\textsuperscript{62} Hanekom et.al., p.110.
\textsuperscript{63} Overberg Courant, Advertisement, 15 January 1862.
\textsuperscript{64} I/SWM 14/8 Report for Blue Book, 11 February 1863.
\textsuperscript{65} Dubow, p.15.
\textsuperscript{66} Overberg Courant, Advertisement, 20.1.1864.
It was in the late fifties and early sixties that an experiment was undertaken with the Scottish Cheviot breed. Joseph Carruthers who bought the farm Attaquas Kloof in the Caledon district attempted to show that the Cheviot would thrive on sour mountain veld which was not suitable for the Merino. In Scotland the Cheviot was kept on exposed mountain tops. It produced a fair quality wool, had a larger carcase than the Merino and was an early maturer which enabled a quicker turnover of stock. By 1862 the experiment had proved a failure, evidently because the vegetation of the Cape mountains was deficient in phosphates and because the finer Merino wool continued to receive much higher prices than that of the Cheviot.

Selective breeding had done much to improve wool yields in the Overberg. Jan Gysbert van Reenen had shown as early as the first decade of the nineteenth century that a fifth generation crossbred progeny could produce three pounds of wool annually. This was less than that produced by a pure Spanish Merino which was eight pounds, but with the large number of Afrikaner sheep in the Colony, the only road to improvement was systematic selection and crossing. In an age when there was no fencing, it was not a simple task to ensure that flocks were kept apart and that mating was restricted to selected stock. In the Zoetendals Valley flocks

68. Overberg Courant, Advertisement, 13 February 1861.
69. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1860.
70. Holt, p.166 and 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1860.
71. Wallace, p.82.
72. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1862.
73. Thoa, p.300.
where management was good, the yield per sheep had been increased from 1,72 lbs in 1837 to 2,45 lbs in 1845.\textsuperscript{74} Sheep numbers had been reduced from 11,449 to 8,499 and yet more wool was produced by fewer sheep. In 1862 wool yield per sheep was only 2,32 lbs,\textsuperscript{75} but this can be attributed to the drought conditions of the early sixties. The farmer with less capital who could not afford to buy in good stock no doubt found it more difficult to improve his flocks. J. du Toit of the Bredasdorp district who sheared 820 sheep in 1868, obtained a yield of 2,07 lbs per sheep. Four years later, having bought 25 sheep from Michiel van Breda, he had increased his clip by 215 lbs.\textsuperscript{76} He still had the same amount of land and the increase appears to be due to improved quality of sheep and not increased numbers. Between 1856 and 1885 the wool yield for the Caledon and Bredasdorp districts increased from 427,281 lbs to 712,049 lbs (an increase of 66.6\%). A figure cannot be calculated for Swellendam alone as the census figures for this district were included with those of Robertson and Riversdale. The percentage increase in wool yield for these three districts for the same period was 29.6\%.\textsuperscript{77}

The marked increase in wool yields cannot be attributed only to improvement of stock, for numbers of sheep also increased greatly until about 1870 when flock numbers stabilised.

Between 1838 and 1875, the total number of sheep for the Caledon, Bredasdorp and Swellendam districts increased from 131,354 to 591,165 which represented an increase of 367.2\%.

\textsuperscript{74} Van Breda Journals I, 1817 - 1847, pp. 64, 64, 80, 81, 89. In 1837, 11,449 sheep produced 19,784 lbs of wool and in 1845, 8,499 sheep produced 20,825 lbs of wool.

\textsuperscript{75} Van Breda Journals II, 1840 - 1944, pp. 14, 15.

\textsuperscript{76} Du Toit Journal 1866 - 1889, 9 October 1868, 8 January 1869 and 22 October 1872.

\textsuperscript{77} CCP 4/11/1 Census 1865, p.xvi.
over 37 years with an average annual rate of increase of 9.4%. The most phenomenal increase had occurred between 1840 and 1845 when there was an increase in sheep numbers of 96.8%. Between 1865 and 1875, however, numbers decreased by 3.68%.\textsuperscript{78}

It was seen above\textsuperscript{79} that the number of non-wool bearing Cape sheep had declined steadily between 1829 and 1841 from 42,419 to 36,087. By 1856, in the Caledon-Bredasdorp district, they had dropped to only 948\textsuperscript{80} which is an indication of the strong conviction of the value of the Merino, a conviction which was supported by peak wool prices.\textsuperscript{81} The Swellendam district, whose figures were included with Robertson and Riversdale where the indigenous sheep continued to enjoy greater favour, also showed a remarkable decline in Cape sheep numbers. From 21,247 in 1856, they decreased to 11,714 in 1865.\textsuperscript{82} The price of wool dropped fairly sharply from 1859 to 1870. As in South Africa, wool production in Australia, New Zealand and South America had also made great strides and the supply was overtaking the demand. It was natural to expect a declining world price for wool. It is also possible that with an increasing demand for coarser wools, the fine wools of the Colony were not commanding their former high prices.\textsuperscript{83} In the Caledon-Bredasdorp area the drop in wool price was offset only very slightly by an increase in Cape sheep.\textsuperscript{84} The

\textsuperscript{78} Figures calculated from Blue Books, CCP 9/1 1838, p.244; CCP 9/3 1840, p.282; CCP 9/9 1845, p.330; CCP 9/28 1865, pp. EE 2,3 and CCP 9/38 1875, pp. EE 2,3.

\textsuperscript{79} See page 131.

\textsuperscript{80} CCP 4/11/1 Census 1865, p.xi.

\textsuperscript{81} See graph, Fig. 6 in Thom, p.201. From 1855 wool prices climbed rapidly, reaching a peak for the nineteenth century in about 1858.

\textsuperscript{82} CCP 4/11/1 Census 1865, p.xi.

\textsuperscript{83} Thom, p.200.

\textsuperscript{84} CCP 4/11/1 Census 1865, p.xi.

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falling world price of wool had an effect on the smaller wool growers who were obliged to compensate for the loss in income from wool by increasing their mutton stock.\textsuperscript{65} The increase was slight, however, when compared to total numbers, for in 1865 there were only 2,463 Cape sheep in the Caledon-Bredasdorp area, or 0.42\% of the total.\textsuperscript{66}

It was natural to expect that with the enormous increase in the number of sheep, a heavy burden was being placed on the land. It has already been shown that by c.1838 certain areas were supporting much more stock than they should.\textsuperscript{87} An observer (probably F.W. Reitz) in 1850 noted that the Western Province was becoming overstocked with sheep and horses, a problem that was aggravated by the division of farms.\textsuperscript{88} In 1857 Reitz believed that the Western Cape was "pretty nearly sufficiently stocked", and that the capital that wool was bringing into the Colony would be advantageously used in increasing the "more immediate products of the soil".\textsuperscript{89} One reason why farmers were able to increase their sheep was that the numbers of horses declined drastically between about 1854 and 1872 partly owing to the ravages of horsesickness but also because wool was proving more profitable. There was a decline in the demand for horses in India and the relatively quiet conditions on the eastern frontier of the Colony between 1857 and 1877 also affected the horse market.\textsuperscript{90} By 1872 almost all the pasture lands of the Swellendam division, and no doubt also of the Caledon-Bredasdorp area, were occupied by Merinos, and horses had become rare.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{86} CCP 4/11/1 Census 1865, p.xi.
\textsuperscript{87} See above pp.31, 32.
\textsuperscript{88} Reid, (ed.), S.A. Agricultural News and Farmers' Journal, Breeding of Cows, 4 July 1850, p.5.
\textsuperscript{89} F.W. Reitz, Cape Agriculture in Two Lectures, p.26.
\textsuperscript{90} See below, p.161.
\textsuperscript{91} 1/SMH 14/10 Report for Blue Book, 16 January 1872.
sheep are regarded as the equivalent of one horse in calculating stocking rates, the reduction in horses made way for a large number of sheep.

It can be seen in the section on grain that farmers were sowing more oats, which is chiefly used for animal feed, than wheat. This strongly suggests that farmers were providing additional feed for their flocks which would enable them to increase their stocking rates. Figures calculated from data in the Swellendam land reports for the early thirties show that in the Duiwenhoks and Vette River wards, stocking rates averaged one small stock unit to between 2,54 to 2,88 morgen. In the wards of Caledon, Swart River and Kars River, the figure was one unit to between 2 and 2,88 morgen, while it was somewhat lower in the Riviersonderend ward where one stock unit occupied from 2,94 to 3,48 morgen. More effective land use, improved stock and improved methods made it possible for Overberg farmers to increase their stocking rates without impoverishing the land. Somewhat later in the century, in 1886, it was claimed that from one to two sheep were being kept per morgen and that the coastal districts of the south-western Cape were the only parts of the Colony that were not overstocked. In the Overberg where no more land was available, the return from wool was making intensification worthwhile and this required attention to quality and not quantity of stock as well as to the production of oats and barley for supplementary feeding.

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92. See Appendix 1 (following p.172).
93. Spilhaus, pp.250, 255.
Space does not permit a detailed discussion of methods used in sheep farming and the combating of disease, particularly scab, but evidence shows that most of the Overberg farmers were progressive in their approach to improved methods. A map of the Cape Colony for 1893 indicates that the districts that had to be placed under the Scab Act extended from George eastwards. The south-western Cape, including the Overberg, had clearly been successful in bringing the disease under control by this date. According to D.J. Jacobs there was a fatalistic belief among many farmers of the interior that an outbreak of scab was "God's will" and this was an obstacle in combating the disease. Between 1864 and 1888 scab nearly brought the wool industry of the Orange Free State to its knees. Strong tobacco water had proved one of the most effective dressings for scab, particularly when mixed with sulphur. Zoetendals Valley regularly used this treatment. In 1847 scab had been troublesome but its occurrence was effectively reduced and in 1865 the journal records dipping only "some" scabby sheep. By 1850, progressive farmers, among whom Michiel van Breda was one, were erecting large stone-wall kraals for their sheep to provide shelter in winter and for lambing. Burrows maintains that Zoetendals Valley can legitimately claim to have been the first farm in the country to abandon the old system of herding the flock by day and kraaling in small kraals at night (a system that was injurious to the wool). In 1853 Van Breda commenced a three mile stone wall to create a large, sheltered enclosure. The system of fencing which held many benefits for the farmer

97. Ibid., 13 May 1865, p.25.
did not become common until the development of ostrich farming in the eighties, but the advantages had been acknowledged in the Overberg by progressive farmers like the Van Bredas 30 years earlier.

Having examined the development of Merino farming, it remains to determine the relative financial value of maintaining woolled sheep as against other branches of farming. Overberg farmers kept cattle, horses and goats, and grain was also grown in the area.

Figures are available from only two farm documentary sources, but as one is representative of the large capitalist farmer and the other of a much smaller, "average" farmer, they can be regarded as fairly representative. Conditions throughout the Overberg were reasonably similar and it only required initiative to derive rewards from systematic farming.

The first source from which data was taken was the Van Breda farm records. The total farm income for the company of Reitz, Breda and Joubert for 1838/39 was 50 241 rixdollars (£3 768). The income from the wool of 7 156 sheep was 19 509 rixdollars (£1 463) which was thus responsible for 38,83% of farm income. In 1840 wool accounted for 42,46% of farm income and in 1845 it brought in 47,51% of the total. The company also made a significant income from the sale of sheep which in 1840 exceeded that of wool. In that year sheep sales represented 49,23% of total income. In 1840, therefore, sheep alone accounted for 91,69% of annual farm income. It is striking that only wool, sheep and horse sales are recorded in the statements in the journal up to 1840 and the conclusion is that income from other sources

100. W. Cooper and Nephews, The World's Sheep Farming for Fifty Years 1843 - 1893, p.45.
102. Ibid., p.81.
103. Ibid., p.89.
such as cattle and grain were insignificant. The company was also a recognised breeder of horses, and yet this branch of farm economy only accounted for 8.31% in 1840. In 1849 there is a record of the sale of wheat to Barry and Nephews. The year’s harvest (less what was required for farm use) of 100 muids was sold at ten rixdollars per muid. The income from wheat (1 000 rixdollars or £75) was insignificant if compared with the earnings from sheep. Even though the wool price had dropped by 50% from 1s 6d in 1838 to 9d per pound in 1849, the clip from Zoetendals Valley was worth £432 10s in that year.

The data recorded by the young J.J. du Toit in his journal shows that a farmer with 820 sheep in 1868 could produce 1 700 lbs of wool which at 11d per lb could earn him about £78 annually. His wheat crop ranged from 19 to 31 muids annually which at 10 rixdollars per muid was worth 190 to 310 rixdollars or £14 to £23. Wool prices had improved by 1872 (and he was now selling washed wool that paid better) and in that year Du Toit sold 1 915 lbs of wool at 20d per pound which earned him £159. Using the sample of 24 farmers in Appendix 1, on average an Overberg farmer owned 1 080 sheep. With each sheep producing about 2 lbs of wool annually a farmer with this number of sheep could expect an annual income of from £99 to £180 from wool alone, depending on the wool price. This income may not appear particularly impressive when compared with salaries of the day but it must be borne in mind that this was

107. Ibid., pp. 2, 39.
108. Ibid., p.48.
109. A first clerk in the magistrate’s office earned £235 per year; a second clerk £120 and the chief constable £60 plus £25 for the keep of a horse. See 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Return of Employees in Civil Commissioner’s Office Caledon, 19 May 1865.
a cash income which the farmer had formerly not had while he could continue to produce most of his daily requirements on the farm. Wool was without doubt far more lucrative than wheat. It also provided a much greater and more steady income than horses or cattle.

The demand for wool in Britain was the result of the great expansion of textile manufacture, concomitant with the technical and industrial development at the start of the nineteenth century. The first steam loom was set up in Manchester in 1806; within twelve years there were about 2,000 and by 1835 a staggering 100,000 power driven looms in England and Scotland.\(^{110}\) Although the manufacture of cottons had taken precedence over woollens, after 1840 the domestic British wool clip declined while consumption of raw wool more than doubled over the next 40 years.\(^{111}\) By 1834 the estimated annual demand for foreign wool in Britain was 25,000,000 pounds.\(^{112}\) In 1849 the *Leeds Mercury* reported that at no time within memory was the machinery of the woollen, worsted and linen manufactures more fully employed which was "clear conviction" of "sound and active" trade.\(^{113}\) In 1845 it was reported that the export of wool from Australia, where production rapidly outstripped the Cape, had risen from 2,25 million pounds to 13,5 million pounds in ten years.\(^{114}\) The increase in production at the Cape was no less spectacular as the following figures indicate:


\(^{111}\) Dubow, p.13.


\(^{113}\) Cited in Reid, (ed.), *South African Agricultural News and Farmers’ Journal*, p.86.

\(^{114}\) S.A.C.A., Editorial, 2 September 1845.
CAPE WOOL IMPORTATIONS ONTO THE LONDON MARKET  
(POUNDS WEIGHT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1825</td>
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<td>1830</td>
<td>33 407</td>
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<td>1835</td>
<td>191 624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>751 741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>3 512 824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>5 377 485</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Having formed a mere 0.6% of the Colony’s exports in 1822, wool in 1850 made up 45% of the total. Production continued to soar until 1872 as the following table reveals:

WOOL EXPORTS FROM THE CAPE COLONY  
(POUNDS WEIGHT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>5 912 927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>23 219 689</td>
</tr>
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<td>1870</td>
<td>37 283 291</td>
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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>46 278 639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>48 822 562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>40 393 746</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

117. Spilhaus, p.246. After 1873 production remained in the region of 40 000 000 lbs declining to 34 432 562 lbs in 1885.
The major significance of wool for the Overberg is manifest in the return of exports from Port Beaufort. In 1843 wool accounted for £15 463 of a total of £27 439. Although exports of goat skins, hides and aloes were also clearly of value to the Overberg, there is no doubt that wool was providing an almost incalculable boost to the economy. Conspicuous by its absence on the list of exports to Great Britain was grain of any kind. On two additional inventories for exports for 1843, to St Helena and other ports of the Colony, grain is listed, but the value was a mere £187.118

For those farmers who preferred to transport their wool to Cape Town, a waggon load of wool was a great deal more remunerative than a load of grain. Wheat usually sold on the Cape Town market for between £9 and £12 per waggon load although as much as £26 could be obtained when harvests were poor.119 However, a Caledon farmer, 80 miles from Cape Town, obtained a mere £3 for a load in 1833.120 Wheat prices did not change much during the period under study and were generally in the region of 15s per muid, although in 1864 best quality wheat was only receiving 12s 6d per muid.121 The very much greater profit to be had from wool is indicated in an entry in the Van Breda Journals. In 1865 three wagons carrying 12 291 pounds of wool were sent to Cape Town.122 If wool was fetching 1s per pound (a nominal average price) this load would be worth £614 10s, or £201 10s per waggon load. The price obtained for a load of wool at a low average price

118. CCT 176 Return of Exports from Port Beaufort and Mossel Bay, 1843.
120. LBD 24 Swellendam Land Reports, Request for Conversion to Duitrent, W.L.Fick, 30 April 1833.
was 673% greater than that obtained for a load of wheat when the latter was at ceiling prices.

In the fifties and sixties the sale of wool was greatly facilitated in the Overberg by the creation of local wool markets. The Riversdale Agricultural Society instituted an annual wool sale in the village in 1854. It was held in the public wool store in October and was attended by Cape merchants or their agents. By 1860 the wool market in Caledon attracted a considerable trade, and in 1861 Swellendam held its first local wool sale. At the Riversdale wool fair the amount of wool traded annually was usually about 158 000 pounds although during the drought of 1865 it was down by 60 000 pounds. Large companies such as Hosenthal Brothers, Macdonald and Busk and Barry and Nephews were the chief buyers, but there were also smaller individual purchasers.

The demand for Overberg wool remained consistent and prices did not drop greatly even when London prices were low. The area became renowned for the fineness of its wool, a standard which it maintained well beyond the period under study. In 1850 the Economist referred to the high prices paid for Western Province wools which were superior to those shipped from Algoa Bay. On the whole Overberg wool

126. S.A.C.A., Riversdale Wool Fair, 6 November 1865.
127. 1/SWM 14/8 Civil Commissioner’s Report, January 1862; 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 8 January 1866 and 24 January 1868.
128. Spilhaus, p.249; 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 11 November 1861 and CCP 9/33 Blue Book 1870, Civil Commissioner’s Report, p.JJ 7.
producers were innocent of the complaints levelled against South African wool, most of which was coming from the Eastern Cape. The get up of great quantities was poor, being dirty and ill-sorted. A pernicious system of credit promoted unrealistic prices, and farmers were encouraged to shear twice a year. Since most South African wool was of short staple, this practice was not in its favour.130

The superiority of fineness and get up of Overberg wools ensured consistent prices even in times of depression. Between 1850 and 1872 the price per pound for washed wool ranged from about 1s 5d to 1s 10d. It is particularly noticeable that from 1860 to 1870 when there was a world slump in wool prices 131 Overberg wools continued to fetch 1s 6d per pound while the average price for colonial wools was 1s.132 In 1865 and 1866, prices paid for Caledon wool in particular, were "good" and better than most western District towns.133 There were a few exceptional flocks such as those of the Neethlings and D.J. van Breda of Bredasdorp and Michael van Breda of The Oaks (near Caledon) whose lily-white wool fetched between 2s 6d and 2s 11d per pound in 1864 and 1865.134 Thus although there were undoubtedly great fluctuations in world wool prices135 there was always a demand for a superior quality product and Overberg farmers were thus encouraged in their efforts to maintain and improve

130. McKee, pp.177 - 183 and Thom pp. 188 - 192.
131. See graph in Thom, p. 201.
132. Overberg wool prices were gleaned from various sources including the civil commissioner's correspondence, S.A. Agricultural News and Farmers' Journal, Cape Argus, Government Gazette, S.A.C.A., Blue Books, Murray and the Van Breda Journals.
133. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1865 and 8 January 1866.
135. This is well illustrated in Thom's graph, p.201.
their flocks. Emphasis would have been placed on increased and improved wool production as mutton prices remained low throughout the period under study. Farmers had difficulty in disposing of their wethers as the Cape Town market was well-supplied by the togt-grazers or itinerant cattle speculators.136

Although Merinos had virtually ousted horses from the Overberg by 1872, the latter played an important role in the farm economy for they served as animals of transport, they were vital for the threshing of grain and until the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, Cape horses were much in demand as remounts for the Indian army.137 From 1814 to 1850 there was also a lively interest among the prosperous in the breeding of race horses.138

The horse was not indigenous to the Cape and the first horses of Arabian and Persian strains were imported from Batavia and Java shortly after Van Riebeeck’s arrival in 1652.139 Simon van der Stel imported some Persian stallions in 1689 to retrieve the Cape horse from the deterioration caused by indiscriminate breeding.140 In 1782 eight stud horses were imported from England and at about the same time a number of Spanish horses arrived from New England.141 Horse-breeding gained impetus in the Colony during Lord Charles Somerset’s reign at the Cape. In 1814 his first importations of

136. Reid, (ed.), South African Agricultural News and Farmers’ Journal, Markets Cape Town, 6 December 1849 and 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1865.
137. Knowles, p.87.
139. De Kock, p.56; Knowles, p.84 and Wallace, p.308.
140. De Kock, p.56 and Knowles, p.84.
141. Wallace, p.309.
English bloodstock arrived and with his encouragement other leading colonists such as the Melcks, Cloetes, Van Reenens, Van der Byls, Rogersons and Kotzes also acquired quality animals. Although many of Lord Charles's sychophantic contemporaries praised the governor's efforts to improve the quality of the Colony's horses, a later, more realistic observer criticised Somerset for being too much a "friend of the turf" and failing to see that by encouraging the English blood-horse exclusively, a more hardy breed capable of withstanding the colony's periodical droughts would disappear. The hardy Cape horse survived, however. It was only in the top studs that horses received care and attention. Most horses in the Colony were left to fend for themselves which resulted in heavy foaling losses and only the fittest survived - "inured to hardship from his birth, and nurtured in the roughest school, the Cape Horse at maturity is a machine not easily deranged". Foreign visitors were much impressed by the hardiness and endurance of the Colony's horses. After a day in harness they were given no feed and were turned out with knee halters to forage for themselves on apparently barren veld. They were small and sturdy and their hard, contracted hooves did not require shoeing. Despite the introduction of less hardy thoroughbred blood, by 1861 there were still Cape horses whose qualities amazed European visitors:

142. Ibid., p.43.
143. Ibid., p.37.
144. Reitz, Cape Agriculture in Two Lectures, p.7.
146. Ibid., p.6 and Teenstra, p.313.
They have no beauty; but one of these little brutes, ungroomed, half-fed, seldom stabled, will carry a six-and-a-half foot Dutchman sixty miles a day .... at a shuffling easy canter, six miles an hour. You off saddle every three hours, and let him roll; you also let him drink all he can get; his coat shines and his eye is bright and unsoundness is very rare." 147

Little did Lady Duff Gordon, who wrote the above, realise that she was writing a eulogy to natural selection. T.B. Bayley of The Oaks, who was a pioneer of controlled breeding with paddocking and stabling, 148 was appalled at the survival rate of foals among his neighbours in 1845. A farmer with 61 mares raised three foals; one with 30 mares raised 2 foals; one with 36 mares got six foals and one with 43 foals got eight of which six died. The reason why a great number cast their foals was their poor condition as they received no extra feeding and because of the "atrocious" system of driving them about on the threshing floor to tread out the wheat. 148 Under such conditions it was not surprising that only the fittest survived and even by 1888 there was still no question about the strength and endurance of the South African horses. Although stunted, they were capable of performing immensely long journeys in hot weather, eating nothing but what they could pick up on the veld. 150

The hardy qualities of Cape horses survived because the majority continued to be reared under tough colonial conditions, but there was an avid elite who bred racehorses as much for sport and prestige as profit. Racing had begun during the first British occupation, with the first race

147. Duff Gordon, p.87.
149. Ibid., p.96.
meeting taking place in 1797. During the early years of the second occupation, racing depended largely on the British garrison, but after the arrival of Lord Charles Somerset, the fashion spread fairly rapidly. Racing clubs were started at Paarl in 1815, Uitenhage and Stellenbosch in 1816, Graaff-Reinet in 1821, Grahamstown in 1823, Somerset East and Swellendam in 1825 and George in 1827. Apart from the growing interest in breeding for racing in the Colony, Lord Charles Somerset believed that next to the export of wine, the Colony’s soil was "best calculated for the export of horses, and were a market once rendered certain it might in a very few years be carried to an extent quite unlimited". In 1816 he announced the imminent conclusion of an arrangement to send 400 horses annually to India for the Madras cavalry and by 1825 Somerset claimed that horse breeding was then a more lucrative employment than any other description of agriculture.

The country around Swellendam was considered particularly favourable for the breeding of horses and in the first decade of the eighteenth century, Overbergers such as Landdrost A.Faure of Swellendam and Daniel van Reenen who had a farm along the Breede, were breeding riding horses which were much sought after in Cape Town. An observer noted that the Swellendam farmers who were breeding for the Cape Town market had much improved the breed by the introduction of English stallions. It appears that in c.1828, horse-breeding held out better prospects than the

151. Hyndham, pp.20, 26, 39.
156. Moodie, p.136.
sale of wool. A young farmer of obvious means, had invested "large sums of money" in 74 horses for breeding. He also owned 200 Merinos which was a small flock. Wool had not yet unequivocally proved its commercial value and 74 horses were clearly considered better value than the 444 sheep with which they could have been replaced.

The leading studs in the Overberg were those of Reitz, Breda and Joubert at Rhenosterfontein and Zoetendals Valley; a Mr Cloete who had an extensive establishment on the Breede River; P.V. van der Byl of Nachtwaacht and T.B.Bayley of The Oaks which was taken over by M. van Breda and was still a "well-known" stud in 1865. Captain J.Rainier of Nethercourt also kept about 70 good quality horses, most of which were stabled. In the early thirties, most farmers in the Overberg owned about 60 horses each. From a sample of 40 farmers, only five owned 20 or less, and only six owned more than 100. Two farmers with exceptionally large numbers of horses were Matthys Uys of Duiwenhoks River who owned two troops, one numbering 220 and the other 180, and Andries Otto of Swart River who had 143. The company of Reitz, Breda and Joubert were maintaining 395 horses on their two farms in 1837 and 311 in 1846.

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157. LBD 27 Swellendam Land Reports, J.P.Muller to Bourke and request of A.J. Muller, 30 June 1839.
159. Wyndham, pp.130, 132.
160. Cape Argus, Obituary, 2 January 1872.
162. S.A.C.A., Advertisement, 18 December 1850.
163. Figures calculated from LBD 24 Swellendam Land Reports 1827.
164. Ibid.
165. Van Breda Journals 1, 1817 - 1847, pp.65, 97.
The South African Turf Club, formed in 1840, exerted a powerful and beneficial influence on breeding and between 1840 and 1860 90 thoroughbred stud horses were imported into the Western Province. A number of the importers were in the Caledon area. The civil commissioner claimed that in no other division had more pains been taken or more money spent to produce thoroughbreds than in his. Messrs Radney, Van Breda and Van der Byl had "defied competition at turf gatherings", and the thanks of the Colony were due to Mr van Breda of The Oaks for his "determined perseverance in producing a good breed of horses".

Breeding of horses by the average farmer received a boost from the trade with India which even before 1838 had been of some importance. Agents to the East India Company required "powerful, well-bred mares" for the Madras government. The horses taken to Madras had found "high favour" because of their hardy qualities for campaigning and in 1849 when a scarcity of horses was experienced in India, the Cape government recommended that the East India Company procure large numbers from the Colony. The arrangement was at least in part due to the influence of the governor, Sir Harry Smith, who had experience of the type of mount required for Indian conditions. Major J.Bower was appointed as the remount agent in the Colony for the cavalry and artillery of India in 1849 and he believed that if the farmers co-operated and kept their prices reasonable, the agency might be made

166. Wallace, p.309.
167. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1860 and 11 January 1861.
168. Moodie, p.139.
permanent. The Indian army paid about £23 for a horse in 1849 which was very much more than the £3 to £10 normally received but because of a fluctuating war situation in India and because of competition from Australian horses, by 1857 the price received by Cape breeders was not very encouraging. With the outbreak of the Indian mutiny in that year, Cape horses were again in demand, a demand that had fallen off by 1860. In 1858 horse exports were worth £26,560 and in 1859 only £3,471.

The income from horses for the average farmer must have been erratic at best. The demand in India depended on the vagaries of war and was therefore not consistent. If what T.B. Bayley said was correct, a farmer with a considerable number of mares could expect to rear only a few foals annually. To equal the annual income of £88 which 1,080 sheep secured when wool prices were low, a farmer would have to rear a minimum of four foals that met the requirements of the Indian army. While the market lasted, it was possible for farmers who took time and trouble with their brood mares, to make as much money from horses as from woolled sheep, but wool was proving a more consistent form of income and sheep were more easily raised than horses. Even on

172. Ibid., 10 January 1850, (Letter dated 29 November 1849), and CO 2838 Civil Commissioner Swellendam, Vendu Roll, 28 December 1846.
177. See above page 157.
178. See above page 149.
a reputable stud such as that of Reitz, Breda and Joubert horses accounted for only between 4.26% and 11.79% of farm income.  

Although the Cape could still provide horses for India in 1857, it was probably the horsesickness epidemic of 1854 that put an end to breeding of horses on a large scale. Horsesickness had been known in the Colony since 1719. Although it occurred annually in some places, severe epidemics broke out at intervals of about twenty years when wet conditions followed prolonged drought. Severe epidemics were recorded for 1763, 1780, 1801, 1819, 1839, 1854 and 1870. The cause was unknown but it was discovered that stabled horses had more chance of survival. The epidemic of 1854 was particularly severe and it was believed that more than 40% of the Colony's horses had succumbed. F.W. Reitz believed that about two-thirds of the horses in the Swellendam district had died. T.B. Bayley lost 43 out of 100 horses. Under such conditions horse breeding was becoming almost impossible.

179. Figures calculated from Van Breda Journals I, 1617 - 1647, pp.81, 87 and 89.
181. Van Reenen, p.29.
183. As late as 1957 the insect responsible for the transmission of the disease had not been positively identified. See Henning, pp.791, 792.
186. Reitz, Cape Agriculture in Two Lectures, p.8.
187. Wyndham, pp.102, 103.
As the value of the Merino became more and more indisputable, and as recurrent epidemics of horsesickness continued to wipe out large numbers of horses, the number of equines in the Overberg dropped considerably between 1838 and 1872. In 1838 there were an estimated 20,931 in the Caledon, Swellendam and Bredasdorp districts. By 1865 the number had decreased to 10,675 and by 1875 it was 9,036. The actual decrease for the 37 year period was 11,895 which represents a 56.8% decrease or an annual average decrease rate of 1.5%. The decline in horses is confirmed in the civil commissioner’s report for Swellendam for 1872. He stated:

Both draft and saddle horses have never been more rare and only a few farmers are paying attention to horsebreeding. At present almost the whole pastorage lands of the division are occupied by Merino sheep.

The poor foaling percentages achieved under colonial conditions, erratic markets and the ravages of disease made this branch of farming a poor competitor for the Merino.

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188. CCP 9/1, 9/28, 9/38 Blue Books 1838, p.244; 1865 pp.EE 2,3 and 1875 pp.EE 2,3.
Cattle formed an important facet of farming, particularly in the early years of settlement in the Overberg, for the trek ox was an indispensable part of the transport machine and breeding cattle were essential to maintain a supply of draught animals. As with sheep, the first cattle had been obtained through barter with the Khoi and by 1708 there were farmers with substantial numbers of cattle as well as sheep. The indigenous cattle were small and slow maturers, they had large horns, and were less tractable than their European counterparts but were well adapted to harsh colonial conditions. Some improvement towards a better milking and beef breed had been made by the importation of Frieslands during the V.O.C.'s regime, but the Afrikaner cattle, as they became known, remained the predominant type as breeding for draught purposes was a priority. The Van Bredas and Van Reenens had been pioneers in crossing the indigenous cattle with Dutch breeds, aiming ultimately in breeding in as much Dutch blood as possible, but the larger Dutch breed required better keep and did not breed as well. By the first decade of the nineteenth century there had already been much hybridization of the indigenous cattle, most of which were to be found in the Cape and Stellenbosch districts, but a few farmers in the Swellendam area had begun crossing their indigenous animals. Many farmers were adamant about not crossing their Afrikaners, but in general the prejudice against improving the beef and milking qualities of cattle was less than the prejudice against wool-bearing sheep.

190. Louw, p.12 and Schreuder, p.52.
192. De Kock, p.54.
193. Reitz, Cape Agriculture in Two Lectures, p.10.
Between about 1827 and 1845 most farmers kept sufficient oxen to make up one or two teams of eighteen each. It was rare for a farmer to have more than 40 oxen although there were exceptions with as many as 100 and even 150. With regard to breeding cattle, it appears from a sample of 40 farmers in the Swellendam district that by far the greater majority kept 150 or less. Only four of this sample had more than 150 breeding cattle. There were two exceptionally large herds, (one of 400 and one of 600) belonging to Pieter du Preez in the Vette River ward and Samuel Odendaal of the Duiwenhoks River ward. The Du Preez family (also spelt Dupré) is mentioned by the traveller Lichtenstein who was impressed during his travels between 1803 and 1806 by the "handsome animals" and the general management of the Du Preez farm.

It would appear that the chief commercial value of keeping cattle lay in the production of butter. During the first decade of the nineteenth century the bulk of Cape Town’s butter came from the Swellendam district where some farmers derived "their whole income and support from this line of farming". It was estimated that farmers could earn about £65 per annum from the sale of butter alone. The sale of oxen provided a subsidiary income but even the wealthier farmers could only sell about eight to ten oxen every other year.

It was no simple task to produce the 2,800 pounds of butter, which at 6d per pound, would earn the farmer £65. The

195. These figures were taken from a random sample of 40 farmers in the Swellendam land reports - LBD 24, 1827; LBD 25, 1827 - 1832 and LBD 27, 1828 - c.1845. 
196. LBD 24, 25 and 27, Swellendam Land Reports, 1827, 1827 - 1832 and 1828 - 1845. 
199. Neumark, p.59. 
200. A. Sparrman, A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope from the year 1772 to 1776, Vol.2, cited in Neumark, p.78
conditions under which cows were milked, even into the late nineteenth century, were highly stressful to the cow and they produced very little milk. Wallace described the milking process in the Colony thus:

> When cows are milked while running in the veld, where they sometimes travel as much as seven miles daily to feed and back again for water, they are brought up by labourers in small clumps to the kraal, and milked once a day, the calves getting their only suck at the same time. The calves are kept apart from the mothers and as each cow is tied up to a post in turn, her name is called out, and a labourer cuts out the wanted calf from the mob of calves, freely using a long whip to facilitate matters. The calf is permitted to take the first milk and when the cow has settled down to parting freely with it the calf is driven back and the milker takes the middle portion of the milk, leaving the last for the calf to finish. 201

Another observer was struck by the "somewhat peculiar" management of the milk cows. They were not housed and were "excessively wild" and the securing of a cow for milking was reminiscent of a rodeo. It is not surprising that milk yields were "very inconsiderable" with twenty cows giving only from 24 to 36 quarts daily. 202 There were undoubtedly farmers who made a handsome income from butter. The Du Preez family ran an impressive dairy 203 and F.W.Reitz claimed that his grandfather had had so extensive a dairy that the buttermilk was allowed to run to waste. 204 But even under modern conditions, dairy farming is a demanding occupation and it is not surprising that wool production displaced this branch of

201. Wallace, p.266.
202. Moodie, p.134, 135. 1 quart = 0,946 litres. One good milker in the present age should give 20 quarts daily.
farming as well. F.W. Reitz claimed in 1850 that the Merino had replaced dairying to such an extent that the export of butter was no longer profitable for the Swellendam area. The extent to which Merinos had replaced dairy cows was reflected in the sharp rise in the price of butter. In the thirties it had been 4½d per pound and had risen to 18d per pound in the fifties. Large quantities of butter had to be imported and Reitz found it regrettable that the Colony could not provide its own requirements. He was a staunch advocate of the Ayrshire cow which was a good producer of milk relative to the amount of food it consumed. By 1857, however, he admitted that he had been unable to convince other farmers of its suitability and had given up the idea as "hopeless".

Not only was the Merino sheep proving a more profitable farming venture, but the ravages of lungsickness among cattle after 1854 provided further incentive for farmers to abandon cattle and dairy farming. Lungsickness, or pleuropneumonia, was introduced to the Colony in 1854 by a bull imported from Holland. The disease spread rapidly and it was estimated that by 1856, 100,000 head of cattle had died from the disease in the Colony. In 1860 it was observed that farmers in the Caledon area did not devote much of their time to cattle as the ravages of lungsickness had "damped their ardour" in this respect. Another particularly destructive disease among cattle, especially in dry years,

206. Reitz, Cape Agriculture in Two Lectures, p.12.
207. Ibid., p.13.
209. CAL/5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1860.
was lamsiekte. Cattle grazing on impoverished, lime- and phosphate-deficient veld, manifested a craving for bones to satisfy their nutritional deficiencies. In picking up old carcase material in the veld, animals ingested an anaerobic toxin which was identified only in the twentieth century as botulism. Lamsiekte was particularly prevalent in the Duiwenhoks River ward, in areas where there was overstocking and recurrent drought. The Overberg experienced a long, dry and sometimes very hot period from October to April when natural grazing was scarce. Under these conditions sheep fared a great deal better than cattle. During the drought of the sixties, it was reported that while sheep in the Caledon district were still in good condition, the cattle were like "walking skeletons".

Although cattle did not decrease to the same extent that horses did, the drop was significant. In 1838 the three districts of Caledon, Swellendam and Bredasdorp had an estimated 31,210 cattle. The number had decreased to 20,110 in 1865, but as the occurrence of lungsickness declined, cattle again increased slightly to 22,642 by 1875. This represents an overall decrease over the 37 year period of 35.8%. According to the census of 1865, the Caledon and Bredasdorp districts had a total of 4,584 breeding cattle. This is a small number when compared with the 359,313 woolled sheep for the same year. Even before the advent of

212. LBD 24 Swellendam Land Reports, Applications for conversion to quitrent - A.van Wyk, 1 November 1832; J. Cronje, 1 November 1832; J.du Preez, November 1832 and A. Lombaard 1 November 1832.
214. CCP 9/1, 9/28, 9/38 Blue Books, 1838 p.244; 1865 pp. EE 2,3 and 1875 pp. EE 2,3.
lungsickness Reitz, Van Breda and Joubert had made a significant reduction in the number of cattle on their two farms. In 1840 there were 536 and in 1846 the number was 365.216 The two farms supported about 11 000 sheep.217

It has already been mentioned that oxen as draught animals were giving way to horses and particularly mules.218 This too, would have influenced the numbers of cattle kept by Overberg farmers.

There are three other aspects of livestock farming which deserve mention although not one of them proved a rival for the Merino. Figures indicate that Boer goats were kept in significant numbers at the start of the period under study, there being 88 153 in the Swellendam district (which included Caledon and Bredasdorp) in 1841.219 Sheep at about the same time numbered 216 400.220 By 1865, however, in the Caledon - Bredasdorp district there were only 18 652 goats.221 They appear to have been favoured by those coloureds who still had access to land. At the Hottentot Kraal in the Swellendam division, the inhabitants possessed 1 771 goats but no sheep in 1874.222 The 1865 census figures for Swellendam included those for Robertson and Riversdale, where a great many more goats were kept because of the Karoo-like conditions, and these figures do not reflect the situation in the Overberg section of the Swellendam district. Boer goats had very little commercial value but had been a

216. Van Breda Journals I, 1817 - 1847, pp. 80, 97.
217. Ibid., pp.64, 65.
218. See above, pp.98.
221. CCP 4/11/1 Census, 1865, p.xi.
222. Cape of Good Hope, Correspondence on the Hottentot Kraal Location in the Division of Swellendam, 4 February 1874.
useful part of a subsistence economy because they provided both meat and milk.

The Caledon district was the first to experiment with the breeding of Angora goats, Colonel William Henderson having imported the first in 1838. He purchased the farm Tyger Hoek in that year where he wished to extend his farming operations, which included the raising of Angoras.223 Angoras were evidently viewed with "suspicion", however, despite doing well in the Overberg.224 Their lack of popularity was probably due to a tendency to abort their young, pulmonary weakness and poor mothering qualities.225 They received more attention in parts of the Swellendam district where by 1875 there were 9,145 whereas in the Caledon and Bredasdorp districts in that year there were only 1,689.226 They were clearly not a substitute for the Merino.

Towards the end of the period under study ostriches raised a great deal of interest. The supply of feathers from wild ostriches was limited but they fetched extremely high prices. In 1839 a single feather was worth 2 rixdollars (3s) while a whole oxhide was worth little more at 3 rixdollars (4s 6d).227 In circa 1860 it was reported that an ostrich feather in England would cost from 18s to 25s.228 The first official record of domesticated birds being farmed occurs in 1885 when 80 were entered in the annual returns for livestock. Between

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223. LBD Swellendam Land Reports, Henderson to Napier, 21 July 1838.
226. CCP 9/38 Blue Book, 1875, pp. EE 2,3.
228. Duff Gordon, p.122.
1857 and 1864 encouraging experiments were made with capturing and taming ostrich chicks but it was not until an incubator was perfected in the Albany district in 1869 that ostrich farming could be extended.228 By 1872 ostriches were purported to be more remunerative than any other branch of farming and a few of the "most enterprising" farmers of the Caledon district had turned their attention to producing feathers. But it was only those with suitable farms and those who could spend considerable sums on fencing large enclosures that were likely to be successful.230 In the Bredasdorp district ostrich farming was also "extensively increasing".231 Entries in the Van Breda journal between December 1869 and December 1870 confirm that there was considerable activity in catching young ostriches. A special enclosure was built and the first plucking took place in June 1870. It was obviously an occasion of importance (or entertainment) as it is one of the few entries written in bold lettering.232 The results were clearly not encouraging as the following entries indicate:

Plucked large ostriches - feathers very inferior;
Plucked 28 ostriches, got 8 lbs 2 oz feathers - fair; plucked the ostriches with much trouble.233

The development of ostrich farming does not form part of this study, but the comments of the pioneer of Zoetendals Valley do not suggest that feathers were likely to take precedence over wool.

Pig farming received very little attention in the Colony and the traveller Mentzel indicates why. Pigs were only fattened

231. Ibid., Civil Commissioner’s Report, Bredasdorp, p.50.
near Cape Town for they could not be transported by waggon and if driven would perish on the way. It would hardly be worthwhile to drive a pig to market, he commented laconically. Pigs were not kept by the indigenous races as they had a "strong dislike to pork as an article of food". Interest in pig breeding apparently increased with the arrival of the English capitalist farmers who imported good stock from Britain and by 1864 the Swellendam agricultural exhibition had sufficient to "gladden any Christian heart or stomach". Pig numbers compared to sheep, however, were also very insignificant. In 1865 the Caledon - Bredasdorp district had 7,089 and the large Swellendam, Robertson and Riversdale district had only 9,459.

Although farmers may have continued to make an income from their various branches of farming, the prominence gained by the Merino over cultivated crops and other forms of livestock in the Overberg between 1838 and 1872 is undisputed. The existence of highly favourable natural conditions and a market more consistent than for any other farm product combined to make Merino farming a sound and profitable venture.

By 1872 the existence of a reliable and profitable source of income had changed the Overberg from an area of quasi-subistence farming to one of commercial farming. The sale of wool drew the formerly simple rural economy into a commercial world economy and this had pervasive and impelling results for the area, aspects which will be examined in the following chapters.

234. Mentzel, p.213.
235. Moodie, p.42.
237. CCP 4/11/1 Census, 1865, p.xi.
APPENDIX 1

STOCKING RATES IN THE OVERBERG CALCULATED FROM DATA IN THE SWELLENDAM LAND REPORTS FOR A SAMPLE OF 24 FARMS IN VARIOUS WARDS, 1827.

Wards of Duiwenhoks and Vette Rivers

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<th>Number of small stock units</th>
<th>Stocking rate (units per morgen)</th>
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</thead>
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<td>4 418</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>1/4,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 543</td>
<td>2 400</td>
<td>1/1,88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 124</td>
<td>2 514</td>
<td>1/2,03</td>
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<tr>
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<td>644</td>
<td>1/2,65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AVERAGE STOCKING RATE: 1/2,88 or 1/2,54

Wards of Caledon, Swart River and Kars River

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm size (morgen)</th>
<th>Number of small stock units</th>
<th>Stocking rate (units per morgen)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 382</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>1/2,83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 603</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>1/3,56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 812</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>1/5,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 039</td>
<td>3 609</td>
<td>1/0,56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 006</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>1/3,71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 287</td>
<td>1 300</td>
<td>1/1,75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>883</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>1/2,90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 484</td>
<td>1 340</td>
<td>1/2,60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AVERAGE STOCKING RATE: 1/2,88 or 1/2,00

Ward of Riviersonderend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm size (morgen)</th>
<th>Number of small stock units</th>
<th>Stocking rate (units per morgen)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 755</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1/6,71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 193</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>1/3,44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 673</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>1/3,81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 572</td>
<td>1 490</td>
<td>1/2,39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 270</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1/5,53</td>
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<td>2 600</td>
<td>1 196</td>
<td>1/2,17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>564</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>1/1,70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 538</td>
<td>1 796</td>
<td>1/1,96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AVERAGE STOCKING RATE: 1/3,46 or 1/2,94

1. Averages were worked out in two ways. In the first method, the stocking rates for each farm (that is the last column) were added together and divided by eight. In the second method, the total morgenage of the eight farms was divided by the total number of small stock units for the eight farms.
2. L6D 24, Swellendam Land Reports, 1827.
Although the Cape Colony was exporting only 18.1% of the wool sold on the London market in 1865, the Colony had become a part of the developing phenomenon of mass trade. The intensification of commercial exchange deeply affects both the economic and general civilization of a people. There is an increase in production and consumption with an increased diffusion of goods and contact between men. While the colonies were providing the raw materials of industry, in the late eighteenth century they were also providing markets for about a third of British textile manufactures. The tremendous expansion in the exchange of raw and manufactured goods provided a great deal of scope for an enterprising business leader class which exploited the integration of the colonies in a world market. Merchants were attracted by the possibilities of profitable transactions brought about by the opening of new centres of production and hence also of consumption. The increase in commerce was accompanied by the formation of joint-stock companies and banks, all of which was to have an influence on the simple rural economy of the Overberg.

1. S.A.C.A., London Colonial Wool Sales, 10 October 1865. Australia was providing 55.5% and New Zealand 25.53%. Not all wool exported through Cape ports was produced in the Colony. From about 1850 Port Elizabeth also exported wool from the Orange Free State. See Thom, p.197.


The transformation from a subsistence/barter economy to a commercial economy was neither sudden nor complete. The Overberg farmer continued to produce much of what he required for domestic use while at the same time yielding a product for the world market. The conversion of the indigenous hairy, fat-tailed flocks to wool-bearers did not necessarily require a large outlay of capital. The Overberg farmer could move gradually into the capitalist sphere while retaining the privilege of being able to provide for himself. He was not entirely dependent on wool sales and being largely self-sufficient, he could withdraw from the market in times of falling prices and wait until the market improved. 5 The large measure of economic self-sufficiency enjoyed by the Overberg farmer was a safeguard against rapid social and cultural change 6 for he could accept or reject the dictates of the commercial world to a great extent. At the same time the added income from wool production placed within his reach a large variety of consumer and luxury items which modified his standard of living.

Trading in the Overberg in the early nineteenth century, as in most parts of the Colony, was dependent either on a long waggon trip to Cape Town, or on the arrival of a smous with commodities which he exchanged for livestock. The operations of smouse, or travelling hawkers, which commenced in the latter half of the eighteenth century, increased in

6. These aspects will be dealt with in the conclusion.
the nineteenth and became an everyday feature on the farms well into the twentieth century.\(^7\) Anyone with initiative and the capital to raise a waggon loaded with exchangeable commodities could operate as a *smous* or *tagt-ganger*. Lady Duff Gordon, the tuberculosis sufferer who spent a number of months in Caledon in 1860/61, referred to an Irish pauper who made a "fortune" by going on a bartering expedition. He chartered two waggons which he converted into an "ambulatory village shop" and went into the "far interior" exchanging his goods for oxen and sheep.\(^6\) Even farmers who found themselves short of income ventured out on *tagt* returning with large numbers of cattle and sheep.\(^9\)

The *smous* or *tagt-ganger* was an unsophisticated form of commercial agent. They were unlikely to be replaced while there was little capital investment in the Colony and the only means of communication and transport remained slow. Prior to about 1838, the Overberg (and most of the Colony with the exception of the wine-producing areas) had not produced a product of sufficient commercial value to attract settled permanent agents. It was perhaps sheer chance and entrepreneurial bravado that had attracted Joseph Barry to open a trading venture at Port Beaufort in 1823.\(^10\) His sequestration in 1827 was an indication of the risky nature of a commercial undertaking in a rural area with no readily marketable product.\(^11\)


\(^8\) Duff Gordon, p.86.

\(^9\) *Government Gazette*, Advertisement, 12 March 1841; CO 2807 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 17 October 1842; CO 2867 Hoorn to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 30 July 1849; Overberg Courant, Advertisement, 23 September 1863 and 1/SWM 11/46 Van Dyk to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 18 March 1869.

\(^10\) See above, pp. 84, 85.

\(^11\) Buirski, pp.48,49.
The benefits of wool export were still only being enjoyed by the progressive few and until greater numbers could be drawn into an awakening commercial system, agents were likely to experience meagre returns. Barry had nevertheless laid a valuable basis for trade and after he and his two nephews pooled their capital in 1834, the business made rapid strides. The firm began with 41 113 rixdollars (about £3 000); in 1837 assets totalled 280 397 rixdollars (£21 000); in 1839 464 208 rixdollars (£34 800); in 1847 1 418 734 rixdollars (£106 000) and by 1860 they had risen to 3 500 000 rixdollars (£262 500). The business had shown phenomenal growth which was related to the rapid increase in wool production and exports.

Joseph Barry's first purchase of wool from Overberg farmers totalled 660 pounds in weight. During 1839 more than 100 000 pounds were bought. The figure for 1847 was 426 515 pounds and between that year and 1850 a further 1 000 000 pounds changed hands. In 1860/61, the peak of the wool boom, Barry and Nephews bought more than 1 000 000 pounds of fleece. Although a great variety of other farm products formed part of the exchange, they were insignificant in comparison to wool. That the prosperity of Barry and Nephews was almost entirely due to wool is illustrated in Fig. 1. The graphs representing the rise in the firm's assets and colonial wool exports correspond extremely well. It can be seen that by 1840 when wool exports were becoming well-established, Barry assets began to rise rapidly. The sharpest rise in the firm's income took place between about

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13. See Fig. 1.
15. Ibid., p.84.
16. See above, p. 152. Wool formed well over half the value of exports from Port Beaufort in 1843.
Fig. 2a  Assets in rixdollars of the firm Barry and Nephews

Fig. 2b  Colonial wool exports in pounds sterling
1847 and 1860. There was a correspondingly sharp rise in colonial wool exports during this period. After 1860 the graphs fail to correspond as the Barry firm suffered a series of serious setbacks in the sixties.\textsuperscript{17}

Although the Barry firm had by far the largest commercial network in the Overberg, there was competition among wool buyers and the representatives of large firms as well as smaller agents established themselves in the villages.\textsuperscript{18} Theodore Osterloh is an example of a wool buyer who based himself in Caledon in 1845 and operated individually. Besides numerous other properties he owned a wool store and carried on a "flourishing business" for many years.\textsuperscript{19} The following extracts from advertisements in the press leave little doubt of the marketability of wool:

\begin{quote}
...liberal advances on consignments [of wool] to their London House.....

.... prepared to pay highest prices for wool and make liberal advances to parties consigning their clips through them to their London agents ......

The undersigned purchase wool for cash or advance money to shippers of wool on favourable conditions...

The undersigned make liberal advances on wool consigned for sale to their London firm...\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} See above, p.87.
\textsuperscript{18} Wilson, "History of Caledon", p.97.
\textsuperscript{20} S.A.C.A., Advertisements, 11 October 1845, 22 October 1845, 8 November 1850, 9 November 1850 and Reid, (ed.), South African Agricultural News and Farmers’ Journal, Advertisement, 1 November 1849.
The growing production and export of wool increased the ability of the Colony to finance imports. The Commercial Advertiser reported a distinct livening of trade between 1835 and 1838, indicated by a doubling in dues collected by the Cape Town customs department.21 Although imports apparently declined from 1838 to 1839, the Advertiser showed that of the 1838 imports a large amount had been specie in the form of compensation money to former slave owners and that real imports had increased by £200 891.22 The revenue from customs was considered a good test of the temporal condition of the population for it indicated the amount of 'luxury' foreign articles that were entering the country - articles such as textiles, clothing, agricultural implements, furniture, books, tea, sugar and coffee. The increase in import dues for 1845 was not a result of increased tariffs but of increased consumption.23 The chief import between 1850 and 1870 was manufactured articles, mainly textiles for the consumer market.24 High priorities on the list of imports through Port Beaufort were hardware, earthenware, fabrics (particularly linen), shoes, boots and slops (comfortable footwear), furniture, beer and ale.25 The customs records for Port Beaufort are erratic and incomplete but they do indicate a considerable increase in dues between 1844 and 1867. From £2 19s 6d they rose to £539 16s 1d. The dues dropped drastically in 1869 and 1870, probably owing to the financial difficulties of Barry and Nephews, but had recovered again by 1872.26

22. Ibid., Cape of Good Hope, 14 December 1839.
23. Ibid., Editorial, 4 October 1845.
25. CCT 176 Return of Goods imported into Port Beaufort, 1843.
26. 1/SNM 11/17 Customs House Port Beaufort. All letters from the collector at the port to the civil commissioner between 1844 and 1872 were consulted.
Consumerization among the rural population increased rapidly. Goods that had formerly been luxuries, because of their availability, became everyday commodities. The array of goods kept by the local storekeeper grew wider, in particular the variety of textiles.27 Country women no longer had to be satisfied with the calico brought by the smaug, but could select muslins, velvets, ribbons and braids at their nearest village. Parasols, pearl buttons, veils, hair nets and eau de Cologne were also readily accessible. 28 There was a great demand for shoes manufactured in Britain. In 1848 the Cape Town press announced the arrival of 200 000 pairs of boots and shoes of "the latest London fashion",29 a mode which within two decades filtered to the Overberg. By 1864 Swellendam had "passed the age of veldschoens" and had entered that of patent tipped shoes.30 A taste for London shoes was accompanied by a tendre for choice French champagne, clarets and a variety of delicacies probably unheard of in country fare prior to 1838.31 Wholesalers were offering to country dealers a large variety of "staple and fancy" goods.32 The increase in the demand for "fancy" goods is well indicated in the changing nature of the advertisements in the Commercial Advertiser. Whereas between

27. S.A.C.A., Advertisement, 3 May 1851. Enumerated in the long list of different of fabrics and garments are Merino hosiery and Merino drawers.

28. CSC 2/3/1/269 Supreme Court, Summons Benjamin Lombard, 5 March 1856.

See also Drostdy Museum, A91/1 Goods Required at Port Beaufort, 1845 - 1846.

29. S.A.C.A., Advertisement, 1 January 1848.


32. S.A.C.A., Advertisement, 5 January 1848.
1839 and circa 1850 there was no direct reference to Christmas and the giving of presents, by the sixties it was common for the December issues to advertise "plate and fancy goods" and "elegant" gifts for Christmas and New Year.³³ Harness and saddlery were also no longer necessarily a product of the farm or village saddle-maker and could be obtained from dealers whose display at the Swellendam agricultural exhibition in 1864 resembled a "London emporium".³⁴

Consumerization of imported goods among the labouring population also increased. In 1850 it was noted that the Khoi of Zuurbraak had given up the old kaross and were clad in fabrics of English manufacture.³⁵ Country dealers were supplying quantities of clothing, bedding, groceries, tobacco and clasp knives to labourers, often in excess of their ability to pay. In 1867 a shopkeeper near Elim was owed £94 4s 5d by 37 labourers from the mission. Individual debts ranged from about £1 to £5.³⁶ With the daily wage being about 1s 6d (or about £2 per month), purchases amounting to £5 were considerable. An enterprising communicant at Zuurbraak opened his own business and was able to retire after five or six years having realized £800 profit on his sale of manufactures. Another received about £100 per month in cash and more than twice that during harvest and sheep shearing.³⁷

³⁶. 1/BRE 2/2/1 Civil Record Book, 1865 - 1875.
The steady growth of commerce and material prosperity in the Colony until the early sixties was considered to be more satisfactory than in almost all other British colonies.\(^{38}\) From 1845 to 1859 John Fairbairn's editorials made regular mention of the increasing prosperity. At the end of 1845 he wrote that the 1844-45 statement of revenue and expenditure exhibited the "prosperous condition of the country".\(^{39}\) In January 1846 he commented that the past year had been one of increase with the completion of public works, great extension of foreign commerce and a population that was better fed, clothed and "decidedly" more wealthy.\(^{40}\) In 1847, with the exception of the frontier war, the Colony had enjoyed prosperity.\(^{41}\) In 1858 the Colony was "prosperous and progressive"\(^{42}\) and in 1859 it was on "the high ridge of the advancing wave of prosperity".\(^{43}\)

One of the indices used to indicate the rate of economic development is population increase. Figures given by C.G.W. Schumann reveal an exceptional average annual increase between 1855 and 1865 which suggests a most marked economic advance.\(^{44}\) It is difficult to draw accurate conclusions about the population for the whole of the Overberg from the census figures of 1865 as Caledon and Bredasdorp are given together while Swellendam is included with Riversdale and the sparser semi-Karoo area of Robertson. However, the white population of Caledon and Bredasdorp doubled in the period 1856 to 1865 - from 3,250 to 6,537. The number of agriculturists for these two areas also increased.

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\(^{39}\) S.A.C.A., Editorial, 4 October 1845.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., Editorial, 3 January 1846.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., Editorial, 2 January 1847.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., Editorial, 22 September 1858.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., Editorial, 19 February 1859. These were ironically prophetic words for within five years the wave was to come crashing down.

\(^{44}\) C.G.W. Schumann, Structural Changes and Business Cycles in South Africa, p.42.
considerably for the same period from 685 to 2 231. If the latter figures are correct the only logical conclusion is that wool production was enabling the land to support a much denser population than formerly. Small farms of only a few hundred morgen were supporting families whereas formerly 3 000 had been the norm. In the Swellendam, Robertson and Riversdale areas, whites had increased from 8 500 to 14 472. There had also been an increase in the number of agriculturists in these areas (from 3 097 to 4 965) although the increase was not as spectacular as for Caledon and Bredasdorp. This expansion was almost entirely attributable to natural increase. Calculations from the census figures for 1865 show that in the three districts under study, immigrants made up only 4.9% of the population. Whites made up almost half of the population of Caledon, Bredasdorp and Swellendam (45.6%, 48.4% and 47.7% respectively). The coloured population (termed "Hottentot", "Kafir" and "Other" in the census) for the three districts totalled 12 739, 5 652 of whom lived on the missions of Genadendal, Elim and Zuurbraak. If the census figures are correct, the growth of the coloured population had been a good deal less than that of whites. In the Caledon-Bredasdorp district coloureds increased from 7 407 to 7 532 between 1856 and 1865, and in the Swellendam, Robertson and Riversdale districts the increase was from 8 215 to 12 312. The apparently small increase in the Caledon-Bredasdorp area suggests that since sheep farming is not labour intensive, large numbers were having to find

45. CCP 4/11/1 Census, 1865, pp.viii, ix.
47. CCP 4/11/1 Census, 1865, pp.viii, ix.
48. Ibid., p.40.
49. Ibid., p.6.
50. Ibid., p.viii.
employment elsewhere, probably in Cape Town. It would appear, therefore, that the prosperity that wool farming brought to the Overberg, was enjoyed chiefly by white agriculturists. The coloureds had little access to land on which they could maintain an independent existence. The small towns of the Overberg offered relatively few job opportunities and prospects for employment were better nearer Cape Town, particularly on projects such as the railway building of the early sixties. By the 1860s a migratory labour force had developed at Genadendal which was attracted to the towns and later to the mines.

The development of new villages has also been cited as an indication of economic development. One must be cautious, however, of attributing the origin of the small towns of the Overberg only to increasing commerce. R. Ross states:

In one district after another, small towns were founded as local agriculture became sufficiently profitable and market-orientated to attract merchants and craftsmen on a permanent basis.

Ross suggests that the origin of small country towns was linked to increasing commerce and a growing economy. Not one of the four main towns of the Overberg was founded for economic reasons. Whereas in England it was the market town that formed the focus of the rural life around it, in the Cape Colony the motive for the establishment of many, if not most, small towns prior to the mineral era (that is before c.1870) was to secure a place of worship. Once this had been

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51. This aspect will receive attention in the following chapter.
52. See chapter three, especially pp.55, 68, 69.
53. Ibid, p.35.
55. Ibid.
realized, if the population warranted it, a magistracy was created. Swellendam, Caledon, Bredasdorp and Napier were all founded with the object of providing the farming community with a church. These towns only very slowly took on a semblance of commercialism and despite the wool boom none of them became large flourishing centres of trade. Other towns in the Colony with about the same date of origin showed significantly greater growth.57

Between 1745 and 1810 Swellendam (with the exception of Genadendal) was the only village community in the Overberg. In January 1744 J.T. Rhenius was appointed deputy landdrost of the future Swellendam district. In 1745 he became "absolute landdrost" and in 1746 permission was given for the construction of a drostdy.58 In the first two decades of the nineteenth century Swellendam was "more or less" a small commercial centre where residents made a living by trading and others as wainwrights and blacksmiths.59 By 1838 the little centre still had a distinctly rural character with its scattered white cottages among "trim gardens, orchards and groves of trees".60 Between 1828 and 1843 the number of houses increased from about 50 to 200,61 and although the village was taking on a "mercantile character",62 pigs and poultry still roamed the streets in the early forties.63 As the wool boom soared to its zenith, Swellendam reflected the

58. 1/SWM Swellendam Magistrate, Inventory 2/3, Introduction.
60. Bunbury, p.97. See also J.Backhouse, p.105.
61. Stopforth, p. 1 and CO 2812 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 6 November 1863.
63. 1/SWM 11/45 Petition of Swellendam Residents, 4 May 1842.
agricultural prosperity of the Overberg. It became the "centre of civilization, education and religion" and was considered the capital of the Overberg. But despite the large quantity of wool being produced in the area, by 1861 the town had no open wool market and still needed "to become a centre of trade". The absence of a wool market which would allow free competition appears to have been the result of the commercial power of Barry and Nephews which excluded almost all competition. Their power, which approached being a monopoly, was advantageous to the agriculturists because it assured a market for their product, but it had a negative effect on the village because of the exclusion of competition. E.H. Burrows perhaps over-romanticizes the "unbridled prosperity" of Swellendam for although it "boasted a newspaper and a bank" by 1860 it was still "very straggling" and "most awkwardly situated in every respect". Even before drought, depression and the great fire of the mid-sixties put a halt to progress, Swellendam had begun to feel the isolation caused by the opening of communications around the Overberg. Heidelberg and Riversdale had become

64. Burrows, Overberg Outspan, p.76.
68. Buirske, p.72.
71. See I/SWM 14/8 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 19 May 1865. On 17 May at least 30 "substantial" buildings were destroyed by a devastating fire. The 30 buildings included those housing three shops, the carpenter's, the printer's, the bank, the tinsmith, the waggomaker and the smithy. The destruction of small businesses was a severe blow to the village.
72. See Chapter Four, especially pp.88 - 90.
the new transit towns for Karoo produce travelling to Port Beaufort. The opening of the Plattekloof Pass which had made this possible had done Swellendam "great injury and [would] still do greater".73

Caledon, the next village to arise in the Overberg after Swellendam, was created in 1810 as a sub-drostdy. It was almost certainly the need for a church and the desire of the British government to provide judicial, religious and educational facilities that led to its establishment. The presence of hot springs on the Klein Swartberg, lauded for their curative powers, was fortuitous and provided extra incentive to foster a new settlement.74 Caledon grew very slowly and evinced negligible commercial activity. A local market was not created until 1840.75 By this date there was an agency of Barry and Nephews in the village which was, however, rather a service centre than a centre of trade.76 By 1845 agents for the purchase of wool had settled in Caledon77 and the wool boom undoubtedly boosted the growth of the village. Whereas by 1850 there were only about 43 householders, in the next ten years the number doubled.78 If one considers the importance of the Caledon area as a wool producer however, a village of a mere 80 houses was not particularly impressive. A traveller noted in 1860 that although the village appeared to have a considerable trade in

75. Wilson, "History of Caledon", p.80.
76. Ibid., p.93, 94.
77. Ibid., p.97.
78. Ibid., p.102.
wool, it was "old fashioned looking" with "very poor dismal looking thatched houses" and the population was considered very small for a village of Caledon's age.79 Despite its appearance, the village continued to grow and between 1865 and 1875 showed significantly greater growth than Swellendam. During this decade Swellendam's population of about 2,000 remained static while Caledon's increased from 724 to 1,036.80 Swellendam had taken a major setback with the great fire of 1865 at a time when depression and drought were seriously affecting the Colony. There was little hope of commercial recovery for Swellendam until the return of prosperity in the seventies. By this time however, the mineral discoveries of the north had deflected commerce and trade northwards, and Swellendam had little chance of regaining its former prosperity. Caledon, which is more favourably situated with regard to the winter rains, did not suffer as severely from the drought of the sixties as did Swellendam. This is reflected in the continued growth of the village between 1865 and 1875. By the close of the period under study Caledon had become a small commercial centre, but emphasis must be placed on small. It had thirteen shopkeepers besides numerous tradesmen in 187081 but with a population of little over 1,000 could hardly claim to be a bustling commercial town.

As with Caledon, the prime motive in the establishment of Bredasdorp, the third most important town in the Overberg, was to secure a church for the farming community. The

farm Langefontein was purchased and following a meeting on 16 May 1838, 30 erven were put up for sale. The purchasers appear to have been local farmers who probably desired a residence near their church.\textsuperscript{82} The Government Gazette of 22 March 1839 announced that a provisional congregation had been formed.\textsuperscript{83} Bredasdorp remained very much smaller than both Swellendam and Caledon and in 1854 had a population of 250.\textsuperscript{84} In the years circa 1865 to 1870 the village supported seven shopkeepers, including an agency of Barry and Nephews, a druggist, two waggonmakers, two blacksmiths, a wheelwright, a mason and two painters, an hotelkeeper, a miller, two bakers and a number of butchers.\textsuperscript{85}

Bredasdorp, like Swellendam, appears to have reached optimal size by about 1865 \textsuperscript{86} and during the wool boom had probably attracted more traders than it could support. This belief is substantiated by a decrease of 215 in the population in the subsequent decade.\textsuperscript{87}

The emergence of another town in 1838/39 near Caledon was not the result of greatly increased commercial activity. Napier came into being because of rivalry between two leading families - the Van Bredas and the Van der Byls. When the necessity for a church arose in the vicinity of the present Bredasdorp, two committees were formed as there was disagreement about the location. The committee that purchased Langefontein named their town Bredasdorp in honour of Michiel van Breda. The other committee under P.van der Byl

\textsuperscript{82} 1/BRE Documents Relating to Erven 1833 - 1908, document signed by Joseph Barry and Vendu Role.

\textsuperscript{83} Cited in Stopforth, p.144.

\textsuperscript{84} 1/CAL 5/1/2/2 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 9 November 1854.

\textsuperscript{85} 1/BRE 2/2/1 Names and Occupations cited in Civil Record Book.

\textsuperscript{86} In 1904 Swellendam still had a population of only 2 406, about 400 more than in 1875. See Wilson, "Caledon and the Overberg", Contree, No.24, September 1988, p.26.

\textsuperscript{87} CCP 4/11/1 Census Reports, 1865, p.6 and 1875, p.9 cited in Wilson, "History of Caledon", p.115.
which purchased Klipdrift in September 1839, gave their village the name of Napier in honour of the ruling governor. The limited commercial activity that occurred at Napier is indicated by the presence of only three shopkeepers, a butcher, a miller and a carpenter between circa 1865 and 1875.

Observers such as Richard Southey, civil commissioner at Swellendam, found it strange that thriving villages had not developed at Port Beaufort and Malagas Kraal, the sea and river ports of the Breede River. He reported in 1850 that both were "extensive trading establishments" yet there was only one store at each. He attributed the lack of activity to the nature of the inhabitants with whom it appeared "almost impossible to effect anything". He made the extravagant claim that if the Breede River had been in the Eastern Cape where there were many more English settlers, a town half as big as London would have arisen. In the mid-fifties when wool sales were showing no sign of abating, there was evidently the belief that Malagas could be developed into a town of some standing. Some 420 erven were surveyed along the river in 1853/54 on land belonging to Van der Byl and Denyssen. Speculatory hopes were not fulfilled and the colonial secretary was advised that there was little

88. Theal, History of South Africa, pp.210, 211 and CD 2801 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 16 November 1841.
89. 1/BRE 2/2/1 Names and Occupations cited in Civil Record Book.
90. CD 2867 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 3 May 1850 and 23 May 1850.
prospect of a rapidly rising village. By 1870 land at Malagas was worth very little and it was doubtful whether the erf on which the Dutch Reformed church stood would fetch £5. Erven had sold for an average price of £14 in Caledon during the boom years of the fifties.

The shortage of fresh water undoubtedly played a role in restricting the development of Port Beaufort and Malagas but both were satellites of the Barry empire and once their raison d'être collapsed they faded into insignificance.

The creation of the hamlet Greyton had been part of the speculative boom of the fifties. By 1869 it was a "deserted place .... and [would] never be a place of much importance". Stanford, which was laid out in 1855, was the only other village of note. It had a population of about 150 in 1859, but was shut out from easy communication with other parts of the division, a problem that would "damp the prospects of [the] place for many years to come".

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92. CD 2891 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 15 September 1853.
93. 1/SWM 14/10 Report on Dutch Reformed Church, Malagas, 9 September 1870.
95. 1/CAL 5/1/2/6 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 20 May 1869.
96. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 11 January 1861.
The fairly anomalous situation existed in the Overberg in that while the area was producing a Merino clip of considerable commercial value, none of its towns developed into bustling centres of trade. This is probably primarily explained by the fact that all the wool produced in the area was exported and provided no scope for secondary industries. Furthermore, the Overberg, with only one, small, dangerous coastal outlet at Port Beaufort, did not have a large hinterland. The bulk of the Colony’s wool was exported either through Cape Town or Port Elizabeth. The Overberg thus, isolated as it was geographically, did not draw a great deal of trade from outside the area and its towns remained little more than service centres for the immediate farming community. The census figures for 1865 show that in the three districts only a very small percentage of the population were engaged in trade and commerce. In Swellendam 10,98% of whites and 3,75% of coloureds were engaged in this field; in Caledon the figures were 9,68% and 1,78% and in Bredasdorp a mere 7,28% of whites and 0,29% of coloureds made a living from trade and commerce. This category appears to include only those who were engaged in the buying and selling of primarily imported goods. A second category, designated manufactures included blacksmiths, saddlers, waggonmakers and tailors - people who provided essential services to a farming community. This category was significantly larger than the former and employed 14,9% of whites and 17,6% of coloureds in the Swellendam district, 15,9% whites and 19,2% coloureds in the Caledon district and 15,01% whites and 13,04% coloureds in the Bredasdorp district. As can be expected, well over half the whites of the three districts were agriculturists, forming 66,56% of the total in the Swellendam district, 54,42% in the Caledon district and 64,02% in the Bredasdorp district. The majority of coloureds were classified as domestic servants and labourers - 69,1%, 72,81%

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and 71.68% for the three districts respectively. 97 These percentages confirm the essentially rural nature of the Overberg despite the fact that it had entered the money economy and had a strong nexus with world trade in the form of wool.

The non-commercial character of the Overberg was in a large measure due to an overwhelmingly Dutch agricultural population which lacked the "feverishness of the modern money-maker". 98 It has already been noted that only 4.9% of the Overberg population were immigrants. 99 It appears to have been primarily this sector of the population which reflected the "feverish thirst for rapid gains" reported in the Overberg Courant in 1862. 100 The editor noted that men in their "new country" had had "rapid success" in their commercial speculation and there had been "remarkable rises from one status to another". This had not always been to their advantage, for vanity and profusion had led them into a "contemptible style of acting and living" which led to degrading excesses. 101 It is very likely that it was chiefly to this sector of the Swellendam population that the observer was referring when he commented that the town had entered the age of patent tipped shoes. 102 The great majority of white Overberg inhabitants were not the product of a materialistic industrial society and did not feel the want of the paraphernalia of either affectation or gentility. Isolated on their farms where all their material needs were provided, their values and aesthetic standards continued to centre

98. Spilhaus, p.255
99. See above, p.182.
100. Overberg Courant, Editorial, 1 January 1862.
101. Ibid.
102. See above, p.179.
around "the number and beauty of their herds and flocks".\textsuperscript{103} In the late fifties a correspondent to the \textit{Overberg Courant} considered Swellendam to be a "respectable and wealthy community"\textsuperscript{104} and yet a traveller through the district a few years previously had seen "very limited signs of wealth and comfort".\textsuperscript{105} The refinements of life may in many instances have been lacking but Lady Duff Gordon, a visitor to Caledon, acknowledged the many advantages of life in the Overberg. Families were happy and healthy and could "pick up a living" which "cost nothing" with their sheep, cattle, pigs and poultry, growing fruit and vegetables in abundance wherever there was water.\textsuperscript{106}

Despite being largely self-sufficient, the temptation for the Overberg farmer to use the credit facilities offered by merchants and later by banks was undoubtedly great, particularly in poor years. Examples of the liberal credit advances extended to wool producers have been cited.\textsuperscript{107} During unfavourable agricultural years, certain parts of the Overberg suffered more than others and it was at such times that credit facilities were resorted to. The "dry cycle" which began at the start of the sixties and lasted for at least six years throughout the Colony was particularly severe. But there is evidence that the Overberg, with its fairly reliable winter rainfall, was less severely affected than many other parts of the Colony. The Caledon area, particularly, weathered the storm of drought and depression exceedingly well. 


\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Overberg Courant}, Letter, 26 October 1859.

\textsuperscript{105} Freeman, p.17.

\textsuperscript{106} Duff Gordon, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{107} See above, p.177.
was often necessary, but it appears to have been handled with a great deal more caution than in the Eastern Cape. Evidently it was chiefly immigrants who abused the credit system, a system vilified for the encouragement it gave to speculators who wished to make a quick fortune. 108

The hesitation with which the Overberg farmer entered into the ramifications of a commercial world are reflected in the caution with which the banking concept was approached. The Caledon district in particular was very tardy in supporting a financial institution. If it had not been for the confidence fostered by the entrepreneurial Joseph Barry and his nephews, Swellendam too may have avoided the entanglement of credit and been spared what Burrows describes as the "groot bankrotskap" of 1866.109

Between 1836 and 1843 there had only been three banks in the Colony.110 As wool exports and the economic prosperity of the Colony increased the number of banks grew rapidly. By 1853 there were twelve and by 1862 (by which stage economic decline had set in) there were seventeen. Before a bank was opened at Swellendam in 1852, Barry and Nephews were transacting banking business and had printed their own notes.111 This had been done to facilitate purchases in the remoter parts of the Overberg. The five pound note that they issued was "attractive in appearance and readily acceptable

108. Overberg Courant, Editorial, 1 January 1862.
109. Burrows, Overberg Outspan, p. 84.
111. Ibid., pp. 241, 244 and CO 2847, Civil Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, 14 February 1848.
anywhere". With the establishment of the Swellendam Bank this practice declined and Barry and Nephews connected themselves with the local bank. There can be little doubt that the formation of a bank in Swellendam had a great deal to do with Barry initiative. In Caledon an attempt was made to initiate an Agricultural Bank in 1854, but despite the fact that private money loans charged up to 25% in interest, the community failed to form a bank. It was believed that the reluctance of the farmers to do so was due to the recent heavy losses from horse- and lungsickness. It is difficult to believe, however, that when wool exports were reaching a peak, there were insufficient farmers willing to take out shares of £10. The initiators had hoped to raise capital of £30 000 by the sale of 3 000 shares. This suggests extreme caution on the part of the farming community, particularly since there had been no banking catastrophes in the Colony up to this date. When the bank was finally established in 1861, capital of a mere £10 000 was raised by the sale of 2 000 shares. Although the Swellendam Bank had been established much earlier, by this date it also only had £18 000 in capital divided into 3 800 shares. Both the Overberg banks had considerably less capital than a number of Eastern Cape financial institutions, and in the Overberg the shares were smaller and thus the risks could be spread over many more shareholders. Graaff-Reinet, for example, had capital of £40 000 with only 1 600 shares; the Cradock Union Bank had capital of £30 000 with 1 500 shares and Somerset [East] had £30 000 with 1 200 shares. This is all indicative of a cautious approach to the joint stock principle and the use of credit facilities. In 1863 the bank was "working well"
but the farmers were only then, two years after its establishment, beginning to appreciate the advantage of it.\textsuperscript{117} By 1864, when the economic situation was depressed, it was reported that the Caledon Bank had been of "great assistance" and many had through it been saved from bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{118}

The rapid development of local banks and the high rates of interest to be had drew the attention of British investors who formed four large banks between 1860 and 1890 to exploit the opportunities offered in the Colony. The two which have relevance for the period under study were the London and South Africa Bank and the Standard Bank of British South Africa.\textsuperscript{119} It was the intention of the imperial banks to bring about extensive consolidation of the colonial banks, but while prosperity lasted there was opposition to amalgamation as it was believed that the English banks were only concerned with profits for their shareholders, most of whom lived in England.\textsuperscript{120}

After the rapid economic growth of the Colony from about 1840 to 1859, financiers could hardly be blamed for believing that there were easy profits to be made at the Cape. It would have required a prophet of superhuman ability to forecast the gloom and hardship that awaited in the sixties. Widespread drought began in 1859 and by 1860 was being "disastrously felt from Agulhas to Zambesi".\textsuperscript{121} By December 1860 the whole of the Overberg had been affected with stock losses and

\textsuperscript{117} 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 3 January 1863.
\textsuperscript{118} 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1864.
\textsuperscript{119} Arndt, p.255.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., p.266.
\textsuperscript{121} S.A.C.A., Editorial, 1 December 1860.
stagnation of business, but in that month heavy rains fell. While most of the Colony suffered severely, the Overberg had cause for thankfulness. During 1861 seasonal winter rains occurred and farmers had a "fruitful season". The abnormal conditions continued, however, and the situation deteriorated. In 1865 the ruggens was reported to be in a "deplorable condition" as a result of the protracted drought. Whites and coloureds in the village of Swellendam had been reduced to poverty and distress unknown in former years and farmers formerly in comfortable circumstances were destitute. In the Caledon district the drought of 1865 was "far beyond anything of the kind experienced in [that] division" and some farmers barely harvested the amount of seed sown. The oldest inhabitants in the Bredasdorp district had not witnessed as dry a year as 1865 and it was calculated that a quarter of all stock had died from poverty. On 8 January 1866 a day of "humiliation and prayer" was held to plead relief from the "calamitous drought". It was not until the summer of the following year that the drought was believed to be "fairly broken up" and experienced colonists were of the opinion that a cycle of good years could be expected.

Even had colonists been prepared for the particularly dry cycle of seven years, they could hardly have predicted the drastic fall in world wool prices which occurred at the end of the American Civil War and which coincided with the most trying years of the drought. Early in 1865 three considerable firms largely engaged in speculative wool buying

122. Overberg Courant, The Drought, 26 October 1865 and Editorial, 26 December 1866.
123. Ibid., Editorial, 25 December 1866.
125. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 8 January 1866.
126. CCP 9/28 Blue Book 1865, Civil Commissioner's Report Bredasdorp, p.JJ 12
127. 1/SWM 14/9 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Mercantile Community, 8 January 1866.
failed. The financial collapse of Overend and Gurney, an old established firm of bill brokers in London in May 1866, created panic and the reverberations reached the Cape where wool prices dropped by as much as 30%. Between 1862 and 1869 wool accounted for 73% in value of all Cape exports. In 1867 a fall in wool prices at the February sales in London was equal to a loss of £50 000 for the Colony. The drastic drop in prices obviously had serious consequences.

The arrival of the imperial banks in the Colony coincided almost exactly with the start of the dry cycle and thus encouraged the extension of credit when resources were beginning to fail. It was acknowledged in 1868 that the Standard Bank, like every other institution in the Colony from the government downward, had committed a serious error in greatly overestimating the resources of the country. It was noted above that by 1864 Caledon residents and farmers were using banking facilities to save themselves from bankruptcy. Although the Caledon Bank had not at that stage been absorbed by Standard, the principle of making use of credit was no different. This was an unhealthy situation summed up by the civil commissioner thus:

It is much to be feared that the introduction of foreign banking institutions into this Colony, within the last few years, has had a good deal to do with the present impoverished state of the Colony, affording as they have done, to persons without means, facilities for obtaining loans, who thus enter into wild speculations without prospect of ultimate payment....

131. Ibid., p.5.
The Argus also attributed the economic crash of 1865 to "reckless speculation fostered by the facility with which, since the establishment of the foreign banks, money [had] been obtainable". G.T. Amphlett, in his History of the Standard Bank, attributed the financial crisis of the mid-sixties to the abundance of money and active speculation in London which had resulted in the transfer to South Africa of large amounts of new capital which was employed too much in stimulating speculative enterprise rather than in assisting production. It was in the Eastern Cape particularly, where the bulk of Colonial wool was being produced, that speculation and the advance of credit was rife. An arrival in this part of the Colony found all business to be based on unlimited credit - everybody took and gave credit and bad debts were common. S. Dubow, in his study of the Graaff-Reinet district, has argued that it was the inability of the imported merchant capital to intervene directly in the productive process so as to transform wool production along capitalist lines, which was the basis of the commercial collapse of the sixties. The failure to stimulate sufficient production by radically transforming the forces and relations of production, resulted in a surfeit of capital, in the form of a plethora of banks, merchants and middlemen. The excess of merchant capital led to a marked degree of overcompetition amongst wool dealers who were forced to purchase wool indiscriminately and at absurdly high prices in order to survive. Merchants and wool dealers, to retain the custom of farmers, were obliged to extend virtually unlimited and perpetual credit. The result of long credit and overcompetitiveness was that the methods of wool production

133. Arndt, p.271.
degenerated. Dubow's argument seems to be perfectly correct with relation to the Eastern Cape, but the position was somewhat different in the Overberg. It has been suggested that in general the Overberg agriculturists approached the concepts of banking and credit with a great deal more caution than their counterparts in the east. The productive process in the Overberg was also in advance of that in the Eastern Cape. In the former area fewer landholders had overcapitalised and they were producing a superior product. In other words there was a more realistic balance between invested capital and production in the Overberg. When inferior categories of wool on the London market became oversubscribed, largely as a result of massive exports of poor quality wool from South America, it was the inferior categories which suffered first and hence the distress of the Eastern Cape. 136

The Overberg, with its superior fleeces, was in a more advantageous position than other parts of the Colony. Nevertheless, even before the depression in 1857, F.W. Reitz had recognized that there were farmers who were being overpaid for an inferior product and this created a "very unhealthy state". 137 It would appear that most Overberg farmers washed their wool and paid more attention to the get up than the majority of Eastern Cape farmers. Whereas the grease wool from this part of the Colony was only fetching 7d per pound after the initial drop in price, 138 Caledon wool farmers continued to receive an average price of about 1s 5d which was considered "remunerative". 139

136. Dubow, p.22.
137. Reitz, Cape Agriculture in Two Lectures, p.35.
139. L/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary 13 January 1862 and 3 January 1863.
Undoubtedly the Overberg also suffered from the economic straits of the sixties and in all three districts bankruptcies were recorded. The Bredasdorp civil record book noted an increase in court cases for debt of from 28 to 80 between 1865 and 1867. The insolvencies in Caledon in 1863 had been numerous but they were principally of an "insignificant character", and the number had declined in 1866, most being for small amounts. The Swellendam district appears to have suffered most from the drought and depression. The Duiwenhoks River and Slang River areas which received less rain than other parts of the Overberg had had severe crop and stock losses when the dry cycle began and by the end of 1860 there was "great hunger" among the farmers. In March 1863 the Overberg Courant reported "depressed circumstances" among the poorer classes and by the end of that year the list of insolvents presented a "melancholy picture". By 1864 the depression in trade was "crushing" - never before had affairs been so critical and resources so crippled - there was no legitimate buying and selling for cash - either barter or a system of credit with bills, bonds and mortgages was used. Although there are not many examples of farmers appearing before the Western Circuit for debt, a certain Stephanus Hendrik Kuun of Leeuwrivier owed Barry and Nephews £503 in 1865. This was equivalent to five years' salary for the average man. Farmers could obtain credit by mortgaging their farms and by 1870 this practice had obviously been much resorted to. In

140. 1/BRE 2/2/1 Civil Record Book, 1865 - 1875.
141. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 10 January 1866.
142. CO 3007 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 29 December 1860 and Ebersohn to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 5 December 1860.
143. Overberg Courant, Editorials, 11 March 1863 and 30 December 1863.
144. Ibid., Editorial, 27 April 1864.
145. CSC 2/3/1/266 First Western Circuit, 1865.
1845 the Cape Saving's Bank had granted £1 750 on mortgage loans in the Swellendam district (a small amount compared to the £22 446 advanced in Cape Town), but by 1870 the civil commissioner revealed that most of the farms in the Swellendam district were mortgaged. There is ample evidence that the powerful firm of Barry and Nephews was in serious financial difficulties by 1866. A document among the Moodie papers shows that Barry and Nephews had registered debts for properties totalling £21 350 and the transfer book of the firm refers to the liquidators of Barry and Nephews. Burrows speaks unequivocally of the "groot bankrotskap" but other writers refer more discreetly to a "reckless credit policy" and financial affairs that "developed disastrously". The Swellendam Bank survived the economic crash, however, despite having heavy financial involvement with Barry and Nephews. In 1864 the bank was able to pay a dividend of 10%. In 1865 and 1866 the bank managed to pay a dividend of 6% despite having had to rebuild the bank after the great fire in 1865. Not until 1877, well after the Colony had entered the recovery phase following the discovery of diamonds, did the Swellendam Bank agree to amalgamation with Standard. The stability of the bank is reflected in a letter penned many years later:

My old dad was liquidator [of the Swellendam Bank when taken over by Standard] and it is about the only colonial bank that paid out in full shares and bonus further resulting in a balance of £66 11s.

146. S.A.C.A., Editorial, 4 October 1845.
147. 1/SWN 14/10 Report for Blue Book, 31 December 1870.
149. Buirsiki, see above, p.87 and Arndt, p.278.
150. Overberg Courant, Advertisement, 13 January 1864.
151. Drostdy Museum, B 18, Minute Book of Swellendam Bank, Newspaper cuttings, 31 December 1865 and 31 December 1866.
152. Arndt, p.278.
153. Drostdy Museum A 95, Greathead to Lord Bishop, 19 October 1914.
The Caledon Bank also survived the plunge with only trivial losses and not until March 1878 did it accept overtures of amalgamation from Standard Bank.154

The ability of the two local Overberg banks to withstand the banking crisis of 1865 is a fair gauge of the economic stability of the area. Most of the district banks came to grief in the depression155 and the imperial banks also suffered heavily. The Standard Bank had to write off debts of £46 000 and at the end of 1865 declared no dividend.156

There can be little doubt that during the economic stress of the sixties, the Overberg suffered less than most other areas of the Colony and was among the first to recover. Not only had Overberg wools continued to fetch remunerative prices, but the grain harvest of 1864/65, was "exceedingly abundant", particularly in the Caledon district.157 In October 1865, after a particularly dry year, "bountiful" rains came down which reached Swellendam and Riversdale.158 In 1866 Zoetendals Valley had "splendid" rain159 and Caledon had more rain than for several years enabling farmers to sow a greater quantity of grain than previously. During that year the wool yield had been good and because of the fair prices many farmers who were drifting into debt had been able to recover.160 The year 1867 was "most favourable for agricultural, pastoral and general farm purposes". Rain had fallen in abundance and at the right times, enabling farmers

156. Schumann, p.81.
158. S.A.C.A., Agriculture, 28 October 1865.
159. Van Breda Journals II, 1840 - 1944, p.29.
160. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 10 January 1867.
to sow more than for many years past. The Swellendam district, which generally received less rain than Caledon, was also reflecting a "hopeful strain" by 1868 and "bustle and life" had returned to the village by 1870. The confidence in the stability of the Swellendam area, which was the area most severely affected during the drought, is perhaps indicated by the fact that the discovery of diamonds on the banks of the Vaal attracted only a very few persons from the area during 1869. The diamond discoveries were causing a great deal of excitement and people were leaving all parts of the Colony for the Campbell Grounds. Sources lead one to the conclusion that there was no great exodus from the Overberg and no reference to actual numbers leaving was found. In 1870 and 1871 only a "very few" persons had left the Swellendam area. The civil commissioner's reports for Caledon do not refer to any departures for the diamond fields. However, the success on the fields by 1872 was attracting a "comparatively large number of farmers and coloured persons" from the Bredasdorp district.

While many parts of the Overberg were receiving good agricultural returns at the height of general drought and depression in the mid-sixties, most parts of the Colony did not begin to see brighter prospects until 1869. Only at the end of that year did the reports of the Standard Bank manager in the Colony begin to paint a more hopeful picture of South African prospects and only by 1871 could he state that conditions could be regarded as "very satisfactory".

161. Ibid., Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 24 January 1868.
163. Ibid., pp. JJ 10, 11.
164. Ibid., p. JJ 10.
166. See footnote 164 and 1/SWM 14/10 Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 16 January 1872.
168. Mabin and Conradie, (eds.), p.34.
Although diamonds were providing a boost to the economy, in September 1871 the improved conditions were attributed chiefly to the improvement in the price of wool which was still the country's main staple.¹⁶⁹

The recovery and continuance of economic prosperity in the Overberg had little if anything to do with the discovery of diamonds. The isolation which had placed restrictions on its grain production were re-emphasized when large concentrations of people began to gather at the diamond fields. The Overberg was too remotely situated and too poorly provided with communications to be able to compete with more favourably situated agricultural areas. The stability of the area lay in the fact that it was fortunate in having a fairly reliable rainfall pattern and that it was producing a high quality wool crop with a consistent demand on the world market. Price fluctuations there were, but with a product of value, Overberg farmers were not obliged to sell when prices were particularly low.

The commencement of the mineral era tended to place a "freeze" on the Overberg. Without a major port to serve the interior of South Africa, the rapid commercial activity that occurred left the area relatively unaffected. Its towns and villages remained small and agricultural activities continued as they had for decades. A form of commercial isolation was now added to the geographical isolation of the area for it was unable to participate in the feverish money-making activities of the diamond (and later the gold) fields of the interior. At the same time the area was sufficiently prosperous and self-sufficient to develop a type of elitism and more and more of the landowners of the Overberg began to approximate in wealth and social standing the position of the landed gentry of the more established areas near Cape Town.

¹⁶⁹. Ibid., p.34.
In the foregoing chapters many of the forces which moulded the milieu and the ethos of the Overberg were examined. A century and a half of white settlement in an economically stable geographic microcosm, not too remotely situated from the influences of Cape Town, had produced a social environment and a characteristic disposition which was resilient to certain aspects of change while not being totally unreceptive to innovations.

Even before the introduction of the Merino, the area had proved its stability agriculturally and by 1838 was, by South African standards, supporting a dense farming population. The added income from the fleece of the Spanish sheep made it possible for greater sub-division of farms which were thus able to support an even denser population of the descendants of the original Dutch settlers. Although a fairly large number of farmers left during the Trek era, farms were not vacated and at no time was it possible for a large influx of British immigrants to obtain a foothold. The small number of immigrant capitalist business-men and farmers who settled in the area were never a cultural threat to the white native Overberger. Yet the Overberg farmer was receptive to the enterprising, profit-oriented lead of the newcomers and wool farming in the Overberg soon reached levels of efficiency unrivalled in most parts of the Colony. Credit must also be given to older colonists such as the Van Bredas, Reitzes and Van Reenens for their influence on the Overberg, bearing in mind that these were influential people who were in touch with modern trends and who, because of its proximity to Cape Town, had vested interests in the Overberg.
Prosperity for the landlords of the Overberg went hand-in-hand with the fact that since the start of the eighteenth century there had been no material threat to lives and property from the indigenous population. The disintegration and dispersion of the Khoi had given the white farmers undisputed control of their territory which suffered no economic setbacks from invasions and warfare. While offering negligible resistance to the whites, the Khoi and their mixed descendants began to play an increasingly important role in the economy of the area for they were indispensable as farm labourers.

Capital accumulation by the white agriculturists of the Overberg did not hold equal benefits for all. Between 1838 and 1872 there was a discrepancy in the material advance in the lifestyle of the different classes of society. It must not be assumed that class distinction was purely on racial lines. There is evidence of an emerging class stratification among the coloured races while the arrival of indigent British immigrants added whites to the labouring classes.

Sources that provide information on social conditions of the coloured classes are few. The criminal records of the Swellendam and Caledon magistrates give a fair inkling into their social conditions, although they highlight the negative aspects. Information on the mission stations is useful but the comments of observers are subjective and one must attempt to comprehend the priorities of the time by which the people themselves assessed the social and economic changes which affected them. The hybridized Khoi were adapting to a different civilization and the squalor which repulsed Europeans was probably assessed differently in their own eyes. As herders and pastoralists they had not lived a life without hardship and their tacit acceptance of a form of clientage with the whites held many benefits for them. The cultural gap between Khoi descendants and whites could not be bridged overnight. Although in theory the emerging coloured
race enjoyed equal rights with whites, an understanding and appreciation of matters such as landownership and political rights was wanting. They had little encouragement from white landowners and they were simply unable to take advantage of opportunities that in theory were open to them.

In the 1830s a Scottish arrival in the Colony commented of the coloured inhabitants of Zuurbraak:

My heart sickened within me at the deplorable and degrading picture of human nature exhibited by the original possessors of the soil, now sunk into a vicious and despised caste beneath the more favoured race.¹

Ironically, the rural proletariat of Britain seemed hardly better off. An observer in Buckinghamshire circa 1840 was shocked at the extreme depression under which each family .... each feeling of humanity, struggled. [There was] irregular employment, family discomfort, female prostitution, drunkenness, idle habits, gambling, absolute ignorance, and in many cases, starvation almost absolute.....²

K.D.M. Snell shows that the plight of the agricultural labourer in England was pitiful. A landowner told the Morning Chronicle in 1849:

A man with a family of five children will be nearly able with 6s a week to buy bread enough, if he buys the coarsest flour; his rent he generally gets out of his harvest money; his clothes he gets by some means or other - people sometimes give them to him - and then, when he is unemployed ... we keep him in the workhouse. So you see, sir, he is amply provided for, even with wages at 6s a week.³

¹ Hoodie, p.97.
² Morgan, p.40.
³ Snell, p.126.
In certain respects the coloured labourers of the Overberg were in a more favourable situation than the agricultural labourer in England. The demand for labour in the Colony almost always (with the exception of the depression) exceeded the supply. There was a great demand at three well-spaced intervals during the year - at ploughing (April - May), shearing (September) and at harvest (December - January) and all farmers permanently required shepherds. Even before the final liberation of the slaves in 1838 (they had to serve a four year apprenticeship from 1834 to 1838 before gaining complete freedom) which affected the labour market, F.W. Reitz commented that it was extremely difficult to obtain shepherds - shepherding was part of a patriarchal life that was fast falling in the esteem of the "aborigines". What employers considered to be high wages did not tempt them.

Complaints of a labour shortage were widespread during the forties and a justice of the peace for Caledon wrote that the "excessive demand for labour at critical periods soon exhaust[ed] the supply". T.B. Bayley of the Caledon area maintained that the shortage of labour was so great that no crime committed by a servant was a bar to his future employment. Swellendam appears to have had a greater labour shortage than other areas of the Overberg and as a result wages were higher than in the Caledon and Bredasdorp districts. The resident magistrate stated that there was a great scarcity of agricultural labourers and "very high" wages were paid. Throughout the fifties, the boom years, there was a steady demand for labour in the Caledon district and certain farmers complained that they could

6. LCA 33, Replies to Questionnaire on Masters and Servants Bill, October - December 1848, T.B. Bayley.
7. Ibid., Resident Magistrate, Swellendam.
not obtain sufficient hands. 8

Capitalist farmers such as Bayley seem to have been the greatest critics of colonial labour. Intent on turning their investments to good account, they held the assumption that the proletarianized coloureds were at their disposal as labourers. Working conditions were probably not sufficiently attractive to produce an adequate supply for the constant demand. J.N.C. Marincowitz claims that rural labourers shared a widespread aversion for regular farm work and they very often sought to reduce or terminate their dependence on farm wages. 9

It was believed that the good times experienced in the fifties was one of the causes of the labour shortage 10 for when provisions were cheap the labourer could by occasional labour procure enough. 11 At the mission stations a considerable amount of land was available and many were able to obtain a subsistence or supplement their incomes by cultivating gardens and by running stock on the commonage. 12 Unfortunately this system did not necessarily benefit the industrious for there were many hangers-on who lived a parasitic existence. A visitor to Zuurbraak was told by the missionary that many of the inhabitants of the station lived by their wits. They watched the industrious when they returned home with the fruits of their labours and threw themselves in the way to share in the spoil. For the rest of the week they could live on roots. 13 In the opinion of the

8. CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots, 1856, p.13.
10. CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Immigration, 1856, p.3.
12. Moodie, p.94.
13. Fawcett, p.27.
civil commissioner at Caledon, the coloureds were a people of simple wants and with the proceeds of a few days work in a month, supplemented by a little stealing, they managed to "eke out a subsistence". 14

The presence of an unwilling labour force seems to substantiate the belief that subsistence was preferable for many to employment on farms. C.W. de Kiewiet attributed the labour shortage to "depressed rewards for labour". 15 This could well have been the case, particularly if one understands "rewards for labour" to include pleasant working conditions as well as adequate remuneration. However, consistent bodily labour was not a part of Khoi tradition, and many Khoi descendants were probably slow in adapting to the demands of a changed environment. What whites considered to be high wages were no substitute for the untrammelled life of the herder. Resentment at being divested of land that they had formerly roamed, and being dependent on white masters for an income, probably played a role in the unwillingness of many coloureds to seek employment.

Sadly for the descendants of the Khoi, they were powerless to resist white encroachment of their land, and even where they were granted settlement rights, absolute proof of ownership often seems to have been withheld. 16 The few enclaves of land which were reserved for coloured settlement were inadequate to support them in the manner to which they were accustomed, that is by extensive herding. Because so little land was available for coloureds, such areas attracted numerous squatters. It is possible that residents of such areas were overcome by a sense of hopelessness which eroded initiative as it was impossible for limited tracts of land to

15. De Kiewiet, p.84.
16. See for example Correspondence on the Hottentot Kraal Location in the Division of Swellendam, May 1876, p.b.
accommodate an increasing number of squatters.

Coloureds such as those who had a grant of 8,000 morgen in the Tradouw ward near Swellendam came in for a good deal of criticism from white neighbours. While only fourteen individuals could make good their claim to be on the land, the settlement housed 55 people of mixed descent - "Hottentot", "Kafir", "Bastard", "Malabar" "Late Slave" and one "European". The land was uncultivated except for seven small gardens. The original settlers of what was once a Khoi kraal continued to subsist like their ancestors by herding, only not sheep and cattle, but goats. They were unable to adjust to the more intensive farming that a reduction in land resources necessitated. They were also unable to prevent the accumulation of squatters. Tribal tradition, gregariousness and the failure of the government to make provision for more land ownership by coloureds fostered overcrowded settlements. Such settlements also harboured ne'er-do-wells whose thefts on nearby farms became a source of irritation to the white farmers. The 8,000 morgen were taken over by government and the fourteen bona fide claimants were granted plots at Zuurbraak. 17

The failure of many coloureds to appreciate the importance of securing property was an important reason why the Moravians resisted the granting of individual titles to their charges at their mission stations. They believed that there were still too many, who, granted the responsibility of their own land, would be unable to retain individual tenure in the face of competition from unscrupulous whites. 18 Unlike the Kholwa (Christian Africans) of Natal who by the 1860s had grown to appreciate that individual tenure was the best way of

17. For a full account of the situation at the Khoi kraal, see Cape of Good Hope, "Correspondence on the Hottentot Kraal Location in the Division of Swellendam", May 1876.
18. CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots, 1855, Remarks of C.R. Kolbing, p.55.
ensuring their progress and protecting their separate identities, many coloureds in the Overberg, even if they acknowledged the desirability of owning land, were unable to adopt the provident, industrious habits that could keep it.

The hand-to-mouth existence led by many coloureds was the more desirable alternative to manual labour which provided inadequate rewards. J.W.D. Moodie commented in the 1830s that they had an "inherent love of freedom" and preferred the "privations of subsistence to the more intolerable hardship of bodily labour". But as the boom years drew to a close, the ability of many merely to subsist without employment decreased. The civil commissioner's reports illustrate a fairly dramatic change in the situation in the labour market in the sixties. In 1862 the labour market in Caledon was "very fairly supplied", in 1865 it had been "for some time supplied beyond its wants", and in 1867 the labour supply had exceeded the demand to such an extent that coloureds were reduced to "extreme want" and had been ready to work merely for their food.

It was not only drought and depression which forced more coloureds onto the labour market. With the intensification of wool farming, a capitalistic enterprise, the scope for the coloureds to augment their living with veldkoss also declined. Game became more scarce and the smaller farm units provided little opportunity for vagrants to go undetected. Consequently many became more and more dependent on wage labour.

21. 1/CAl 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1862.
23. 1/CAl 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 10 January 1867.
While proletarianization was making a large number of coloureds dependent on wage labour, there is evidence that numbers of coloureds had been taken up on the farms in a paternalistic system, although it is impossible to estimate the extent to which a benevolent paternalism was practised. Towards the close of the period under study there does appear to have been a greater awareness among farmers of the need to provide comfortable housing for their labourers. A member of the house of assembly for Swellendam, Dr H. White, maintained that a new house tax proposed in 1870 would prevent farmers from providing comfortable dwellings for their employees. He commented:

It has been hard work to persuade farmers to provide comfortable cottages for their workmen and just as they are beginning to take a pride in seeing labourers snugly housed, the Government propose to tax the dwellings as luxuries. 24

Mr I. Balie of Genadendal believes that benevolent paternalism was not general and that considerate employers were the exception. 25 One of these exceptions was undoubtedly the altruistic F.W. Reitz whose coloured employees on the farm Rhenosterfontein, were considered to be of a higher moral standard than the "Braak se volk" (inhabitants of Zuurbraak). They congregated on Sundays with the family to hear the "oubaas" read the Bible and formed an attachment for the Reitz family and farm that lasted for generations. F.W. Reitz took a paternal pride in the achievements of his labourers. 26 A similar situation existed on the farm Swartrivier in the Caledon district where the paternalism of the Swart family fostered an attachment among its coloured labourers for the farm and family which has existed to the present. The Van der Bergh and Beyers families have been on the farm for

generations and the attachment is believed to date back to emancipation. The considerate treatment of coloured employees on Swartrivier is confirmed by I. Balie of Genadendal. 27

Another example of where a paternalistic interest in the farm labourers has fostered enduring loyalty is on the Van Breda farm, Zoetendals Valley where the forebears of Klaas Ahrens and Fleurs Jantjies have been for generations. Fleurs Jantjies was from Mozambique, believed to have been one of the survivors of a slave ship that was wrecked on the Bredasdorp coast. 28 Two coloured women worked in the employ of the Beyers family on the farm Ganskraal for five generations. The slave Ai Lah who was alive at the time of Johann David Beyers (1733 - 1797) was still a part of the Beyers household during the lifetime of Jacob Hendrik Beyers (1868 - 1962). Mietjie Palmer also survived five generations of Beyers, her family being closely connected to the Beyers family from about 1864. 29

While in the process of adapting to living with an exploitive white society, being in the employ of a considerate master held many benefits for the proletariat. In certain instances labourers were given the opportunity to maintain their own stock, but the shortage of land in the Overberg and the profitability of wool would have curtailed this practice. There is evidence that shepherds were allowed to accumulate small flocks of their own. David Davids, the shepherd of Johannes Uys at Slang River had 37 of his own sheep running with his master's flock and Arend December of the farm Jonkers Dam in the Swellendam district owned a "small" 27.

28. Personal communication, Mrs Alphine van Selin (née Van Breda), Mrs Muriel van Breda and Mrs Maud van Breda, 17 and 18 May 1990.
flock. The white farmers mentioned above were undoubtedly leading farmers of the area who appreciated the necessity of providing adequate rewards for labour. Perhaps the complaints about a shortage of labour came only from those farmers who failed to provide adequately for their employees.

In the Overberg (as in many other parts of the Colony) the practice of providing rations as well as payment for farm labour continued throughout the period under study. In the 1840s Caledon and Swellendam farmers were paying between 1s 6d and 2s per day at harvest and shearing, with board and lodging. T.B. Bayley claimed that as much as 3s per day was paid at harvest. By 1855 the daily rate had not changed. The general rate was 9d to 1s per day with rations, and from 1s 6d to 2s 6d at peak times. Since wheat and mutton were abundant in the Overberg and commanded low prices on the outside market, farm labourers were unlikely to be denied an adequacy of these staples. Wine undoubtedly formed an important part of a day's rations and in most cases as much as two bottles a day was provided. It was believed that extensive "plying with wine" had a tendency to destroy the appetite of the labourer and enabled the employer to save on food which was much dearer than the wine provided. It appears that wine was frequently a greater inducement than real wages and labourers could be obtained from Genadendal for "reasonable" wages, provided that wine was provided at intervals of about two hours during the day with an extra "dop" as reward if they worked well.

30. 1/SNH 2/35 Criminal Records Swellendam, Circuit Court 1865 - 1869, case against Thomas Michiel et.al. for sheep theft, 19 October 1865 and case against David Vollenhoven for sheep theft, 8 November 1866.
31. LCA 33, Replies to Questionnaire on Masters and Servants Bill, October - December, 1848, Magistrates Caledon and Swellendam.
32. Ibid., T.B. Bayley, justice of the peace, Caledon.
33. CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots, 1856, p.13.
The situation during the depression was clearly less favourable to labourers, for rates dropped and in certain cases farmers only paid in kind. Residents of the coloured settlement at Slang River complained in 1870 that for some years daily wages had been low and even at shearing and harvest they received no more than 1s. Six labourers from Slang River complained that it was common for employers to tell them that they had no money and that they had to take their wage in kind.\textsuperscript{36} The levy of a house tax in 1870 aggravated the shortage of cash. The Zuurbrakers maintained that they would not be able to pay the tax as they often had to accept "food and other things" as wages.\textsuperscript{37}

Although the basic wants of many labourers in the Overberg were met in their conditions of service, it is evident that their situation with regard to cash wages did not improve between 1838 and 1872. According to the Blue Books labourers were receiving the same daily wage in 1872 as they were in the early forties, although they were still being provided with rations as well.\textsuperscript{38} The increasing prosperity of the Colony was not revealed in increasing cash wages for predial labour.

One of the lowest ranks in government employ was that of constable and they were generally but not always coloureds. In 1839 a coloured in this position at Caledon received £25 per annum.\textsuperscript{39} Twenty eight years later a constable at Swellendam was receiving £40 per annum and was about to receive an increase of £5.\textsuperscript{40} It was possible for someone thus employed who started at an annual salary of £25 in 1839 to be receiving from 60% to 80% more thirty years later - the

\textsuperscript{36} 1/SMW 11/46 Six Residents of Slang River to Robertson, 3 September 1870.
\textsuperscript{37} 1/SMW 14/10 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 16 August 1870.
\textsuperscript{38} CCP 9/35 Blue Book 1872, pp. CC 2, 3.
\textsuperscript{39} CD 2784 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 15 February 1839.
\textsuperscript{40} 1/SMW 11/9 Colonial Secretary to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 4 September 1867 and 29 March 1868.
increase per annum being between 2% and 2.7%. Salaries of white government clerks showed a significantly greater increase during the period under study. In 1847 a second class clerk at Caledon received £100 per annum. By 1861 this had been increased to £120 and by 1872 the annual salary for this position was £250.\footnote{CD 2838 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 29 January 1847; 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 20 September 1861 and 1/SWK 11/9 Colonial Secretary to Civil Commissioner Swellendam.} After 25 years it was possible for a government clerk to be earning 150% more with the increase per annum being 6%.

One can argue that since predial labour was still being provided with rations and in many cases lodging, their real income was keeping up with the cost of living. The farm labourer who was adequately fed by his employer was probably better off than a constable in government employ. The prices of the chief commodities, bread and meat, rose together with a general rise in the cost of living which accompanied the wool boom. In 1856 the Select Committee on Immigration reported that a "great" rise had occurred in a few years.\footnote{CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of the Select Committee on Immigration, 1856, p.4.} In 1861 government employees requested an increase in salary because "the prices of all necessaries of life continue[d] to increase".\footnote{1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Memorial of J.C. Truter and H.B. Wright, 11 April 1861 and 20 September 1861.} Mutton and bread which both cost 2½d per pound in 1840\footnote{CCP 9/3 Blue Book 1840, Prices at Swellendam, p.285.} were priced at 5d and 4½d respectively in 1853\footnote{CO 2891 Tender for Gaol Supplies, Caledon, 3 December 1853.} which represents increases of 100% and 80%. Immigrant labourers complained that bread and meat in the Colony were considerably dearer than in England.\footnote{S.A.C.A., Editorial, 22 September 1858.} The editor of the\textit{ Commercial Advertiser} commented on the anomalous situation that whereas in England there was little over one sheep per person, in the Colony there were 30 sheep to every human
being and yet mutton was as dear and dearer than in England. 47 Prices naturally fluctuated according to the nature of the seasons. The poor years in the sixties which followed upon the boom caused further price increases and in 1865 it was reported that wheat prices had risen more than 100% since the previous year. 48 Farm labourers who had rations included in their wages were being compensated to a considerable extent.

The number of stock thefts is possibly an index of the want experienced by the coloured population in the district, although a large number of thefts probably went undetected or were not followed up. The number of convicted cases is remarkably small which tempts the conclusion that the need to steal was not particularly great. However, numerous cases were probably not reported because of the inconvenience entailed in travelling to the nearest justice of the peace or magistrate to report the case. Nevertheless, sources such as the civil commissioner’s correspondence do not suggest that stock theft was a major problem in the Overberg. In the Swellendam criminal records for the two years 1839 to 1840 there were only three convicted cases for sheep and goat thefts. 49 In the following two years there were eight thefts, excluding those for horses. 50 In the two years 1846 to 1847 there were four thefts. 51 In the peak years of prosperity, 1854 to 1857, there were only six cases of sheep and

47. Ibid., Editorial, 25 September 1858.
49. 1/SWM 2/23 Cases against Cobus Filander, 10 January 1840; January Alexander, 10 August 1840 and Michiel Strydom et.al., 28 November 1840.
50. 1/SWM 2/25 Cases against Caffre Kiewiet et.al., 24 September 1830; Willem Vries, 17 January 1832; Adam, 21 September 1840; Kees Fredericks et.al., 10 July 1842; Africander Pick et.al., 20 July 1842; Andries Koller et.al., 2 July 1842; Joachim Kasselman et.al., 15 July 1842 and Lucas Louis 15 September 1842.
51. 1/SWM 2/29 Cases against Jacob, 2 December 1846; Cornelis Orange, 12 December 1846; Marinus, 8 September 1845 and Piet Goliath, 6 April 1846.
goat thefts in these four years.\textsuperscript{52} Even during severe years of depression, 1861 to 1865, there was an average of only four convicted cases per year.\textsuperscript{53} However, it was acknowledged that during 1865, the height of depression, crime had increased as a result of poverty and there had never been so many cases of sheep theft in the Caledon district.\textsuperscript{54} These years were exceptional and privation was not restricted to the coloured classes. When prosperity returned it was reported in Caledon that no cases were sent for trial before the circuit court for a period of eighteen months. Cases tried in the magistrate’s court were few with only a small percentage of petty thefts. The lack of crime was attributed to the abundant harvest of the previous season.\textsuperscript{55} It was seldom that crops failed in the Overberg. There was little market for grain and little profit for the farmer from this branch of farming. One can conclude that farmers had little cause to stint on grain provisions to their labourers.

Even assuming that agricultural workers received an adequate supply of wheat for bread, a static cash income affected their ability to purchase clothing and the great variety of consumer goods which were being introduced into daily life. Those desirous of improving their homes would have been restricted by a lack of cash. Trousers which cost 6s in

\textsuperscript{52} 1/SWN 2/32 Cases against Jan Swart, 25 May 1854; Wessel Kees, 26 May 1854; Stephanus Jantjes, 25 April 1854; Jacob Kleinbooy, 22 December 1854; Louis Jacobse, 16 October 1854 and Africa 1 December 1855.
\textsuperscript{53} 1/SWN 2/34 See cases dated 21 March 1862, 24 September 1862, 1 March - 31 July 1858 (?), 20 Jan 1863, 26 February 1863, 30 September 1863, 18 January 1864, 26 January 1864, 8 August 1864, 22 April 1864, 12 March 1865, 10 February 1864, 3 November 1864, 27 December 1864, 1 June 1865 and 24 April 1865.
\textsuperscript{54} CCP 9/28 1865, Blue Book, Civil Commissioner’s Report, Caledon, p.JJ 11.
\textsuperscript{55} CCP 9/33 1870, Blue Book, Civil Commissioner’s Report, Caledon, p.JJ 8.
rose to three times that price in 1856 and building costs rose enormously. Tenders for the building of the magistracy in Caledon in 1856 had ranged from £860 to £1 200. When the building was finally completed in 1862 it had cost £5 000. In the latter case, which is extreme, the inflation rate exceeded 50% per year.

A major problem with a large section of the coloureds which aggravated their living conditions was addiction to alcohol and this was encouraged by the dop system. A visitor to Caledon in the sixties found the coloured population — and particularly the "mongrel Hottentots" — a sad spectacle, so drunken, hideous and sullen looking. They spent all their earnings at the canteen and they looked wasted and degraded. There was also a great deal of imtemperance at Zuurbraak although the missionary stated in their defence that in certain towns white labourers were equally guilty of alcohol abuse. The problem had escalated with the increase in trade in the Colony and the establishment of villages which led to the granting of many more canteen licences. Registers of the Swellendam magistrate show that arrests for drunkenness were almost a daily occurrence. There was opposition to the issue of canteen licences as it tended to the "manifest and rapid demoralization of the lower orders". The opposition came from both whites and coloureds of Caledon and Genadendal who appealed to the legislative council against a system which had such destructive results for the coloured population.

56. CO 2801 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 29 March 1841.
57. 1/CAL 5/1/2/3 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 16 September 1856.
58. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 3 January 1863.
60. CCP 1/2/2/1/1 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands to Hottentots, p.15.
61. CO 2812 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 29 May 1843.
63. LCA 21 Items 8 and 21, Petitions 23 June 1848 and 10 November 1851.
The growth of commercial farming in the Overberg and the desire for maximum gains from a capitalist venture highlighted the resistance of coloureds to employment and the inability of the employer to obtain the type of service he desired. A questionnaire circulated with a view to a new masters and servants ordinance in 1848 revealed, however, that there was more dissatisfaction in the Eastern Cape. In the three years from 1845 to 1847, 48 cases of complaints of masters against servants had been registered in the Swellendam district. From 1846 to 1848, 78 similar cases were noted in Caledon, whereas for the same period in Grahamstown, 123 complaints had been made.64 A petition to the legislative council in 1853 from 35 Caledon farmers (this, however, representing a mere 4.3% of the farmers in the Caledon/Bredasdorp area) complained of the dishonesty, drunkenness and "audacious infractions of contracts of service"; their "idle habits and reckless propensities" were daily making them more useless as labourers.65 An irate civil commissioner of Swellendam considered the Zuurbrakers as domestic servants to be "worse than useless - idle, immoral, vain, and ill-tempered, if not also dishonest, and provokingly fond of adhering to the observance of religious exercises, which appear[ed] to have no beneficial effect whatever on their general conduct".66 The quality of labour was believed to be declining and this was imputed to the accumulation of the coloureds at the mission stations and to defective magisterial arrangements.67 The populations at the mission stations were acknowledged to be "injuriously dense, and in them multitudes of young persons [were] growing up in

64. LCA 33 Replies to Questionnaire on Masters and Servants Bill, 1848.
65. LCA 28 Item 9, Petition 10 September 1853.
67. CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Freehold Grants to Hottentots, 1856, p.36.
habits which render[ed] them as incapable of useful and profitable employment as they [were] indisposed to it". The most vehement complaints against Genadendal came from immigrant farmers such as T.B. Bayley, W. Shaw and H. Vigne. Accustomed to labour in England which was probably more pliable, they found indigenous workers in the Colony irksome.

S. Newton-King, although writing on an earlier period, believes that the repeated complaints of the "inertia", "moral debasement" and "vagrant disposition" of servants should not be taken at face value. She believed that the restrictions of the Caledon Code of the early nineteenth century had produced rancour and prejudice which expressed themselves in many ways such as deliberate loafing, theft and destruction of the master's property and desertion. She believes that the response of the indigenous people to their servile status took a turned-inward and self-destructive form, expressing itself in alcoholism. It seems likely that this reaction from servants was aggravated by the advance of commercial farming. Demands made on farm labourers increased in proportion to the farmer's growing capital input. Labourers did not respond positively to the greater demands made upon them for they shared little of the increasing gains that farmers realized from their growing income from wool.

Because of the dissatisfaction of employers with their workers, J.S. Marais believed that it was no surprise that the new representative parliament of the Colony (established in 1854) which was essentially a parliament of masters, should pass Act 15 of 1856. The latter "came nearer to satisfying the desires of the colonists" than its pre-

68. LCA 33 Replies to Questionnaire on Masters and Servants Bill, 1848, Elliot (LMS missionary).
decessor (the act of 1841) had. In contrast to the ordinance of 1841, that of 1856 received not a single comment in the correspondence between London and the Cape and Marais believed that its easy passage was an illustration of the receding tide of philanthropism. The most important changes brought about by the act of 1856 were related to punishment for defaulting servants. Magistrates were given the right to punish more severely for a servant's refusal to do work, desertion, drunkenness, and for using insulting language and brawling. 70

Despite complaints against servants, the Reverend C.R. Kolbing pointed out that the labour force of the Overberg could not have been seriously unproductive as agriculture and the produce of wool had been increasing in the Caledon division where the two Moravian institutions were situated. He stated:

> It will be found that the produce of grain and wool did increase from year to year, and the price of land has risen proportionally. This shows that the increase of these institutions is not ruinous to the farmer; it will perhaps be found that the produce of the said articles has increased more in this district than in others. 71

There were instances where coloured employees proved themselves to be equal to or better than white immigrant labour. Three constables at Swellendam who were married and were christians had

> for a considerable time been employed as constables and always conducted themselves with much propriety - and although they may be considered not to be of

70. Marais, pp. 204 - 206.
71. CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee on Granting Lands to Hottentots, Letter of C.R. Kolbing, 15 April 1856.
an equal rank or class with the Europeans, yet I feel it my duty to state that they behave better than those hitherto employed as constables for the police station here. In proof of which I beg to state - I engaged four men - three Irish and one English - within about six months I was compelled to discharge them for bad conduct. 72

Two groups of coloureds in the Caledon district who were the offspring of white fathers and who had inherited land, formed "respectable and well-ordered communities". The one group, on the farm Koppies which was near to The Oaks belonging to T.B.Bayley, were considered to be thriving and had a considerable number of fine-wooled sheep. They were industrious people and the white farmers preferred members of these communities as labourers to people from the institutions. 73

The problems encountered by some white farmers with the indigenous peoples as labourers, particularly in the period following upon emancipation, engendered interest in acquiring immigrant labour from England. Enthusiasm for immigration measures reached a height in 1840 when 1,049 landed proprietors in Cape Town signed a memorial to the secretary of state for the colonies. 74 It would appear that emigration to the Colony occurred in two main phases - from 1845 to 1850 and from 1857 to 1862. According to L.A. Rushby, fourteen ships arrived during the first phase with about 4,000 immigrants. 75 A number of these appear to have found employment in the Caledon district, for Bishop Robert Gray noted during his journey through Caledon

72. CG 2847 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 11 April 1848.
73. CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Special Committee on Freehold Grants to Hottentots, 1856, pp.7,11.
75. Rushby, pp.99 - 149.
and Swellendam in 1848 that there were very few houses in which he did not find English labourers. Gray stayed at the homes of English immigrants and it is most likely that his comments refer only to the homes of these farmers.\(^{76}\) Near Linde's farm in the Riviersonderend valley, he noted that there were about 150 English people. Robert Gray mentions that a Mr Vine (probably H. Vigne) and a Mr Twentyman both had several English labourers.\(^{77}\) T.B. Bayley of The Oaks (also in the Riviersonderend valley) employed thirteen white labourers in 1848.\(^{78}\) A certain number of the immigrants also found employment in the villages - in 1848 Caledon had four white constables - John Irish, William Rich, John Miller and William Chamberlain.\(^{79}\) British immigrant labour did not find favour with the local Dutch population, however, and during the second phase of immigration (1857 - 1862) the civil commissioner reported that he did not think immigrants would readily find employment in the Caledon district.\(^{80}\) By 1870 it had emerged that the Dutch farmers preferred the indigenous peoples who were "better suited for their wants".\(^{81}\) Only one immigrant labourer was known to have settled in the Bredasdorp area - an overseer on Van Breda's farm. No applications were received between 1858 and 1861 for immigrant labour from this area.\(^{82}\)

Dutch farmers throughout the Colony preferred coloured labour, a phenomenon which William Porter, attorney-general and prominent politician, attributed to a difference in language, different ways of working and living - all their manners and customs were dissimilar. According to Porter the

\(^{76}\) Gray, p.6.

\(^{77}\) Ibid., p.10.

\(^{78}\) LCA 33 Replies to Questionnaire on Masters and Servants Ordinance, 1848, T.B. Bayley.

\(^{79}\) CO 2847 List of Employees in Gaol and Police Establishment Caledon, 10 April 1848.

\(^{80}\) 1/CAL 5/1/2/5 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Immigration Board, 9 November 1861.

\(^{81}\) CCP 9/33 Blue Book 1870, Civil Commissioner's Report Caledon, p.JJ 8.

\(^{82}\) S.A.C.A., Cape Town Immigration Board, 19 February 1859.
Dutch farmer had

...some feudal ....notion of his own importance as a landholder, and he [did] not like to have it intimated to him by a bare-breeched fellow, brought in the other day at government expense, that he [was] looked upon as an absolute ignoramus.83

It emerged in a study of the Eastern Cape that the Dutch element opposed immigration of white labour as in a very short time the immigrants found themselves better off than the farmers - instead, therefore, of being their servants they became their equals and provided competition in the labour market.84 In 1860 the farmers of the Riversdale and Napier districts sent petitions to the legislative council requesting that no further funds be voted for immigration.85 Not only would the Dutch farmer have felt threatened by English labour, he would have favoured the maintenance of labour relations that had been developing in the Colony for generations. Although coloured labour might not have equalled in efficiency that imported from England, the Dutch farmer felt more secure with an established mastery or "baasskap" over his coloured labour which legislation had done little to change.

The arrival of white immigrant labour created a new dimension in the class structure of colonial society which did not remain rigidly structured on colour lines. Although many of the immigrants were able to make use of the opportunities provided in the Colony for betterment, certain immigrants were of humble origins. Many of them were rural workers who, by 1850, had come to be held in an unprecedentedly low

84. Dubow, p.61.
85. CCP 2/1/1/6 Legislative Council 1860, Petitions, p.47.
social esteem in England.\textsuperscript{86} There is evidence that significant numbers of the immigrants found themselves socially on a level with the coloured races. An immigrant to Caledon in the forties clearly equated himself with the "peasantry" - "us poor persons", including in this category liberated slaves, Khoi labourers and white immigrant constables.\textsuperscript{87} Reverend B. Anderson of the London Missionary Society stated that English labourers frequently spent their leisure time at Zuurbraak, especially Sundays, and he found them to be generally "dissipated characters". There was a "great deal of intercourse" between white and coloured people at the settlement.\textsuperscript{88}

There was also mixing of the races at certain schools which were established with the poor classes in mind. A school established in Swellendam in circa 1836 with a view to providing education for the slaves and their children who were about to be emancipated, attracted both white and coloured pupils. Poorer white parents preferred sending their children to this school because of a want of "proper clothes".\textsuperscript{89} These children could have attended the government school which at that stage still offered free education. It is evident, however, that social class

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\textsuperscript{86} Snell, pp. 6 - 8.
\textsuperscript{87} I/SW 11/145 John Ogilvie's Petition to Civil Commissioner, c. 1844.
\textsuperscript{88} CCP 1/2/2/1/3 Report of Select Committee into Freehold Grants to Hottentots, 1856, p.34.
\textsuperscript{89} CO 2776 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 23 October 1838.
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distinction, which is based on income and a way of life, made poorer class parents opt for a school which did not show up their children unfavourably. There was also an English Church school in Caledon in 1859 being attended by all races. 90

Although there was considerable fluidity among the races, particularly among the poorer classes, colour prejudice remained strong among certain elements of the population. Government schools were theoretically open to all races, but the civil commissioner at Swellendam did not recommend the admission of coloureds as many of the whites would withdraw their support. 91 In the Riviersonderend valley, an attempt to establish a public school on Linde's farm in the seventies was bedevilled by the fact that government disapproved grants for segregated schools. Yet the Dutch farmers refused to support a school that admitted coloured children. 92

In the villages, the absence of any form of legal racial segregation produced heterogeneous gatherings such as the one described by Lady Duff Gordon in Caledon in 1861:

_Then came a Dutchman, and asked for six penn'orth of bread and cheese, and haggled for beer; and Englishmen, who bought chickens and champagne without asking the price. One rich old boer got three lunches, and then "trekked" (made off) without paying at all. Then came a Hottentot, stupidly drunk with a fiddle, and was beaten by a_

90. Wilson, "History of Caledon", p.163.
91. CO 2776 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 23 October 1838.
92. Wilson, "History of Caledon", p.179.
little red-haired Scotchman, and his fiddle smashed .......[the Scotchman] was in turn sent flying by a gigantic Irishman, who wouldn't see the poor baste abused". 93

In Swellendam, the fair degree of provision that had been made to accommodate the emancipated slaves in the village had provided scope for upward social mobility. By 1862 the village had a number of "smart young men" who aspired to "respectability" and "gentility" although their social behaviour did not always meet with general approbation. 95 The company of coloureds was even being "courted" by some of the "young aristocrats" of the town. An observer noted that it was pleasing to see a change in feeling with regard to the coloured races. He felt that the former prejudice against colour seemed to have ceased and white and coloured met as friends. 96

Animosity among the races in the Overberg (in common with other parts of the Western Cape) was much less in evidence than in the Eastern Cape. In the latter area race relations were aggravated by the regular confrontations between white and Xhosa who in the fifties received support from disaffected coloureds. During the Eighth Frontier War which erupted at the end of 1850, a section of the coloured troops in the Eastern Cape rebelled against the Colony. The discontent was exacerbated by a proposed ordinance to prevent squatting upon government land. Fear spread that the rebellion would become general. In the Riversdale district there was "great alarm" that coloureds throughout the Colony intended to rise and massacre the white population on New

93. Duff Gordon, p.82.
94. See above, pp.74, 75.
95. Overberg Courant, Editorial, 1 January 1862.
96. Ibid., Letter, pseudonym, 26 October 1859.
Year's day. The farmers bought up guns and powder as fast as they could and assembled at night for protection. A state of uneasiness, produced chiefly by rumour, continued into the second half of 1851. Trouble had been expected from Elim but the civil commissioner from Swellendam did not find "much" the matter there. At Zuurbraak where it was "perfectly quiet" the inhabitants had been indignant at the imputations of insubordination. It was commented that it was "all fudge" and the panic had been entirely without cause.

There is much evidence in the Overberg that Dutch paternalism and British humanitarianism had produced a form of liberalism conducive to compatibility among the races. J.S. Marais maintained that the attitude of the Afrikaner in the Western Cape towards his black or brown servants which regarded him as different was compatible with real kindness towards the coloured man, provided that he knew his place. There was a readiness to make allowances for him if he was slow and stupid and a large measure of sympathetic understanding of his character. With the increasing prosperity of the white farmer, however, the economic gap between him and his labourers increased. Wool farming brought economic improvement which was experienced chiefly by the white farmers of the Overberg. The economic inferiority which remained the lot of the coloured labourer was to perpetuate a colour prejudice which was, however, far less marked than the relationships that were to evolve in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.

97. LCA 26 Item 7, Papers detailing an alarm in the district of Riversdale, 28 January 1852.
98. CO 2073 Civil Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, 6 August 1851.
99. LCA 26 Item 7, Papers detailing an alarm in the district of Riversdale, 28 January 1852. See also P.B. Borcherds, An Autobiographical Memoir, pp. 349, 350.
101. Marais, p.5.
CHAPTER NINE

POLITICS AND THE OVERBERG

The attitudes and involvement of the majority of Overbergers in colonial politics were closely related to the economic and geographical isolation of the area, both of which had played an important role in the development of the Overberg milieu. With the notable exception of one brief defiant political stand in June 1795 when the Swellendam burghers followed Graaff-Reinet's example in ousting the V.O.C.'s authorities, the native Overbergers showed little political initiative until late into the nineteenth century. Their action in 1795 had been an assertion of independence provoked primarily by the Company's economic policy. The V.O.C.'s reign came to an end in that year and with it the demise of a selfish, profit-oriented policy which had little interest in the economic well-being of the colonists.

Although economic policies after the second British occupation in 1806 were more favourable to the colonists in that the system of monopolies was abolished, the agriculturists of the Overberg gained little from the change. Local markets for grain remained limited and erratic and transport difficult and costly. Economic involvement and economic gain are closely related to political activity and C.W. de Kiewiet believed that men's political energies were likely to be proportionate to their hope for material betterment. In the era before wool-bearing sheep drew the agriculturist into a world economy, self-sufficiency was more important than attempting to produce agricultural products.

2. Muller, Muller, (ed.), p.65.
for a distant and non-profitable market. Hence a society aloof from the economic embroilment which is an important factor fostering political involvement.

The political inertia of the Overberg for at least half the period under study was not due only to economic factors. In common with other colonies under British rule, the Cape Colony fell under a system which ruled from above and in which the colonists had little or no say until the granting of representative government in 1853. Saul Solomon, a sagacious and influential politician at the Cape, described British colonial government before the granting of representative institutions in disparaging terms. He saw the system as "essentially secret and arbitrary, virtually irresponsible, necessarily distant and therefore ignorant of the circumstances and indifferent to the interests of the colonists". At the time of the anti-convict agitation of 1849 it ruled some 43 colonies with hundreds of thousands of people of all complexities, all creeds and all classes, of the most dissimilar habits, living under the most varying institutions with the most complicated and contradictory laws. Forty-three colonies under such circumstances were subjected to the government of one man called a secretary of state for the colonies, or, as was more frequently the case, one of his clerks. The governor at the Cape was the representative of this autocracy and until 1854 the colonists were effectually without a voice at the colonial level of government. At local level, agriculturists gained nothing from the granting of local municipal bodies by the Act of 1836. From 1843, however, they were able to elect four inhabitants of their district to the Divisional Roads Board, created by the Ordinance of 22 November 1843 for the improvement of trunk roads.

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5. Ibid.
While farmers remained semi-subsistence and had little to gain from a market connection, their interest in colonial politics was likely to be limited and the autocratic form of rule could be tolerated. The increased economic activity of providing for a world wool market was bound to awaken political interest and awareness. It is significant that the granting of representative government coincided with the peaking years of the wool boom and there is evidence in the Overberg to support C.W. de Kiewiet's contention that economic betterment and political activity are closely related.7

The first step in the direction of government by consent came as a result of the Reform Bill of 1832, passed by the British parliament. The passing of the Reform Act was a response to a demand for greater democratization in Great Britain. It enfranchised the middle class, liberated the House of Commons from aristocratic control, and led by natural sequence to democratic town government and the abolition of slavery.8 The effects of the reforms were not slow in filtering to the colonies. On his arrival at the Cape in 1834, the new governor, Sir Benjamin D’Urban, instituted the legislative council. The council was an advisory body consisting of four officials, the attorney-general and from five to seven nominated colonists.9 The council very rapidly fell into disrepute for it was ineffective as a representative and legislative body. The nominated, unofficial members carried too little weight and were dominated by the governor and the executive.10

An observer on the functioning of the legislative council in its early years noted that the control of the government over the unofficial members was so entire as to reduce them to insignificance. There had been suggestions that the unofficial members should be elected by the people. For the 1834 constitution to function smoothly, too much depended on the tact and temper of the governor. Sir George Napier (1838 - 1844), for example, could be "coldly aloof and scathingly cynical" and at one time or other every member of the council was the victim of his moods. Within fourteen years, and even before the anti-convict agitation of 1849 showed up the inability of the council to cope with a crisis, the governor Sir Harry Smith advised the secretary of state for the colonies that the legislative council was regarded in the Colony as a failure.

Although the great majority of Overberg farmers lived in ignorance of events in Cape Town well into the forties, there was a small core of men in the Overberg who made an uncommonly large contribution to political awareness in the Colony. Until the end of the period under study, these men were almost without exception either immigrants or colonists connected with leading families in Cape Town. It was not until late in the nineteenth century that Overbergers, born and bred, began to take their place in the political arena. Exceptional for his interest in the agricultural and political world was F. W. Reitz (1810 - 1881), the son of Jan Frederik, partner of the Merino breeders of Zoetendals Valley. He married a daughter of Dirk Gysbert van Reenen, a

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brother of the earliest pioneers of the Merino. Reitz was educated in Cape Town at the Riebeeck Institute - the school of A. Faure and Dr D.F. Berrangé. In 1826 he went to Edinburgh to study agriculture. Having completed his studies, he undertook a tour of Europe in 1830, visiting among others, Merino studs in Nantes and Italian irrigation schemes. Reitz's studies and observations and his eagerness to implement improvements in the Colony placed him in the forefront of Cape agriculture until about 1870.15 After his return to the Colony, Reitz formed the Swellendam Agricultural Society in 1832. In 1834 he published the perspicacious pamphlet "Observations on the Merino" in which he predicted a speedy change to wool sheep.16 With his knowledge of and interest in progressive farming, Reitz proved himself capable of representing the interests of the Overberg agriculturists.

Although Reitz made his debut in colonial politics in 1849 at the time of the anti-convict agitation,17 he was a proponent of representative government before this date. Together with Joseph Barry whose entrepreneurial eminence fitted him for political involvement, and the immigrant, Dr Henry White, F.W. Reitz spearheaded the movement in the Overberg for a representative assembly. Although demands for constitutional reform date back to 1826 with at least one or other group constantly petitioning the British government for a legislative assembly,18 Reitz, Barry and White were the first to articulate the demand for democratic representation in the Overberg. They were evidently ahead of

many other divisions in their political initiative. On appealing to the civil commissioner at Swellendam for permission to hold a public meeting in August 1848, the latter hesitated to sanction it as he did not want to set a precedent to more distant divisions.\footnote{Richard Southey, civil commissioner at Swellendam during the campaign for a representative government, claimed that Reitz did not have much support in Swellendam and that Henry White was "the public" and that the real public took no interest in the issue.} Despite Southey's opinion, by 1850 Reitz and his party had a considerable following thanks to the eruption of the anti-convict agitation of 1849/50.

There can be no doubt that the anti-convict agitation played an important role in fostering political awareness throughout the Colony and was a major factor in the granting of a representative constitution in 1854. A.F. Hattersley correctly maintained that collective excitement was needed to force men out of their indifference to politics — there had been no serious conflicts in the Colony that led to open discussion of political issues.\footnote{The question of sending convict labour to the Colony had first been raised in 1846 when the governor, Sir Peregrine Maitland, had been asked whether he would welcome some 600 men to construct a breakwater in Table Bay. Maitland's reply seemed to confirm that there would be no objection, provided the convicts were under strict supervision and were not liberated in the Colony. In May 1848, the governor, Sir Harry Smith, anxious to proceed with harbour works, wrote in reply to the query of the secretary of state for the colonies regarding convict labour.}

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He asked him to take measures for "conferring this boon .... with as little delay as possible" and the colonial office felt that they could go ahead with plans for sending out convict labour. Political offenders and men who had undergone a probationary term and earned certificates of good behaviour alone would be selected for transportation. In April 1849 the secretary of state for the colonies, Earl Grey, despatched the Neptune for the Colony from Bermuda with 286 men on parole. He had not waited for Governor Smith's report on the reaction of the colonists to his proposal. The announcement that a shipload of convicts was on its way provoked widespread reaction in the Colony. A mass protest meeting was held in Cape Town and petitions were drawn up in all parts of the Colony. In May 1849 the Anti-convict Association was founded and for almost a year it exerted unprecedented political influence throughout the Colony. A "pledge" was signed not to employ or give shelter to any of the convicts and the Association undertook further not to have any connection with anyone who assisted in landing, supporting or employing any of the felons.

The agitation brought contempt upon the legislative council for its inability to curtail imperial authority. Petitions for the concessions of representative institutions naturally followed. In 1848 even the officials of the council had agreed that the time had come for constitutional reform. Judge William Menzies noted of the council that he himself served on that it was day by day declining in public estimation and had fallen into such disrepute that if one or two unpopular measures of importance had been forced and hurried through it by the weight of the executive, it is almost certain that the machinery for legislation in the

22. Ibid., pp.9 - 11.
colony would have been brought to total standstill, by resignation or absence from the council. In July 1849 two vacancies for unofficial members arose on the legislative council due to the decease of one of the members and the ill-health of another. The vacancies were filled, but the new members, who in the eyes of the colonists were collaborating with an autocratic system, were intimidated to such an extent by the Cape Town mob that they resigned their seats.

When the Neptune dropped anchor in Simon’s Bay on 19 September 1849, the municipal commissioners of Cape Town addressed a message to the governor trusting that he would order the ship away. Within half-an-hour the municipality received a reply that the ship would ride at anchor until advice had been received from London. As soon as it was known that the ship was not to be sent away, business was virtually suspended as tradesmen feared to transact any business that might implicate them for possible support of the government. It was reported that nothing could exceed the “disorganisation of the government, of commerce, of agricultural interests, [and] of every branch of trade”.

The landing of convicts appears to have been one of the few incidents that aroused the political instincts of the Overbergers. In the Caledon district 500 farmers attended a meeting on 1 December 1849. It was resolved that an anti-convict association be formed to resist making the Colony a penal settlement. Regret was expressed that persons of the Caledon district had sold cattle to the government in defiance of public opinion. Captain Robert Stanford who owned farms in the Overberg was one of the few prepared to

26. Ibid., p.58.
run the gauntlet with loaded waggons to help replenish the commissariat stores. His actions brought upon him the opprobrium of the community. His children were expelled from school and members of his family pelted in the streets. 28 Numerous field cornets resigned. 29 T.B. Bayley, known as a "leading farmer and politician", of the Caledon district, wrote to Richard Southey regarding the reaction to government supporters. He stated:

John Linde says that masses of his neighbours are on bad terms with him, and I know that Shaw and myself and all of us who did not take a share in the Caledon Meeting have been denounced as suspicious characters. 30

Bayley believed that much of the activity during the anti-convict agitation was aimed at creating an awareness among the Afrikaner of the value of public meetings, agitation and political feuding. 31

The dispatch that enabled Sir Harry Smith to send the Neptune away to Van Diemen's Land was written on 30 November 1849 and the ship left Simon's Bay on 21 February 1850. Even before the departure of the convicts a Cape Town newspaper expressed the view that the struggle had created a people in South Africa. A colonial community could only emerge with a will of its own when arbitrary government by officials nominated overseas had been replaced by elective institutions. 32 Sir Harry Smith's popularity in the Colony had been declining and the anti-convict agitation was only the most recent cause

30. Wilmot, p.103.
31. Ibid., p.86.
32. Hattersley, pp.74, 79, 80.
of tension between the British authorities and the Dutch colonists. Governor Smith's activities across the Orange River, culminating in the Battle of Boomplaats and the execution of Dreyer, had greatly antagonized the colonial Dutch. The anti-convict agitation, and the delay in granting representative institutions, had exacerbated feelings in the Colony, and widespread anti-English feelings were reported. 33 A journalist of the time, far from noting a consolidation of British and Dutch into one common cause, noted that the agitation had "increased and hardened...... race feeling between Dutch and English". 34

After the crisis, the governor, sensing the need to placate public opinion, called upon the district roads boards and the municipalities "after ascertaining as well as possible the views of householders and ratepayers", to nominate five persons to fill the vacancies on the legislative council. The vacancies were finally filled by F.W. Reitz, Christoffel Brand, Andries Stockenström, John Fairbairn (the popular members) and by Robert Godlonton, who was pro-government. With the exception of Godlonton, the new members contended that the immediate business of the council should be confined to consideration of the framework of the proposed new constitution for the Colony. Finding that the government was resolved on the normal functioning of the council as a legislative body, Reitz, Brand, Fairbairn and Stockenström, acting in concert, resigned. The session had lasted only two weeks, from 6 September to 20 September. 35

The secretary of state for the colonies had made known in 1848 his decision to grant an elective assembly to the Colony, but discussion of a new constitution was interrupted

34. Ibid., p.46.
35. Hattersley, pp.86, 87.
by the outbreak of frontier warfare in December 1850. However, the Cape Town Municipal Council requested that the popular members draw up a constitution for self government which Fairbairn and Stockenström were requested to convey to England. William Porter, the attorney-general, also drew up a draft constitution which was submitted to the British House of Commons. 36

There were practical difficulties in the establishment of a local parliament. The white population was scattered over vast areas. The Dutch pastoralists, who were engrossed in the problems of making a living had little time for public affairs and they were individualists rather than citizens. 37 They also greatly outnumbered the British colonists. The anti-convict agitation had produced a cleavage between British and Dutch and S. Trapido believes that it was this cleavage, together with the breakdown of consent in the political institutions of the Colony, that delayed the granting of representative institutions. 38 In 1851 Sir Harry Smith warned that if the new legislature was to be entirely popular, the legislation at first would be anti-English. Ironically, it was in order to protect the English minority that the low franchise qualifications of 1853 became part of the constitution, although Trapido maintains that Governor Smith and colonial secretary Montagu would never have agreed that it did. 39

37. Hattersley, p.94.
39. Ibid., p.48.
The constitutional struggle at the Cape over the franchise qualifications gave rise to two factions. The one party sought a narrowly based electorate to be achieved by a high property qualification, the other a widely based electorate to be obtained by a low property qualification. The former party were chiefly English and the latter Dutch, although Governor Cathcart recognised that there were many English who sided with the Dutch on what were commonly termed liberal principles. It is difficult to understand exactly who supported what, but essentially the argument centred around either granting the coloureds the vote or not. The ultimate approval of the low qualification suggests that each party eventually saw the advantage of a coloured electorate that could be manipulated to further its own interests. The colonial secretary, John Montagu, at first supported the higher property qualification of £50 giving the reason that the £25 qualification would enfranchise "a body of ignorant coloured persons whose numbers would swamp the wealthy and educated portion of the community". The Dutch farmers, fearing domination by the English mercantile class, favoured the low qualification. Trapido sums up the division thus:

It should be apparent that closely interrelated structural factors – class, colour, nationality – were determining the conflict over the franchise. It was not simply English v. Dutch, but rather the high-franchise party of the English merchants of Cape Town and Grahamstown, led by Robert Godlonton, with the decisive support of Sir Harry Smith, the Governor, and Montagu, his Colonial Secretary, opposing the supporters of the low franchise, the Dutch-speaking farmers led by Reitz and Brand, who had the support of the radical Cape Town editors, Fairbairn and Buchanan and their Coloured followers, all of whom accepted the

41. Ibid., p.50.
leadership of Andries Stockenström. Most significant of all, William Porter, the Attorney-General, was a supporter of the low franchise.42

Trapido rightly asserts that the supporters of the £25 franchise made strange companions. The relationship between Fairbairn and the Dutch-speaking population had long been strained. In addition, Fairbairn had clashed with Porter during the anti-convict agitation of 1849 - 50. But both men supported a low qualification for similar reasons. Both wanted the coloured population to qualify for the franchise, and both were determined that the British connection should not be undermined. The Dutch-speaking population had little or no sympathy for these objectives. Nevertheless they were adherents of a low franchise because they were opposed to the ruling clique of executives and merchants, and it was only the latter who would have benefited from a high qualification.43

By 1850 the so-called popular constitution with its low franchise qualification had a considerable following in the Swellendam district. The Commercial Advertiser reported that the sheep farmers of the Swellendam district were taking a lively interest in the framing of the constitution. A special deputation had gone to the colonial secretary, John Montagu, with a protest but he had refused to receive it.44 The popular members also received support from the landholders of Bredasdorp and Napier. At a meeting chaired by M.J. van Breda following their resignation from the legislative council because it failed to address the question of a representative constitution after the Neptune crisis, the opinion was expressed that they had acted in a "manly and noble manner".45

42. Ibid., p.51.
43. Ibid., pp.51, 52.
45. Ibid., Public Meeting, 4 December 1850.
Overt opposition to the representative constitutions in the Swellendam district was limited. Benjamin Moodie, the Scottish settler of 1817, held the view that the Colony was not yet ready for a representative government. At a meeting held in Swellendam in November 1850, a small contingent of four, led by Moodie, proposed a rejection of the draft constitutions. They recommended the election of two members in each district who would be added to the existing legislative council. The meeting considered such a move a "retrograding step" and Moodie was obliged to withdraw his proposal. The meeting was then addressed by Joseph Barry who felt that despite the imperfections in the popular constitution, it should be accepted. This proposal was unanimously accepted.46

In the final draft constitution of March 1852, the £50 qualification was favoured above the £25 one. The historian, J.S. Marais, believed that the move was aimed at annihilating coloured voting power and was probably the outcome of antagonism towards the coloureds following the Kat River Rebellion of 1851.47 It was believed that farmers of the Western Cape had no desire to elevate the coloured classes.48 In March 1852 six justices of the peace in the Caledon district (who were primarily the English capitalist farmers such as Bayley and Shaw) sent a letter to government alleging that the Dutch farmers of the district were "to a man" opposed to the £25 franchise.49 In the Swellendam district, where the influence of F.W. Reitz undoubtedly played a role, there was support for the £25 franchise. This support for coloured voters did not, however, necessarily stem from a more liberal attitude towards coloured voters. T.R.H. Davenport maintains that many of the Dutch supported

46. Ibid., Article, 9 November 1850.
47. Marais, p.214.
48. Breitenbach, p.266.
49. Marais, p.214.
the lower qualification as they believed that by extending the vote to the large number of coloureds, they would be able to contain their main rivals - the English speaking business community who were generally "conservatives" and opposed to too much power being placed in the hands of the colonists. Joseph Barry, although a member of the mercantile class, recognised the importance of supporting the popular liberal constitution which had a strong following in the Swellendam district. Ostensibly he was a liberal.

When the constitution was finally approved in 1853, it was the low franchise party which prevailed. Newcastle, the secretary of state, desired that "all subjects at the Cape without distinction of class or colour should be united by one bond of loyalty...[and that] the exercise of political rights enjoyed by all alike [would] prove one of the best methods of attaining this object".

The granting of the low franchise in 1853 gave rise to the phenomenon of the "Cape liberal tradition", a tradition which subsequent writers denounced as being somewhat of a misnomer. In 1939 Professor R.F.A. Hoernlé in South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit, acknowledged that Cape liberalism was not an "indigenous growth of the experience of White Colonists in contact with non-white peoples .... but imported and imposed from the outside, by officials from overseas". Humanitarian liberalism entered the Cape with immigrants from the British Isles or was brought back by

51. See Du Plessis, chapter 9, p.1.
South Africans who had gone to England for their higher education. Hoernlé maintains that Cape liberalism was never, in practice, as completely "colour-blind" as it was in theory. 54 P. Lewsen draws attention to the fact that the liberalism of the nineteenth century was not identical with democracy. It did not intrude into social relationships or attack the class structure. It also accepted as axiomatic that the civilization of the West was superior to all others, that its creed of hard work and duty was inseparable from its values, that morally and technically its advantages were indisputable, and its duty to backward and lesser peoples was to guide, uplift them and teach them its ways. There was much that was contradictory in the liberal creed, and its application to a colonial situation could be expected to cause many anomalies. This was the case at the Cape. 55

Liberalism came to the Cape as a result of the philanthropic and humanitarian movement in England which was most influential between 1820 and 1845. It led to the passing of Ordinance 50 in 1828 which made the coloured races (slaves excepted) equal before the law with whites. Ordinance 50 opened the way for the general masters and servants law of 1841, without restriction of colour, which took in the former slaves who were finally freed in 1838. 56 Ordinance 50 was a "measure imposed from outside upon a hostile society". 57 So was the freeing of the slaves. These liberal moves were a major reason for the Great Trek, for many of the Dutch colonists clung to a biblical justification for superiority of the white race. The Dutch colonists, or Afrikaners, who

55. Lewsen, p.70.
56. Ibid.
remained behind in the Colony did not give up their ideas on "proper" relations between master and servant. There was a prevalent opinion among farmers of the Western Cape that "a labouring man ought not to look to get higher than a labourer" and they desired to obtain coloured labour on terms dictated by themselves. J.J. Breitenbach notes the strong opposition of the Caledon landowners to the low franchise although this came not only from Dutch farmers, but also from justices of the peace such as T.B. Bayley and William Shaw. The petition submitted by the Caledon farmers in February 1852 stated that they wished to exclude a large body of coloured subjects who were "tainted with Revolutionary and Communist principles. Although this attitude appears to be the outcome of the Kat River rebellion, the petitioners either failed to recognise or to acknowledge a capitalistic desire to maintain control over a labour force that was an essential part of an expanding capitalist venture—wool farming. However, there was an undeniable element of benevolent paternalism present in parts of the Overberg, an attitude that was inescapably linked with the white man's belief in his superiority, but this attitude was also linked......with a genuine desire to give others the opportunity to rise, and to grant them, when they did, the rights of civilized men (if not the status).

58. Lewsen, p.71.
60. Ibid., p.268.
61. See above, p.245.
62. LCA 26 Item 16, Petition from Caledon, 11 February 1852.
63. See above, pp.214, 215.
64. Lewsen, p.78.
The support of men such as F.W. Reitz for liberal politics forms a part of a phenomenon which André du Toit has recently labelled the "Cape Afrikaners' failed liberal movement". He believes that for a brief period there were the makings of a definite liberal tendency among Cape Afrikaners. It began at the time of the anti-convict agitation, and was most pronounced during the constitutional controversies leading to the granting of representative government in 1853. After this the "liberal discourse" moved away from politics into the realms of education and above all the church, culminating in the "liberalism struggle" within the Dutch Reformed Church during the 1860s. For a while liberalism seemed to be winning the main battles, but by 1870 the liberal tendency was a spent force.

There is much to be said for the contention that the improvement in the Cape economy, which was almost exclusively due to increased wool production, had much to do with the development of the liberalism of the Cape Afrikaner. Economic improvement opened up exciting prospects for progress and prosperity. But although the educational reforms of the 1840s prepared the way for the "liberal groundswell" that followed, it was really only the tip of the iceberg that was influenced by the liberal education provided by schools such as Changuion's Institute in Cape Town. In 1865, only between 11% and 13% of white children in the Overberg were receiving a "formal education" and it

65. Professor of Political Studies, University of Cape Town.
67. Ibid., p.39.
68. See below p.284.
was only exceptional families, such as the Reitz’s, who sent their children to Cape Town for their schooling. Although the circulation of newspapers undoubtedly increased, the short duration of the only local newspaper of note in the Overberg is an indication of poor support for the printed word. Had the liberal education of platteland children had a broader base, the Afrikaners’ "failed liberal moment" may have been of longer duration.

The Overberg, settled primarily by a semi-literate rural population inexperienced in colonial politics, was limited in its choice of representatives in the parliament granted by the constitution of 1853. It was predictable that F.W. Reitz, after his exertions on behalf of a representative constitution, should become a member of the new legislative council, a position which he held for nine years. Predictable too, that Joseph Barry with his commendable entrepreneurial ability should also be given a seat on the legislative council, a position which he held until 1864, the year before his death. It was no surprise either that Joseph Barry’s nephew, John, should be elected as a member of the new house of assembly for Swellendam. The Barry family, through their commercial involvement, were well versed in colonial affairs and equal to the task of political involvement. Slightly less predictable and anomalous, however, was the election of the liberal John Fairbairn as the second member of parliament for Swellendam. Fairbairn, a foremost protagonist of the interests of coloured people who believed in eliminating all distinctions on the grounds of race, had not always been in high favour with the Afrikaans-speaking colonists. But his unequivocal support of representative government and his genuine interest in all facets of colonial development, won

69. See below p.286.
72. Ibid., pp.301, 302.
him the support of the Swellendam voters. The Swellendam electorate were in favour of the low franchise qualification. Regardless of whether their reasons for enfranchising the coloureds were the same as Fairbairn’s, they saw in the latter a sincere champion of colonial interests.

In the Caledon - Bredasdorp constituency one may have expected either a Van der Byl or a Van Breda to have been elected to parliament in 1854. A member of the Van Breda family (probably H.W. van Breda who was elected in 1869) was in fact narrowly beaten by Charles Aiken Fairbridge. The latter was a leading lawyer in Cape Town and it was considered "only to be expected" that someone in this position "should seek parliamentary honours". The other member chosen for this constituency was also a non-Overberger, Brian Henry Darnell. Contemporary records reveal little of Darnell although he appears to have been elected because of an interest in the country and in the conservation of country resources.

Prospective political candidates in the Caledon-Bredasdorp constituency had to take cognizance of the large voting populations at Genadendal and Elim. It is clear that the coloured electorate on the missions was an important factor in elections. In 1872, coloured voters in the Caledon division numbered 300 out of a total of 1,200, that is 25% of the electorate. Darnell failed to be returned for a second time in 1859 as he had neglected to canvass voters at Genadendal.

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75. Wilson, "History of Caledon", p.70.
76. Cape Argus, Political Report, 6 January 1859.
Large accumulations of coloureds at the mission stations who were easily manipulated by politicians, encouraged carpet-bagging political tactics. J.C. Silberbauer who was elected in 1859 evidently owed his success to the support of the coloureds to whom he had made promises which, according to the Argus report, he neither could nor would keep. Shortly after his election a correspondent to the Argus complained:

Perhaps the members of the Assembly are not aware that you [Silberbauer] did not obtain one White man's vote in the whole district and that you about as much as represent the inhabitants of Caledon as you do the inhabitants of the moon — even your Coloured supporters have become conscious of your plausible sophistries and insidious sympathies.

Silberbauer was a director of the Cape Commercial Bank and of the Commercial Marine and Fire Assurance Company. From advice that he proffered to shareholders, he appears to have been both pompous and opinionated. A man who expressed himself in the following vein was unlikely to retain the support of prosaic agriculturists:

He [speaking of himself] thus merely performs a duty to them, and does not expect nor hope for any testimonial, either in the shape of silver inkstand, gold snuff box, or piece of plate. If only he escape abuse ...[he will] rest content with the conviction that he has not shirked a duty at a critical moment.

Silberbauer was writing in 1860 when the money market was becoming "tight". He offered the "plausible sophistry" that the Cape Town banks should increase the interest on fixed deposits in order to attract investors so that the

77. Cape Argus, Political Report, 6 January 1859.
78. Ibid., letter from a correspondent, 14 April 1859.
agricultural and mercantile sectors could be granted more credit. He noted that Eastern Cape banks had done this and had attracted capital from the Western Cape. Eastern Cape banks were thus able to allow their farmers higher mortgages. "Frontier banks have thus increased their means of accommodation for their customers..." he argued. He criticized the Cape Town banks for their caution - they were losing ground and retrograding. He considered it the Cape bank directors "duty" to provide for the legitimate wants of mercantile and agricultural interests. 80 In view of the financial collapse of the mid-sixties that affected the Eastern Cape so much more than the West, perhaps critics were justified in denouncing Silberbauer for sophistry and poor prognostication.

It was intimated in the mid-sixties that farmers did not take sufficient interest in the election of candidates who would "levy taxes and make laws for them". 81 By 1871 Caledon had had the reputation "forced" upon it of being a "conservative pocket division". It was claimed that whoever presented themselves first for election walked over the course. 82 Candidates from the city knew that if they worked on the electorate at Genadendal and won their support they had a fair chance of being elected. In 1859, a local candidate, H.W. van Breda, who modestly claimed to want to represent the Dutch community, was not elected, despite being considered the best candidate. 83 Complacency on the part of the white farming electorate and political manipulation of coloureds clearly played a role in Overberg politics. After elections for the legislative council in 1864 Caledon was "sore" at the result of the late election and

80. Ibid., pp. 5, 7, 8, 11.
82. Wilson, "History of Caledon", pp. 72, 73.
83. Cape Argus, Political Report, 6 January 1859.
"resent[ed] the insolent dominion of a class which [could] be swayed and used for any purpose by impudent intruders and outside political adventurers". 84

After 1859 the Caledon electorate began to sit up and take notice. Between that date and 1873, two Van Bredas and two Van der Byls from the area were returned to parliament - A.J. van der Byl (1859 - 1863); H.W. van Breda (1869 - 1873); Alexander van der Byl (1869 - 1870) and Dirk van Breda (1871 - 1873). 85

The constitution of 1854 was destined to last less than two decades. It was a system that could only work while times and tempers were good. It was an illogical system that left the ultimate power in the hands of the governor and the permanent official heads of government departments. Policies were framed by the governor and his executive but they could be accepted or rejected by the elected house of assembly. 86

The system could only work while there was agreement between the executive and the legislative assembly. While Sir George Grey was governor (December 1854 - August 1859 and July 1860 - August 1861) the system presented no problems. The Colony experienced unequalled prosperity in the decade of the fifties. Grey was popular with the colonists for he could sanction expenditure without demanding additional taxation. Money was spent on immigration and new magistracies. Lighthouses were built and a breakwater was begun at Table

84. Overberg Courant, The Vacancy in the Legislative Council, 6 April 1864.
Bay. Grey's interest in education fostered the construction of the S.A. Public Library and made revenue available for improving the education system.87 Had Grey governed a decade later, the record may have been different, but his amenable, enthusiastic nature convinced the colonists that "no greater man .... had ever guided the administration".88 John Fairbairn said of him:

He moves with so much natural ease in the right direction that it is impossible to say whether he leads or follows in any great moment.89

Modern studies of Grey are not entirely laudatory, and in spending colonial revenue on extensive public works which met with the approval of the colonists, Grey was probably satisfying his own "ruthless egotism to which he would sacrifice anything and anybody".90 Dissatisfaction with government was unlikely in times of prosperity, but the prosperity which the Colony had enjoyed during the late forties and fifties came to an abrupt end in the early sixties. It was unfortunate for the new governor, Sir Philip Wodehouse (a detached, rigid civil servant who was for ever "wielding British Imperial authority")91 that his term of office co-incided with unparalleled drought and depression. Eric Walker said of him:

It would have been hard for any man to live up to Grey's standard of popularity and Wodehouse was unlucky. He came with the drought and the drought only departed with him; he was faced with a growing deficit; he could not hope to be loved, if only because he had to restore the finances, in other words, to tax.92

87. Ibid., pp.294, 294.
89. Ibid.
90. J. Peires, The Dead Will Arise, pp.45, 46.
It was during Wodehouse's unpopular term of office that the movement for a fully responsible government in the Colony gained impetus. The issue of responsible government had been raised at the second sitting of parliament in 1855 and a committee had been appointed to investigate it. Wodehouse was opposed to independence because he feared the consequences for the coloured and black population. The Cape became split into two antagonistic halves with John Molteno leading those in favour of responsible government (the "liberals") and the ex-civil commissioner of Swellendam, Richard Southey, leading the anti-responsibles or "conservatives". There was antagonism between the Eastern and Western Cape with the latter being strongly in favour of responsible government.

Wodehouse's governorship became increasingly unpopular, particularly among those who favoured responsible government. His attempts to introduce a tax on wool between 1862 and 1869 encountered fierce opposition from wool producers. The opposition to Wodehouse's financial policies were only part of what T.R.H. Davenport describes as the "storms of the late 1860's and early 1870's" which included the unpopular annexation of Basutoland in 1868 and of the diamond fields in 1871 - all of which helped to stir Afrikaner interest in the secular affairs of the Colony. S. Trapido maintains that the Afrikaner population has been depicted by the publicists of nationalist Afrikaner movements as being

93. Du Plessis, chapter 9, p.2.
95. Ibid., p.179.
97. CCP Legislative Council Votes and Proceedings, 2/1/1/9 1863, pp. 73, 83 and CCP 2/1/1/12 1866 - 1867, pp.91, 97, 123, 127, 129, 137, 141, 155, 169, 177.
politically quiescent before 1878. But he states that this view is not well founded. He believes that between 1848 and 1878 Afrikaners were brought together to defend major interests on at least six occasions. The self-consciousness of the Cape Afrikaners was enhanced by the existence of the two independent republics to the north of the Colony. The white population of these republics was made up of emigrants from the Cape who were not only part of the 1834-38 trek. In the decade between 1860 and 1870 there were regular departures from the Cape, including the Swellendam district. The latter area carried on a profitable trade in waggons and other commodities with the trekkers beyond the Orange and had close familial and material ties with the young republics. The civil commissioner reported in 1869:

There can be no doubt that the disturbances beyond the Orange River have seriously affected our trade and not least the waggons' trade which had been carried on extensively and was the means of profitable employment to many.

British policy in the interior was affecting the pockets of the Swellendammers which added to the general sense of outrage at the British annexation of Basutoland.

In the absence of personal written opinions, it is very difficult to gauge the political views held by the Overberg agriculturists. Election results and newspaper reports suggest that although generally quiescent, they could hold strong views on questions that directly affected their livelihood. Their political consciousness tends to be underrated because they were obliged to leave country

100. Ibid., p.52.
101. 1/5WM 14/9 Report for Blue Book, Swellendam, 28 January 1869.
representation to those who were fluent in English. It was natural for voters to lose interest in elections if they could not vote for the persons they believed suitable, the latter being ineligible because of their inability to speak English.

Even by 1864 when the Colony had had a representative parliament for a decade, it does not appear as though rural Overbergers showed an active interest in elections. Statements were made in the house of assembly which implied that the registration of voters in the Swellendam district in 1864 had been very slack. It was claimed that only the civil commissioner and one of his clerks had registered. The civil commissioner admitted that there was "great indifference about being registered and a "general apathy". Part of the problem was that it was difficult to apply the registration law with the aid of the field cornets, many of whom did not understand the registration act, nor did they try to do so.

In the 1864 elections in Caledon there was a little more interest among white voters in returning a candidate who would champion local interests. Although J.C. Silberbauer, with overwhelming support from Genadendal, was elected for a second term, a member of the Van der Byl family, who were landholders in the Overberg, was also elected.

There was a fairly dramatic swing in political energies of the Overberg, and particularly of Caledon, in the late sixties. This seems to have been attributable to the

103. Scholtz, p.119.
104. I/SWM 14/6 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 22 June 1864.
105. I/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 30 March 1864 and see above p.257.
unpopularity of Wodehouse's financial policy and British annexationist policy. In 1869 J.C. Silberbauer, who had received 500 votes in the previous elections, had fallen in popularity, receiving only 270. Silberbauer, who appears not only to have been an unsuitable candidate for a country constituency, had relied heavily on the voters of Genadendal. If the Argus correspondent can be believed, Silberbauer had not carried out his promises to the electorate. White agriculturists had realized that carpet-baggers who depended primarily on votes from the mission stations were not representing their interests in parliament. The nominations for 1869 showed a decided rallying from the Dutch-speaking electorate. Three candidates, who judging from their names were residents of the district, were nominated - W.H. van Breda, A. van der Byl and P.H. de Villiers. Van Breda and Van der Byl were the two successful candidates with 627 and 571 votes respectively. In 1864 there had been a total of 1 206 votes cast in the Caledon electoral division. In 1869 the figure was 1 860. The increase of 654 votes indicates considerably more political interest.

The increased interest in politics was probably chiefly due to Wodehouse's unpopular attempts to restore the finances of the Colony, British interference in the areas to the north and the desire for an independent colonial government. That responsible government was the issue at stake in the 1871 elections is apparent from the following report in the Argus with regard to the election in Caledon:

107. See above, pp. 251 - 253.
108. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4, Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 31 May 1869.
109. 1/CAL 5/1/2/4, Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 30 March 1864 and 31 May 1869.
Advocate Van Breda has beaten Dr Christie by 51 votes - the Liberals have achieved a splendid triumph. The majority of Dr Christie's votes were obtained, by what means is known to all, at Genadendal. Conservatism tried the familiar weapons - money and small slanders were freely used to discredit Mr van Breda. Caledon decidedly rejected Dr Christie. A candidate against Responsible Government had no chance at Caledon. His [Van Breda's] comparative youth and inexperience were against him .......[but] the genuine political enthusiasm of the Caledon Liberals carried the day. Rarely has an expression of opinion been so unequivocally given .......[there has been] steady progress of liberal opinion throughout the country. Bredasdorp was equally in favour of the Liberals. 110

Wodehouse, unable to reach a compromise with the colonists, had been recalled shortly after he had again prorogued parliament on 5 May 1870. In 1871, at the first sitting under the new governor, Sir Henry Barkly, John Molteno proposed a motion in favour of responsible government. It was finally passed on 1 June 1871 by 31 votes to 26.111

Events such as the anti-convict agitation in the late forties, and the British annexations of the late sixties and early seventies played an important role in stirring up colonial feeling against British rule. But these were isolated sensational events and the interest which they fostered among a widespread rural population was probably transitory. Although one cannot discount these events in the development of a political awareness among the Overbergers it would appear that there was a far more important, if less manifest force, which fostered interest in government. By the end of the fifties the Overberg farmers were among the most wealthy in the Colony. Economic well-being was accompanied by an improved standard of living and

110. Cape Argus, Editorial, 23 March 1871.

111. Du Plessis, chapter 9, p.10 and Solomon, p.117.
opportunities for better education. Improved communications and more regular access to the products of the printing press, which are a manifestation of economic advance, helped to disseminate knowledge and form opinions.

The chief source of prosperity for the Overberg agriculturists was their wool clip. Although there is little in writing which records the farmers' opposition to a proposed wool tax in the sixties, the vastly increased interest in the elections of 1869 and the success of the liberals in 1871 was in no small part due to a threat to their main income. British annexationist policy was unpopular, but the annexations had little direct bearing on the lives of farmers. Men react more rapidly to matters which affect their material well-being than to ideologies. It is perhaps no extravagant claim that the increased prosperity of the Overberg which was due almost entirely to the wool of the Merino, fostered political awareness in the area. Herman Giliomee has recently drawn attention to the material, economic base of a growing Afrikaner awareness among the wine and wheat farmers of the Stellenbosch, Paarl and Halmesbury districts from about 1870. Events in Trans-Orangia were precipitants of Afrikaner nationalism, but precipitants do not produce a nationalist movement. The nationalist movement which was to gain momentum in the twentieth century was built on "an Afrikaner consciousness which had been forged by the material concerns of commercial farmers...".112

There were no major political issues which directly affected Overbergers between 1838 and 1872. Their farms were not threatened by attacks from Xhosas and the area was too much a part of the old, western part of the Colony to be agitated by secessionist propaganda such as was experienced in the Eastern Cape. The area was stable in every sense of

the word. Dissatisfied people become concerned about politics and policies, not a people complacent in their own security. The commercial nexus which the wool trade produced changed the situation. It created a sensitive spot which could be affected by adverse conditions over which Overbergers had no control, unless they became politically active. Once Overbergers had tasted the luxuries and comforts that the income from wool afforded, they were loath to see their income affected by inimical agricultural policies. In 1872, the close of the period under study, political ideologies and growing Afrikaner nationalism were in their infancy. Economic considerations were responsible for the early growth of political awareness in the Overberg and not a sense of ethnic exclusivity. Heightened political awareness had developed from an appreciation of the importance of a government that was sympathetic to its material interests.
CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSIONS

The Overberg is an area with clearly defined geographical boundaries, boundaries which have influenced the development of the area from the start of white settlement. Isolated from the markets of Cape Town, deprived of the traffic of a large hinterland by mountain ranges and unable to profit from an overseas trade because of the absence of natural bays providing safe harbours, the Overberg was placed at a disadvantage. But, with an equitable climate, a reliable rainfall and terrain and soils fit for cultivation, the area soon proved its stability as an agricultural area for white settlers. The indigenous Khoi, drastically reduced in numbers by the time of permanent white settlement in the Overberg, posed no serious threat to the newcomers.

The first land grant in the Overberg was made in 1710. By 1838, a period of 128 years, the area had become optimally settled, if not in fact overpopulated, for the farming economy of those years. Frequent subdivision of farms among numerous heirs produced farming units that could not support a family with extensive ranching as the only means of livelihood. By 1846, in certain parts of the Overberg, there were farms of under 200 morgen. Until late in the nineteenth century, in most parts of the Colony, 2 400 morgen was considered a minimum to support a family.¹ The average size of farms in the Overberg by 1863 was 2 448.3 morgen - there were thus many that were less than the size considered adequate. With the exception of inaccessible mountain land and small scattered blocks of crown land, unoccupied land was

¹. See above, p.28.
unobtainable, unless put up for sale. In many instances farms had more than one proprietor and it was not uncommon for a farm to have more than five proprietors.\(^2\)

By the early thirties land pressure had led to serious overstocking which was the main reason for the removal of a large number of impoverished farmers from the Swellendam area between 1828 and 1843.\(^3\) By 1838, Overberg farmers were faced with a choice between more intensive cultivation and productive farming or trekking. Areas such as Natal, where the Zulus under Dingane had been defeated, offered prospects of extensive areas for settlement where the accustomed mode of herding sheep and cattle could be continued.

By 1838, farming with the wool-producing Merino had proved beyond reasonable doubt that it was a profitable venture for the Colony. Prospects for rapid profits attracted immigrants and capital, but the scarcity and highly desirable nature of land in the Overberg prevented a large influx of British immigrants and capital, factors which had important consequences for the Overberg. In the first place the character of the area was little affected because of the few newcomers that were admitted and secondly the unavailability of land prevented large-scale speculation, the latter factor contributing significantly to the economic stability of the area.

By the time of the second British occupation very little land remained in the hands of the indigenous Khoi. British policy

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2. See above, p.31.

3. See above, pp. 37, 38.
was unlikely to favour the return of land to these people, influenced as it was by the principles of enclosure which amassed land in the hands of the English landlords. Farming in England was becoming a capitalist venture and a displaced rural population was regarded strictly for its productive potential. Government policy at the Cape, where wool production was transforming farming into a profitable capitalist venture, did little to encourage individual tenure for the coloured races. Well before the commencement of this study the majority of Khoi descendants were living on the farms of white colonists. Large numbers of coloureds resided at the three mission stations of Genadendal, Elim and Zuurbraak and although they came in for vehement criticism from farmers for withholding potential labour, they formed valuable labour banks, providing extra labour at the peak times of sowing, harvesting and shearing. Government policy undeniably favoured white farm land ownership and with the increase in the value of land occasioned by wool production, supported the move to divest the coloureds of the remnants of Khoi kraals. The only coloureds who were successful in retaining farmland were those to whom it had been bequeathed by a white father.

Because of geographical barriers, transport to and from the Overberg was both difficult and dangerous. The passes constructed over the Houw Hoek and Hottentots Holland Mountains expedited traffic between Cape Town and the area. But it remained an arduous and costly journey, particularly for heavy loads of wheat which remained unremunerative throughout the period under study. Access to the area by the shipping route making use of Port Beaufort, demonstrated, if only for about 45 years, (c.1820 - c.1865), the incalculable value of a rapid route from the area to Cape Town. But the

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4. See above pp.69, 72, 73.
coastal route was dangerous and was only undertaken by intrepid individuals.

As communication routes improved to and from the interior, the Overberg lost rather than gained in the trade with the hinterland. Port Elizabeth and Mossel Bay were more accessible to Karoo and Trans-Orangia traffic. By the end of the period under study the economic focus had been completely re-directed to the north following the discovery of diamonds. The Overberg became a forgotten corner of South Africa. The area was excluded from all railway building in the nineteenth century and only received a rail link with Cape Town in 1902.

Despite logistical disadvantages to economic progress, by 1872 the Overberg had emerged as a prosperous agricultural area. The prosperity was occasioned by the fairly rapid change to wool-bearing sheep in the 1830s. Such was the demand for wool and the ability of the Overberg to produce a fine product, that the handicaps imposed by difficult communications were to a large extent overcome.

The production of wheat in the Overberg gradually increased during the period under study, a phenomenon which could be expected with the increase in population and the subdivision of farms. However, other grain producing areas rapidly outstripped the Overberg yield. The Cape and Stellenbosch districts, and even the more distant Malmesbury, were more favourably situated with regard to the Cape Town market and it was in this direction that the early railway development occurred. Wheat production in the Overberg was primarily for home use with most farmers cultivating less than 40 morgen. A very inconsiderable area of the Overberg - a mere 5,78% - was cultivated by 1865. Between 1856 and 1865 there was an actual decrease in the land cultivated for wheat.
Calculations reveal that the annual average rate of increase in wheat production between 1838 and 1875 was only 1.2%. This is a clear indication that wheat was not a rapidly growing agricultural activity in the Overberg.

The production of oats and barley, however, which were cultivated for stock feed, showed significantly greater growth than wheat. The annual average rate of increase for oats production was 3.78%. Although barley production was only increasing by 0.4% per year, the production of oats and barley combined, exceeded that of wheat in 1875 by 27,526 bushels. Stock feed was undoubtedly of greater importance than wheat. Figures for wheat, oats and barley production on two farms in the Bredasdorp district show a marked preference for oats and that the cultivation of oats and barley together far exceeded that of wheat. Although Overberg conditions favoured all forms of grain cultivation, wheat lost in favour as the Overberg lay outside the 70 mile radius of Cape Town which was considered the maximum for profitable wheat growing. In an area where everyone produced wheat, there was no local market and the prices received in Cape Town barely defrayed the costs of production and transport. Until the railway link between the Overberg and Cape Town was completed, the emphasis was unlikely to change. Attempts to increase wheat production diminished once agriculturists appreciated the rewards to be obtained from converting their Cape sheep to wool-bearing animals. An animal that brought in a healthy cash income was worthy of attention, and hence the increase in the cultivation of the stock feeds, oats and barley.

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5. See above, p. 105.
There does not appear to have been an unwillingness to adopt improved agricultural methods and mechanisation in the Overberg, but the excessive costs of imported machinery made these articles an extravagant purchase for the non-profitable grain cultivation of the area. By the close of the period under study, the old Cape wooden ploughs had all but disappeared and had been replaced by imported metal Ransomes and Howards. During the 1860s the use of reaping and particularly threshing machines increased following the demonstrations of their use at the agricultural exhibitions of 1859 and 1864.

The wool-bearing Merino sheep, introduced to the Colony in 1789, had by 1804 been taken up by three pioneering farmers in the Overberg. It took a quarter of a century, however, before conviction of the value of wool transformed the indigenous flocks of the Overberg to wool-bearers. There is no doubt that the success obtained from wool farming at Zoetendals Valley did much to popularize the Merino. A meticulous breeding programme rapidly increased the wool-bearing qualities of the indigenous sheep. By the early 1830s the potential of the Overberg as a wool-farming area had attracted the attention of a number of English capitalists. These men were investors intent on maximum profits and together with leading colonial farmers such as F.W. Reitz and Michiel van Breda, they influenced the farming populace of the Overberg. By breeding wool-bearing qualities into their indigenous sheep, the formerly quasi-subsistence farmers obtained a product that had a growing demand on the world market. In the decade of the thirties there was a dramatic swing to and increase in the number of Merino sheep in the Overberg. It would appear that truly productive

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7. See above, p.131.
wool farming took off a great deal more rapidly in this area than in other parts of the Colony. The rapid increase in the assets of the firm Barry and Nephews, which were directly related to wool sales suggest that between 1835 and 1840 the trade in wool in the Overberg was in advance of the wool trade for the whole colony. The mercantile capital of men such as Joseph Barry had a catalytic effect on Overberg wool farming. Commercial go-betweens provided not only an outlet for the product, but also capital for investment in better stock. The wool pioneers had shown that within five years, with careful selective breeding, Cape sheep could be producing genuine wool and not hair.

Wool production in the Overberg continued to increase rapidly due to both rising numbers of wool-bearing sheep and to concentration on better stock. Between 1856 and 1865 the Caledon and Bredasdorp districts showed an increased wool production of 66,6%. Between 1838 and 1875 sheep numbers had increased from 131 354 to 591 165, an increase of 367,2%. This increase in sheep necessitated an increased production of stock feed, hence the predominance of oats and barley over wheat, to which reference has already been made.

The indigenous sheep rapidly lost favour in the Caledon-Bredasdorp district where, by 1856, there were only an estimated 948. By 1865 they formed only 0,42% of total sheep numbers. There was also a decrease in the numbers of indigenous sheep in the Swellendam district, but it was not as dramatic. The Karoo-like areas of this district still favoured the hairy sheep where poorer conditions did not justify the trouble and cost involved in converting to Merino sheep.

8. See above, graphs between pp. 176, 177.
The success of wool-farming in the Overberg was closely allied to the application of progressive methods. Prejudice against scientific treatment of scab was more rapidly overcome in the Overberg than in other parts of the Colony. Maps issued for the control of scab in 1893 indicate that the disease had been brought under control in the Western Cape by that date.

The ability of the Overberg to support the rapidly increasing numbers of sheep was offset by a decline in horses and cattle. Between 1854 and 1872 the number of horses declined drastically, partly owing to the ravages of horsesickness but also because wool was proving more profitable. In the first half of the nineteenth century before wool had proved its commercial value, parts of the Overberg, and in particular the Swellendam district, achieved renown for horse-breeding. Before the swing to the Merino, most Overberg farmers owned about 60 horses. Cape Town offered a fair market while there was also a demand for sturdy horses in India. The Indian market was erratic, however, and it soon became evident to Overberg farmers that not only was wool a far more reliable product, but sheep were raised with far less difficulty. The horsesickness epidemic of 1854 was a severe blow to horse-breeders, killing as it did an estimated 40% of the Colony’s horses. Between 1838 and 1875 horse numbers in the Overberg decreased by 56.6%.

Cattle formed an important part of the farm economy with most farmers keeping sufficient oxen to make up two teams of eighteen each, together with the necessary breeding cattle. On average, up to 1845, Overberg farmers kept about 150 breeding cattle. For some farmers butter provided a substantial income but dairying conditions in the nineteenth century were extremely primitive. Individual milk yields were low and a great deal of physical effort was required to

produce profitable quantities of butter. By 1850 wool production had replaced dairying to such an extent that the production of butter was no longer profitable. Lungsickness, which was introduced to the Colony in 1854 drastically reduced cattle numbers which was further incentive for farmers to abandon cattle and dairy farming. Cattle were also less able to withstand the long dry period experienced in the Overberg from October to April when there was scant grazing. Cattle numbers did not drop as drastically as those of horses, but a decline of 35.8% was significant.

Boer goats, which had formed an important part in a subsistence economy were also ousted to a large extent by the Merino. Angora goats, which were introduced to the Caledon district in 1838, were evidently viewed with suspicion and by 1875 there were only 10,000 throughout the Overberg.

The high price paid for ostrich feathers aroused interest in ostrich farming. Birds were domesticated in the 1860s and incubation of ostrich eggs commenced in the Albany district in 1869. By 1872 a few Overberg farmers were experimenting with ostriches but considerable expense was necessary to fence large enclosures. Ostrich farming also required a great deal more effort than sheep farming and before 1872 was clearly no rival for the Merino.

Although farmers may have continued to derive an income from various branches of farming, the prominence gained by the Merino over cultivated crops and other livestock is undisputed. Intensification in the rearing of Merinos was accompanied by expansion in the cultivation of stock feeds as increased stocking rates demanded supplementary feeding.
The important implication for the Overberg of the change to Merino sheep was that a quasi-subsistence farming economy acquired too, the characteristics of a commercial economy. Overberg farms continued to produce most of the essential daily requirements while the additional income from wool could be spent on the luxuries and refinements that European travellers had found so conspicuously absent in most farm homes.

The transformation from a subsistence/barter economy to a commercial economy was neither sudden nor complete. The Overberg farmer never became entirely dependent on the income from wool and was therefore partly immune to the vagaries of the world market. The large measure of economic self-sufficiency enjoyed by the Overberg was a safeguard against rapid social and cultural change. By 1872 white agriculturists were enjoying a great deal more prosperity but there was no cultural revolution to match the silent agricultural and economic revolution wrought by the Merino sheep.

Prior to the production of wool in the Overberg, there was little scope for commercial activity. Joseph Barry’s trading venture, begun in 1823, had ended in sequestration by 1827. Wool, by this date, was not being produced by the generality of farmers. The success of Barry’s partnership with his nephews, which commenced in 1834, was directly linked to wool production which by that date had significantly increased. Barry assets climbed rapidly from 1835 to 1840 and even more rapidly until the peak of the wool boom in 1859. Graphic comparisons suggest that productive, commercial wool

10. See above graphs between pp.176, 177.
farming took off more rapidly in the Overberg in the early years than in other parts of the Colony. The wool trade generated a great deal of commercial activity in the Overberg and imports of manufactured goods increased rapidly.

One of the most striking results of the switch to wool farming was that it enabled the Overberg to support a remarkably greater white farming population. The Overberg by 1838 was barely supporting its farming community. A large number had been encouraged to leave for the brighter prospects of the interior. Yet between 1856 and 1865 the number of agriculturists in the Caledon-Bredasdorp area, according to official figures, had increased by 225.7% (from 685 to 2231.) The increase of white agriculturists in the Swellendam district (which was included with Robertson and Riversdale) was much lower, that is, 60.3% (from 3097 to 4965). The Caledon-Bredasdorp districts in particular, were clearly able to support rapidly increasing numbers of Merinos assisted by supplementary feeding. The figures suggest that parts of the Swellendam district as well as the Robertson and Riversdale districts with their lower rainfall were unable to increase their Merinos to the same extent and hence the expansion of the white agricultural population was also held in check. The population growth in the Overberg was almost entirely due to natural increase. By 1865 only 4.8% of the population were immigrants. Consequently the cultural milieu of the original Dutch settlers was not greatly exposed to the forces which hasten acculturation.

11. See above pp.181, 182.
"In him who hath shall be given" is a biblical adage that could have been coined in the Overberg during the nineteenth century. White agriculturists were obtaining a comfortable subsistence from their farms before the introduction of the Merino sheep. The additional income from a wool clip contributed considerably to the prosperity of farmers who thus had an expendable income over and above their basic daily requirements. An influx of fluid capital can be expected to reveal itself in various ways - in an improved standard of living, improved levels of education, increased leisure and in a change of recreational and cultural pursuits. In a community that was geographically and commercially isolated and which did not receive large accretions of British immigrants, the pace of change was not what might have been expected. While the material prosperity of the Overberg was consolidated by the change to Merinos, the social milieu remained relatively undisturbed.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century the generality of farmers in the Overberg were considered poor. Farmers lived in pandoks, most had no or few slaves and they made bricks and harvested their wheat with their own hands, assisted by their families. Nevertheless they could produce almost all their own food, and other essential and highly desirable items such as guns, cloth, tea and sugar were supplied by the smoos. Few were in real want or poverty.

12. See above, p.149.
Distanced from refined society where there is a compulsion to compare, and with neighbours in similar circumstances, the Overberg farmer could not have felt the lack of civilization too severely. These early farmers had extensive land grants in a stable environment and within a foreseeable number of years, with the least exercise of industry and providence, could increase their herds and flocks and improve their homes. Lichtenstein, who travelled extensively in southern Africa in the first years of the nineteenth century, maintained that no part of the Colony was as well supplied with building material as the Overberg — timber in the neighbourhood, shells on the coast which made excellent lime, and stone and clay easily available. While few farmers experienced penury, those whose farms were situated along the great cattle road from the interior to Cape Town had, by the early nineteenth century, become "affluent". Lichtenstein believed that the trade in cattle was responsible for the wealth of these farmers who had more frequent intercourse with Cape Town. This gave them an idea of polished life, and had introduced a sort of luxury and refinement. Most of them were dressed in fine linen or cotton and their houses were neat and spacious. He recounts that the farm of Du Preez was

....a very pleasing spectacle. The spacious house, the excellent outbuildings, the workshops for the slaves, the stalls for the cattle, a large garden, in the midst of which [was] a fish pond, supplied with water from the neighbouring Krombek River, the neat lawn before the house, the sleek, fat cattle, all evinced an affluence and spirit of order.....

17. Ibid., p.205.
As with many of the travellers who recorded their impressions, Lichtenstein probably only stayed with the more affluent farmers. The Du Preez family, whom he encountered near the present Heidelberg, were exceptionally prosperous. This is borne out in the Swellendam land reports. Pieter du Preez in 1832 owned 39 slaves, 600 cows, as well as a large number of horses, oxen and sheep. While very few farmers could claim to rival Du Preez, there is only one reference to a "poor" farmer in the 106 land reports for the early thirties. The latter, Carel Lots, owned 150 sheep, 12 horses, 20 oxen and 15 cows. 18 The accounts of C.I. Latrobe, superintendent of the Moravian missions, who journeyed through the Overberg about a decade after Lichtenstein (that is in 1815/16), reveal that the refinement and orderly farmyard of the Du Preez family was by no means general. However, the necessities of life never appeared to be lacking. In the vicinity of Genadendal he had been to the farm of a widow, which was, "like most farms in this neighbourhood, an assemblage of mean houses and sheds". Latrobe also called at the farms of Piet and Cobus Du Preez where he found the substantial buildings, noble oaks and rich plantations to be "unlike most farmers' dwellings". 19 Latrobe had been surprised to find that the home of the renowned kommandant Jacobus Linde in the Rivieronderend valley was a "miserable cottage" with "homely furniture". 20 Yet Latrobe was well fed on the produce of the farm and noted:

...though custom has excluded attention to what Englishmen call the comforts, yet there seems to be no want of the necessaries of life, and no feeling of inconvenience attending the absence of neatness and elegance. 21

18. LBD 24 Swellendam Land Reports, Requests for Conversion to Quitrent, Pieter du Preez, 1 November 1832 and Carel Lots, 1 September 1831.
19. Latrobe, pp. 187, 188.
In the 1820s a shrewd observer from Holland, M.D. Teenstra, commented on the "considerable wealth" acquired by the farmers of the Overberg. He speaks of a farmer in the Caledon district with thirteen children as well as in-laws and grandchildren being fed from a "sumptuously laden table". The daughters, who were "beautifully dressed", attended to nothing and even had their children suckled by the female slaves. Teenstra noted however, a lack of economy in their farming operations and signs of laziness and carelessness. 22

A decade later, J.W.D. Moodie, while travelling to Genadendal, encountered a substantial, if not wealthy, farmer. He was one of those patriarchal characters so frequently to be met with throughout the colony, who so forcibly remind us of those described in Scripture, as possessing an extensive tract of land, with their children, children's children, bondsmen, and flocks of sheep and cattle. The whole country round him was occupied by his married sons, inhabiting as good houses as his own, and being as well supplied with cattle and everything which in the rude simplicity of their habits is considered essential to comfort. 23

Moodie was particularly impressed by the lack of ostentation that accompanied the wealth of the Overberg farmer. Jacobus Du Preez of the Vet River area "seemed to want nothing to complete his happiness" yet he was free from that "restless love of excitement and ambition of making a show of his wealth and consequence". Moodie noted too that there was a strong love of equality in the white community and that prosperity could be more evenly diffused. The poor had the facility to acquire independence while those who had accumulated riches retained the simplicity of their original habits. The money that in England would be squandered in

22. Teenstra, pp.320,344.
23. Moodie, p.73.
empty show and spurious hospitality, the Cape farmer expended in establishing his children in the world without regard to seniority.24

The observations of travellers cited above were all recorded before Merino breeding became general. The material well-being of the area is evident. By mid-century, a farmer with 1 000 wool-bearing sheep could expect an added income of between £156 and £180 per annum from his wool clip.25 By the fifties wealth was more evenly distributed for it was no longer only those who were close to the cattle road who had a ready market for their produce. All farmers who raised fine-woolled sheep had an equal chance of marketing their clip profitably. Although farm size varied from as little as 167 morgen to 3 800 morgen and more,26 there was nothing besides this to distinguish one Overberg farmer from the other. With only a few exceptions, ancestry and education were not dividing factors in Overberg society. There would undoubtedly have been discrepancies in the income of large and small landowners, but this did not produce a sharply stratified white society. The inflow of fluid capital into the Overberg from the sale of wool was considerable, yet a commendable "rude simplicity" and egalitarianism remained among the white agriculturists.

Perhaps the single most striking feature of the increasing prosperity of the Overberg was the lack of ostentation which accompanied it. Although the Swellendam district was

25. See above, p. 149.
26. See above, pp. 27, 28.
considered wealthy by 1859, the farms of the area showed very limited signs of wealth and comfort. There were some attractive homesteads along the Langeberg mountains with oak trees and rose gardens, but even towards the end of the century the homes of the ruggens (which made up a large part of the Overberg) were "uninteresting" clay buildings with thatched roofs that were seldom white-washed. Even in Swellendam which by 1864 had "some pretensions to gentility" the houses had a uniform barn-like appearance and lacked elegance. The residences impressed a traveller as being "good" and "substantial" but there was clearly nothing resplendent about their appearance. By the early 1860s, which ushered in a long cycle of drought, corrugated iron roofs were beginning to replace the thatch because of devastating fires. It was a source of regret that Swellendam, a picturesque village with its quiet-looking thatched roofs, might soon look as "sharp, cold, [and] clipped ....as a small manufacturing town".

The accommodation available to travellers in the villages increased in the period under consideration and fewer travellers appear to have been accommodated in farmers' homes. Accounts such as those of Lichtenstein and Latrobe describing farmers homes are not available for the wool boom period. One can only surmise that with the increase in expendable income and the increasing availability of manufactured items from Britain that the interiors of homes took on more of a semblance of the comforts familiar to

27. Overberg Courant, Letter, pseudonym, 26 October 1859.
28. Freeman, p.17.
29. Spilhaus, pp. 249, 250.
32. Freeman, p.17.
33. Overberg Courant, Editorial, 16 October 1861.
Europeans. The lists of the mercantile establishment at Port Beaufort show that there was a demand for glazed furniture prints, canteens and pewter plates. 34 Large quantities of chintz and linen were imported through Port Beaufort as well as considerable quantities of furniture and earthenware, all of which must have transformed the interiors of farm homes. 35 Window glass, which was not easily transported by road over the passes, also found its way to the Overberg via the Breede River 36 and began to replace the hole in the wall covered by wooden shutters observed by Latrobe. 37 The changes in dress of Overbergers were more apparent than changes to homes. Manufactured shoes and fabrics from Britain were readily available. The veldskoens that were still common in the twenties 38 had given way to "slops" and "patent tips" by the seventies. 39 The younger members of families were turning out in "fashionable attire" on their "sleek, prancing horses" 40 while the blue and brown stuff petticoats and bedgowns of former years 41 could be replaced with spotted muslins, lace and velvet and titivated with braid, veils and pearl buttons, all of which were available at the local store. 42 Barry's mercantile establishment at Port Beaufort had a regular demand for duffles, moleskin jackets, capes, socks, checked shirts, waistcoats, good shawls and silk gloves and neckerchiefs. 43 These items would have replaced the rough-and-ready homemade garments of earlier times.

34. Brosdy Museum, A91/1 Lists of Goods Required at Port Beaufort, 1845 - 1846.
35. CCT 176 Customs, Return of Goods Imported into Port Beaufort, 1843.
36. Ibid.
38. Teenstra, p.344.
41. Prins, "Aspekte van die Geskiedenis van die Westelike Overberg", p.255.
42. CSC 2/3/1/269, Civil Cases of Western Circuit, Summons, 5 March 1866.
43. Brosdy Museum, A 91/1 Lists of Goods Required at Port Beaufort, 1845 - 1846.
As the Overberg was a sheep and wheat producing area there is little wonder that mutton and bread continued to form the food staples of most people. A visitor to Caledon in the sixties found that all kinds of food were scarce with the exception of mutton and bread, which were both "good". The only vegetable that was consistently available was pumpkin. Farmers favoured a mutton *bredie* with pumpkin and red pepper and "as much sheep tail fat as the dish will hold". The lack of vegetables was attributed to "Dutch apathy" for it was claimed that even a walking stick would grow, given water.\(^44\) The lack of green vegetables was commonly noted by visiting Englishmen\(^45\) and the establishment at the hot springs in Caledon had to obtain greens from Hottentots Holland as they were not available locally.\(^46\) The only vegetables that were traded on the Caledon market in the 1840s were potatoes and peas and beans. The latter were almost certainly dried, as was the fruit offered on the market.\(^47\) Until economic progress and technology made it possible to provide irrigation, much of the Overberg with its winter rainfall had great difficulty in watering vegetables during the long, hot growing season. Rather than produce its own vegetables in the 1840s, the farm Zoetendals Valley which had access to an estuary, bartered harders and salt from the nearby pans for dried peas, beans and peaches from the *Bosjesveld* (the present Robertson, Montagu area).\(^48\) By the 1860s the farm journal gives evidence of an interest in growing a variety of vegetables and fruit. In 1863 fruit trees, water melons,

\(^44\) Duff Gordon, p.70.

\(^45\) G. Thompson, *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa*, p.15 and Moodie, p.68.


\(^47\) Milson, "History of Caledon", p. 98.

\(^48\) Van Breda Journals II, 1840 - 1944, pp.3,4.
onions and cabbages were planted\textsuperscript{49} and in 1871 450 cabbage plants were transplanted.\textsuperscript{50} This was more than the farm could use and by this stage Bredasdorp was probably providing a market for fresh vegetables. By 1884 vegetable-growing was receiving more attention and was improving all over the Colony. The Good Hope Agricultural Society had done much to encourage the use of European seed and this was producing "good fruits". This had been evident in the wide variety and good quality of the exhibits at the Swellendam Agricultural show in 1884.\textsuperscript{51} Tea, which was considered a luxury, had always been popular.\textsuperscript{52} While the staples of meat, bread and rice were costing between 2d and 4d per pound, tea, which was imported, was 4s 6d per pound.\textsuperscript{53} Little wonder that there was propaganda in favour of the local bush tea during the economic depression of the sixties. It was hoped that it would supersede the expensive and often "suspicious" article from China - it was considered more wholesome, nourishing and had a better flavour.\textsuperscript{54} The game which had once formed an important source of food, was, by the 1880s fast decreasing, although shooting parties still brought in snipe and wild duck.\textsuperscript{55} Although this source was declining, the variety of foodstuffs available to Overbergers would have become more varied by the 1870s because of the greater interest in vegetables. As sheep and wheat were locally produced, the consumption of meat and bread was unlikely to change, as was the "notoriously healthy" agricultural appetite. It was noted that the week-long agricultural show at Swellendam in 1884 was "one round

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p.22. \\
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p.48. \\
\textsuperscript{51} Murray, "Report of the Great Western Agricultural Society Exhibition, 1864", p.11. \\
\textsuperscript{52} Moodie, p.126. \\
\textsuperscript{53} CCP 9/3 Blue Book 1840, Prices at Swellendam p.286 and 1/CAL 5/1/2/4 Civil Commissioner Caledon to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1864. \\
\textsuperscript{54} Overberg Courant, Bush Tea, 22 March 1865. \\
\textsuperscript{55} Duff Gordon, p.69.
of eating and drinking". A waggon load of oysters brought up from Port Beaufort (the finest and best flavoured on the coast) was "soon disposed of". For agricultural producers, the Overberg remained a land of milk and honey.

The material change in a community is easier to assess than abstract concepts such as ethos and culture and yet these are real and influential forces in the history of an area. Assessments can only be made on those aspects of a culture which have left concrete records such as education, religion and recreation, all of which give some indication of the values and attitudes of a community. The material progression of the area, as well as the introduction of outside elements in the form of British immigrants undoubtedly made inroads into the traditional culture that had developed over more than a century.

At least some of the income derived from wool exports, both by the individual farmer and the Colony, could be expected to be channelled into education. The increase in government expenditure in this direction suggests a significant improvement between circa 1838 and 1872. Disbursements between 1845 and 1866 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Disbursement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>£3,612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>£8,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>£18,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>£17,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>£19,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866 (est.)</td>
<td>£22,278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57. CCP 1/2/2/1/13 Report of Select Committee on Retrenchment of Public Expenditure, 1866, p.viii.
Despite an average annual increase of about 22% on expenditure on education for the twenty years between 1845 and 1866, by the latter date a remarkably small percentage of children in the Overberg were receiving any formal education. The percentages, calculated from figures in the 1865 census are given below:

PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CALEDON, SWELLENDAM AND BREDASDORP DISTRICTS RECEIVING FORMAL EDUCATION IN 1865

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th>Coloureds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caledon</td>
<td>11.07%</td>
<td>20.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bredasdorp</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>46.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swellendam</td>
<td>13.26%</td>
<td>8.08% 58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School attendance throughout the Colony had increased considerably in the decade 1843 to 1853 from 5,000 to 23,500.58 This represents an increase of about 37% per year. There is no doubt that strides were being made in education, yet it was apparent that in predominantly rural areas such as the Overberg, the schooling system was catering for an insignificant number of children, particularly among the whites. The relatively high percentages of coloured children who were receiving education in the Caledon and Bredasdorp areas can be attributed to the presence of mission schools at Genadendal and Elim which were well attended.60

58. CCP 4/11/1 Census 1865, p.70.
60. See Backhouse, pp. 97, 99 and Krüger, pp. 177, 272.
The provision of government schooling underwent various changes between 1838 and 1872. The development of the education system had many ramifications and cannot be examined in detail here. Although schooling facilities had improved by 1872, there were still numerous shortcomings in the education system, particularly for the children of the predominantly Dutch-speaking farmers. Two primary precepts of government education policy prevented more rapid progress of education among the rural population. These were that English would remain the medium of instruction and that government aid would not be provided for country schools unless they could be attended by all races. Government policy aside, the greatest obstacle to the advance of education was considered to be the lack of interest from farming parents who themselves were illiterate. In the Caledon district in the sixties farmers sent their children to school at the age of about twelve for only one or two years. They only learnt to read and write and remained "grossly ignorant". The indifference of parents to education may not have been as widespread as intimated in certain sources. The superintendent-general of education believed that the problem was the scarcity of properly qualified teachers. In 1838 the Caledon area had between 40 and 50 private farm schools with "meesters" providing an elementary education. At about the same time Swellendam

61. For a detailed description of the development of education in the Caledon district see Wilson, "History of Caledon", Chapter Six.
64. CCP 1/2/2/1/10 Report of Select Committee on Education, 1863, Rev. A.G.M. Kuys, Napier, p.69 and CCP 9/33 Blue Book 1870, Civil Commissioner's Report Caledon, p.73 B.
district had 25 farm schools providing for 200 pupils. In 1848 a request was received from farmers in the Duiwenhoks River ward for assistance in providing an education for approximately 150 of their children — there was a "laudable anxiety" to have their offspring educated.

There can be little doubt that towards the close of the period under investigation only a small proportion of the rural population were receiving the sort of education considered adequate by the government. The superintendent-general reported in 1863 that of 61 aided schools that he had inspected, containing 3,305 scholars aged five to seventeen, only about 11% could read English with "tolerable accuracy" and another 10% "very inaccurately".

The extent of literacy, and particularly in the English language, remained limited in the rural Overberg. An official in the Swellendam district commented in 1850 that "Boers only write about a dozen letters during their life time". Years later it was still essential for circulars to the field cornets to be in Dutch as they understood little or no English even though Dr William Robertson (Dutch Reformed Church minister at Swellendam) claimed that by 1863 English had made "great progress" where he lived. There was a section of the population at Swellendam who were acknowledged to include English of a "superior class" as

68. CO 2847 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 29 July 1848.
70. CO 2867 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 2 March 1850.
71. 1/SMN 14/8 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 14 March 1863.
72. CCP 1/2/2/1/10 Report of Select Committee on Education, 1863, p.69.
well as Dutch farmers of "liberal education and polished manners".73 There were evidently sufficient people of this calibre to give Swellendam its air of "gentility" with a select number who were considered "the Society".74 Robertson believed that having this "higher tone" in the town was affecting the country all around to a considerable extent.75

William Robertson was a leading figure of the community who undoubtedly exerted a profound influence on the cultural advance of the Swellendam area. He was one of the teachers selected in Scotland in 1822 for the English Free Schools of Lord Charles Somerset. After initially settling in Clanwilliam, he was appointed minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Swellendam in 1833, a congregation which he served until 1872.76 Robertson wasted little time in establishing a church library (July 1834)77 and in 1836 a site was selected for the Swellendam Reading Society (renamed the Swellendam Literary Institute) which came into being under the inspiration of Robertson and F.W.Reitz.78 The names of the members who signed the early rules leave little doubt of the predominance of English interest in the library - White, Baker, Barry, Wylde, Kerr, Moodie, Reid, Taylor, Hopley, Jeppe, Scrutton, Gardner, Cardinal and Robertson. Apart from F.W. Reitz, the only colonial names were Muller and Jansen.79 The immediate influence of this society in the district was probably limited as the majority of farmers were

75. CCP 1/2/1/10 Report of Select Committee on Education, 1863, p.66.
76. Stopforth, p.121.
77. Ibid., pp. 90, 91.
78. CD 2818 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 30 September 1844 and Stopforth, p.92.
unlikely to have journeyed to the village for English lectures on poetry, botany or Mohammedanism. Country libraries did not generally receive a great deal of support, and even in Swellendam which was considered "rather intellectual" the library was in debt at the height of economic prosperity in 1859. In 1866 the Caledon library was reported to be in a "lingering state". The chief attraction at libraries had apparently been the availability of the "luxury" of a newspaper and when subscribers discovered that they had access to the newspaper without paying a fee, they ceased to pay a subscription.

The newspaper does indeed seem to have been a luxury in the Overberg. Thanks to the efforts of certain 1820 settlers, the South African Commercial Advertiser appeared in 1824 in Cape Town, and by December 1831 Grahamstown had its own Journal. The Eastern Province Herald (1845), the Port Elizabeth Telegraph (1848), the Graaff-Reinet Herald (1852) and the Cradock Register (1858) were all in circulation before the Overberg had its own newspaper. Only in 1859 did the Overberg Courant appear for the first time. Apart from De Bode, printed at Genadendal from 1860, the Courant was the only local newspaper in the Overberg and it lasted for a mere six years. The first issue appeared on 5 October 1859 and publication ceased when the building housing the press was destroyed in the great

80. S.A.C.A., Editorial, 29 September 1858 and 1/SWM 14/8 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Secretary of Swellendam Literary Institute, 6 August 1863.
82. Overberg Courant, Article, 19 October 1859.
84. 1/SWM 12/89 Extract from Report on Public Libraries, c.1887.
85. L.H. Neurant, Sixty Years Ago, pp. 5, 85, 86.
87. Raum, p.120.
fire of 1865.\textsuperscript{88} The \textit{Courant} printed material in both English and Dutch and evidently served a useful purpose in the circulation of official notices.\textsuperscript{88} Economic prosperity had undoubtedly increased the demand for newspapers\textsuperscript{90} but in the country there was a strong preference for issues in Dutch. In 1852 it was announced that a Dutch issue of the \textit{South African Commercial Advertiser} was to be printed and agents were wanted in sixteen areas throughout the Colony, including Swellendam and Caledon.\textsuperscript{91}

The objection to English in the Overberg appears to have been purely a result of an inability to understand it. Resistance to English was a natural phenomenon fostered by isolation and the limited interaction with English elements, either through commerce or intellectual and cultural pursuits. The Dutch language was reputed to have reached an all time low by the early sixties\textsuperscript{92} but there was little evidence that it would ever be superseded by English in the Overberg. In the period under consideration the cultural independence of the Overberg agriculturists had little if any connection with political animosity to British influence. It was only after 1868, and therefore largely out of the realms of this study, that British annexationist policy aroused feelings of national awareness among the Dutch-speaking elements throughout the Colony.\textsuperscript{93}

In all cultural aspects, British influence in the Overberg was minimal. But a subtle change that accompanied the increasing material well-being of the Colony was a growing

\textsuperscript{88} 1/SWM 14/9 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 26 January 1866.
\textsuperscript{89} 1/SWM 14/9 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 10 November 1866.
\textsuperscript{90} Overberg Courant, Editorial, 5 October 1859.
\textsuperscript{91} S.A.C.A., Advertisement, 15 May 1852.
\textsuperscript{92} Scholtz, p.154.
emphasis on leisure-time and recreation. In the commercial world in the late forties, Christmas was not considered a yearly season of recreation. The December issues of the Commercial Advertiser in 1848 and 1849 made no mention of Christmas whatever. By the fifties small advertisements for Christmas fare and gifts were appearing and by the mid-sixties a great deal more emphasis was being placed on Christmas and holidays. By the 1870s there was an agitation among clerks and employees for a Saturday half-holiday and an annual holiday season. In the early nineteenth century, Christmas and New Year were not considered cause for celebration in the European style. Celebrations had coincided, rather, with some long and tiring farm practice such as harvest. By the 1860s, however, Christmas and New Year had become a time for "highjinks" with dances accompanied by boisterous revelry. Church bazaars had also become the mode. These occasions were accompanied by much merrymaking which raised earnest objections from persons who clearly preferred the old-fashioned manner of raising money which was "dry, dull and exclusive".

Swellendam had a cricket club by 1870, and Caledon an archery club in 1866, but the only social diversion which took the imagination of the Overberg in the period under study was horse-racing. It was reported in the forties that all the towns and villages in the Colony had races. Racing clubs were started at Paarl in 1815, Uitenhage and Stellenbosch in 1816, Graaff-Reinet in 1821, Grahamstown in

95. Ibid., Editorial, 24 December 1870.
97. Duff Gordon, p.75.
98. Overberg Courant, Editorial, 29 January 1862.
99. Cape Argus, Robertson, 6 December 1870.
1823, Somerset East in 1825 and George in 1827. According to H.A. Wyndham, the Swellendam Turf Club was formed in 1825. It was definitely in existence by 1839 for the Government Gazette reported the cessation of races in that year because of the prevailing horse-sickness although the minute book at the Drosdy Museum only dates from 1848. In the Riversdale district in 1845, three non-British residents requested ground for use as a race-course. By 1864 the Swellendam course was considered the best in the Colony and the races held in conjunction with the agricultural exhibition of that year attracted 200 vehicles and 5,000 visitors. The Club still had 40 members in 1864, but the depression and drought clearly placed a severe strain on its activities. There are no minutes between 1864 and 1872.

The social and cultural aspects of the Overberg milieu showed little measurable change between 1836 and 1872. There was, however, a facet of the milieu in which considerable change occurred, change which transformed the Overberg into a leading and prestigious agricultural area which aroused envy from far afield. The catalytic effect of a few leading colonial and immigrant farmers on a receptive agricultural population elevated the Overberg to an area producing the finest wools in the Colony. Free from frontier turmoils and relatively free from climatic vagaries, the Overberg farmer held the privileged position of being able to pursue agricultural improvement which called for little more than personal initiative.

103. Ibid., p.39.
105. Drosdy Museum A 51, Minutes of Swellendam Turf Club, 1848 - 1904
106. 1/SWN 11/45 Theunissen, Basson and De Villiers to Civil Commissioner Swellendam, 7 February 1845.

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A moving spirit in the agricultural world in the early thirties was Michiel van Breda who formed the Cape of Good Hope Agricultural Society in 1831. Sources differ on the year in which the Swellendam society was formed, but it seems most likely that it was established in 1832 by F.W. Reitz. The lead of the Eastern Cape in this field was followed somewhat more rapidly than in the literary field. Somerset (East) had a society by 1828, Uitenhage by 1827 and Graaff-Reinet by 1832. The Cape Society played an important role in encouraging better wool production. From 1836 a silver cup was awarded for the best 100 pound sample of colonial wool. The cup was won regularly by Michiel van Breda and his son Dirk Gysbert, the trophy finally becoming their property in 1846, their having won it for three years in succession. As the Van Bredas farmed in the Overberg, their successes would have encouraged emulation.

The Caledon Agricultural Society was formed in 1843 and there can be little doubt that it owed much to T.B.Bayley who had recently bought land in the district and resided at The Oaks from 1844 to 1856. Through his own private enterprise and his involvement with agricultural societies he helped to raise the rude colonial husbandry to the

110. Zuid Afrikanersche Tijdschrift, March - April, 1832, cited in Burrows, Overberg Outspan, p.120.
111. P. van Breda in his article in Contree, No. 14 July 1983, gives the date as 1842.
114. Thom, pp. 81, 82.
115. See above, p.42.
importance of a profession and the dignity of a science”. However, despite the early efforts of the Caledon and Swellendam societies, F.W. Reitz believed by 1857 that a great deal more could be achieved. Small societies offering only £30 to £40 in prizes were not likely to effect much. He proposed that a paid secretary be appointed and that shows be held in four different and widely-separated parts of the Colony, coming round to each at the end of every fourth year. At such shows the value of the stock and produce shown, as well as the congregation of farmers was likely to be much greater. It is a measure of Reitz's influence that his ideas were put into practice. At a meeting of delegates of the agricultural societies in the Commercial Exchange on 17 May 1859, a draft plan and regulations were drawn up by which the various societies throughout the Colony "might be best enabled to combine for the purpose of encouraging improvements in agriculture and the rearing of livestock". Such a union would facilitate the holding of large exhibitions. Two highly successful exhibitions were held in the Overberg - the first in Caledon in 1859 and the fourth in Swellendam in 1864. (The interim shows were held at Worcester and George). The exhibitions had a wide coverage in the press and their influence on the agricultural population was incalculable for it exposed them to new ideas - better breeds of stock, progressive methods and the most recent imports of farming equipment. The Commercial Advertiser reported that the show at Caledon had

117. Cape Argus, Obituary, 2 January 1872.
118. Reitz, Cape Agriculture in Two Lectures, pp.40, 41.
119. CO 748 Sundry Committees, Agricultural Societies, c. 17 May 1859.
120. See Cape Argus, Report on the Grand Exhibition at Caledon, 29 November and 3 December 1859 and Murray, "Report of the Cape of Good Hope Agricultural Society Exhibition, 1864".
"surpassed all expectations" - especially the fine-woolled sheep. Great spirit had been shown by the once "apathetic Cape Boers". It was also reported that agricultural societies were advancing in public opinion, agriculture was "by no means stagnant" - the fine-woolled sheep had supplanted the inferior breeds by millions, and improved ploughs, threshing and winnowing machines were gaining way among the farmers. It is significant that the Swellendam area could hold a successful exhibition in the mid-sixties when most other parts of the Colony were suffering severe drought.

The stable environment of the Overberg and the initiative of agricultural societies in the south-western Cape were viewed with envy by other parts of the Colony and by the more recently settled Boer republics. A correspondent of The Friend claimed that the attitude of Free State farmers towards agriculture was "shocking" - even the Volksraad of which 40 out of 55 members were farmers, did nothing to encourage agriculture. In the Eastern Cape, where there was perhaps more capital and initiative, settlers such as George Nicholson were sadly disillusioned by the prospects offered in that part of the Colony. Droughts, locusts and hail in the Graaff-Reinet district had led him to conclude that no one could realize a large income from farming. He viewed with envy the Swellendam district where there were extensive tracts fit for the plough and where rust [in grain] was less destructive than farther eastward. He reckoned this area to be "the best district in the Colony for a settler to locate with a view to profit if he had sufficient capital".

122. Ibid., Editorial, 22 September 1858.
Nicholson unwittingly identified the nature of the immigrant farmers of the Overberg of the wool boom period. They came with profit in mind and considerable capital was required to purchase into the long-settled area. They did not come as permanent settlers. Once the wool boom had peaked and recession and drought set in, these farmers either retired or followed other pursuits. By 1865 names such as Bayley, Taylor, Carruthers, Morris, Dutton, Buchanan and Rainier were no longer part of the farming community. It is a matter for speculation why the Moodies and Barrys, also immigrants from Britain, remained in the Overberg and were assimilated by the local population. Both Benjamin Moodie and Joseph Barry arrived in the Colony before the anglicization and philanthropy of the twenties. It is possible that the climate for assimilation was a great deal more fluid in the first decade of permanent British occupation. By 1828, with the abandonment of traditional Dutch institutions and the passing of the philanthropic Ordinance 50, a certain amount of anti-British feeling appeared, especially in the country districts. By mid-century, even though the Overberg manifested little overt anti-British feeling, the resistant cultural traits had probably manifested themselves to the extent that immigrants of British descent found it difficult to acclimatize to the rural Overberg.

Nurtured in comparative isolation and material well-being, the white farmers of the Overberg emerged as a distinctive and elite group of agriculturists. Like all people reared in isolation, they became self-reliant and independent. But

125. Overberg Courant, Caledon, 27 March 1861.
126. See above, pp. 42 - 44.
127. Le Cordeur, p.54.
in contrast to the agriculturists of the interior where a dogged opposition to modernity developed from the instinct of self-preservation, the Overberger mellowed and became more receptive to progressive change. In contrast to the group of Swellendam revolutionaries who had confronted the British authorities during their first occupation, by 1870 the agricultural population showed a "great reverence for law and yielded a willing obedience to it". Unlike the British immigrants, Overberg farmers during the drought of the sixties showed patience and endurance. They tended to be slow to appreciate any novelty and leaders of the community such as Dr Robertson and the civil commissioners found that they did not recognize leaders among themselves and were not much accustomed to "act in concert". For much of the period under study the area failed to produce suitable candidates for the office of justice of the peace and immigrants such as T.B. Bayley, Major W. Shaw, and H. Vigne were elected to these posts. Men such as F.W. Reitz, who rose to prominence, was exceptional, and he was considered by conservative Afrikaners to be a "detribalized colonial Dutchman". Although the majority of Overberg farmers formed part of a socially egalitarian group, there were a few families who retained a sense of superiority and who through ancestry, education or through the possession of land in or near to Cape Town, maintained a greater contact with the outside world and who were necessarily well acquainted with the English language. Reitz could claim to belong to this group which included families such as those of the Van

128. See Wallace, p.399.
130. S.A.C.A., Swellendam, Extract from Letter, 2 December 1865.
132. 1/SWM 11/20, Government Surveyor to Tinley, 25 August 1873 and CCP 1/2/2/1/10 Select Reports on Education 1863, p.74.
133. Burrows, Overberg Outspan, pp. 121, 124, 128.
Reenens, Cloetes, Van der Bijls, Denyssons and Van Bredas. The mercantile Barrys, Joseph and his two nephews, through marriage to grandchildren of Dirk Gysbert van Reenen, an "aristocrat" of the Cape Dutch community, became part of this group.134 Together with a number of British immigrants such as Dr Robertson and the Moodie family, this small group provided a disproportionately large number of social and political leaders for the Overberg. The Barry family in particular appears to have achieved an extraordinarily strong hold over a large part of the Overberg. E.H. Burrows describes their power as almost "feudal", with a political ascendency that derived from their economic monopoly in the Overberg.135 Although the term landed gentry has been avoided in this work, the group referred to above no doubt answered to this description by 1838. By 1872, with the wealth that wool brought to the area, there were undoubtedly a great deal more Overberg landowners whose position as gentlemen farmers approximated that of the landed gentry of the more established farming areas nearer to Cape Town.

The growing production of and trade in wool did not lead to the founding of any new towns of significance in the Overberg. Swellendam, Caledon, Bredasdorp and Napier were all in existence by the beginning of the period under study. Although the prosperity of the wool boom was undoubtedly reflected in the growth of these towns, none of them became important commercial or entrepôt centres. Town growth received a severe check during the depression of the sixties. The villages never recovered from the stagnation of this period for by the time prosperity returned to the colony in the early 1870s, diamonds had proved a stable and profitable mining venture. Routes of communication and commercial activity shifted focus and the geographical isolation of the Overberg was accentuated. Villages such as Greyton, Stanford

and Malagas, whose existence was directly related to the growth of the wool trade and speculation encouraged by inflated land prices, faded into insignificance.

The absence of large tracts of unoccupied land, which prevented large-scale speculation, the limited number of British immigrants with a "feverish thirst for rapid gains"\(^{136}\) and the cautious approach of the Overberg farmer to credit had a stabilising effect on the economy of the area. The wealth generated by wool did not reveal itself in ostentation or in reckless borrowing. The banking concept was slow in finding favour among Overberg agriculturists and the banking capital available in the area was significantly less than in the Eastern Cape.\(^{137}\) The stability of Overberg banks and a sagacious approach to credit are revealed in the ability of the Swellendam and Caledon financial institutions to withstand the devastating depression of the sixties. Sound farming practices and the production of a superior product without having overcapitalised on their ventures, enabled the Overberg farmers to maintain a realistic balance between capital and production. Not all parts of the Overberg were equally fortunate, however, and risky ventures and excessive credit resembling the Eastern Cape do appear to have occurred in areas where rainfall was less reliable. The result was that by the end of the period under study the practice of mortgaging farm land was common, particularly in the Swellendam district. As a whole, the Overberg, with its relatively stable farming conditions and its concentration on superior quality wools, proved its ability to withstand one of the most severe depressions in history.

It was fortunate for the Overberg that it had a product with

\(^{136}\) See above p.192.

\(^{137}\) See above p.195.
a reasonably consistent world demand. As local markets for food shifted to the interior with the development in mining, the Overberg was placed at an even greater disadvantage as a competitor in this field. Although the mineral era tended to place a "freeze" on the Overberg, the agriculturists were secure in their prosperity, being the benefactors of the silent rural revolution.

Coloured labour played an important role in the rural economy and despite complaints from employers, agricultural production could not have advanced as it did if the labour force was deficient and ineffective. The coloureds were the product of a complex mixture of Khoi herders, servile slaves, dominating whites and free blacks. They were caught between the traditions of a simple herding society and an increasingly capitalistic and materialistic white society. Unable to retain land in the face of the advance of a stronger society with land owning traditions, they were proletarianized and became dependent either on the mission institutions or on farmers for a place of abode. After emancipation a certain amount of provision was made to house coloureds in or around the villages, but this was inadequate. As a result the mission stations became overcrowded and the benevolent paternalism of the missionaries was abused.

It would appear that the standard of living of the agricultural labourer did not undergo any noteworthy change in the period circa 1838 to 1872. Paternalism persisted and farm workers in the Overberg continued to be supplied with food and lodging in part payment for service. Their position compared favourably, however, with coloureds employed by government whose salaries had to keep pace with a sharp rise in the cost of food. It must be conceded, however, that a paternalistic dependence on employers restricts independence and freedom of movement. While there was a labour shortage the system was open to exploitation for farmers could resort to malpractices to retain their labourers.
There were clearly vast differences in the living conditions of coloureds, even on one mission station. A civil commissioner at Caledon in the sixties stated that the coloureds were accustomed to a state of poverty - "they were always poor". And yet it was reported in 1862 that there were 400 "good" homes in Genadendal and that the cleanliness of certain Genadendalers was superior to that of French and English peasants. The superintendent of the Moravian mission stations maintained that the homes of many coloureds compared favourably with those of the farmers of the district. He stated:

Whosoever will take the trouble of comparing the houses of the Genadendal people with those of the poorer farmers of this and other districts, will find that there are many by no means inferior, but even better, and, what regards neatness, cleanliness, and comfort, superior than (sic) many of them.

There had undoubtedly been an improvement in the living conditions of many Genadendal residents for it had been noted in 1820 that they were living in "hundreds of miserable little huts". Conditions at Zuurbraak did not appear to be as favourable. Although a visitor to the institution in 1850 commented that its inhabitants were in far better condition than the peasantry of England in the days of Elizabeth or the peasantry of Ireland at that time, and that they were on the way to a "higher civilization", some
twenty years later a section of the Zuurbraak population created a poor impression. They had a "squalid mode of life, which only very few .... had any ambition to improve". It was admitted in 1870 that there was "doubtless a great deal of distress" at Zuurbraak, but this was attributed to indolence.\textsuperscript{144} The resident missionary believed that the great majority were quite capable of paying the house tax that was initiated in 1870.\textsuperscript{145} The improved situation at Genadendal suggests that many coloureds responded to the paternalistic guidance of their Moravian guardians. There was a great need among the coloureds for mentors who could inculcate the positive aspects of western society and help them to avoid exploitation.

Immigrant white labour found little favour among the Dutch agriculturists of the Overberg. It was only the British immigrant farmers who made use of this source of labour. The original white settlers had established a position of dominance over the indigenous labourers, a situation which they were unlikely to forego in favour of a labour force that differed in language and customs.

Although race distinction remained, the animosity between white and coloured in the Overberg was less marked than in the Eastern Cape. The rancour produced by the Kat River rebellion which followed upon the frontier war of 1850 elicited no more than rumours and a grossly exaggerated feeling of uneasiness in the Overberg. Dominance and subservience exist in all societies. There is reason to believe that there was a large measure of compatibility among

\textsuperscript{144.} 1/SM 14/10 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 16 August 1870 and 19 October 1870; and Petition signed by Daan Prins, et. al., 15 August 1870.

\textsuperscript{145.} 1/SM 14/10 Civil Commissioner Swellendam to Colonial Secretary, 26 August 1870.
white agriculturists and coloured predial labour. There is, however, no denying a growing economic gap between landowners and labour between 1838 and 1872.

The marked difference in wealth between large landowners such as the Du Preez family and small farmers 146 that existed at the start of the period under study had declined considerably by 1872. By this date there was a more equal distribution of wealth brought about by the conversion to wool sheep. Landowners like the Du Preezes had been able to benefit from proximity to the "great cattle road" to the interior, whereas more remotely situated farmers had been without a profitable market for their stock and grain. Once a farmer had a wool clip he could be assured of a consistent income. In addition to the more equal distribution of wealth, there was a strong love of equality among the white farmers. The poor had the facility to acquire independence while those who had accumulated riches retained simple habits.147 Rural white society was not sharply stratified - with a few exceptions, ancestry and education were not dividing factors.

Inability to articulate fluently in English, and inexperience in colonial politics, both of which were largely due to geographic and economic isolation, produced political inertia. This was aggravated by the lack of representative, democratic institutions which persisted for the platteland until the granting of divisional roads boards in 1843. While Overberg farmers continued to be quasi-subsistence with little to gain from a market connection, their interest in colonial politics remained limited. The turmoils of a frontier society were unknown. There were few major political crises that aroused the interest of Overberg farmers, and none that had a direct bearing on their daily

146. See above p. 278.
147. See above pp. 278, 279.
The agitation for a representative government that gained momentum during the anti-convict crisis undoubtedly created a greater political awareness in the Overberg, as did Governor Smith’s unpopular policy in Trans-Orangia. The activities of the Swellendammer, F.W. Reitz, in championing a liberal constitution could hardly have gone unnoticed by even the remotest and most disinterested of farmers. An anomalous development during the struggle for a representative government was the emergence of differing attitudes to the liberal franchise in the Swellendam and Caledon districts. While Swellendam supported Reitz and Fairbairn in favouring a low qualification which would enfranchise most coloureds, Caledon adopted a conservative view, supporting a policy which would exclude the coloured population. In the Swellendam district the majority of white farmers clearly had confidence in the wisdom of Reitz’s views and the leading role which he played in these years undoubtedly had a profound influence on the opinion of the district. The prime mover of political opinion, and certainly the most vocal, in the Caledon district at that time was T.B. Bayley. He was supported by other conservatives such as William Shaw who did not join the anti-convict agitation. As in the agricultural world, T.B. Bayley also exerted a disproportionate weight in politics. His voice, with perhaps a minority of followers, was the voice that was heard. The inarticulate Dutch-speaking majority, inexperienced in politics and without a capable representative to express their views, went unheard. Thus whether the majority of white Caledon farmers supported a high, non-liberal franchise, is difficult to ascertain. After parliamentary institutions had been functioning for about a decade, however, the white Caledon farmers, even if they supported votes for coloureds, had become decidedly disenchanted with the effects of coloured enfranchisement. Malpractices at Genadendal in particular secured the election of unsuitable candidates. As the issue of responsible
government drew closer, the white Caledon electorate became aware of the importance of exercising their votes to ensure that conservative carpet-baggers did not succeed in canvassing the 25% of the electorate that resided at Genadendal.

The liberal tradition was not as broadly diffused as leaders such as Reitz and Fairbairn may have desired. The education which stimulated liberal thought did not penetrate to remote rural areas with limited schooling facilities. The old relationships between master and servant remained relatively unaffected. Political liberalism in the rural Overberg was thus by no means synonymous with social equality between white and coloured. P. Lewsen comes closest to defining the situation when she says that support for the political equality of the coloured was

\[\text{...inescapably linked with the white man's belief in his superiority, but this attitude was also linked ...with a genuine desire to give others the opportunity to rise,.... and to grant them when they did, the rights of civilized men...}^{148} \]

The increased political activity in the Overberg, which was stimulated by the granting of new constitutions, was closely allied to the advance in the material prosperity of the area. By the end of the fifties, thanks to the income from wool, Overberg farmers were among the most wealthy in the Colony. Policies that were likely to be inimical to their material interests were sure to arouse opposition. In the sixties the Colony entered a period of unparalleled depression and drought, emphasized all the more by three preceding decades of unparalleled prosperity. Wool producers, already affected

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148. Lewsen, p.78.
by a drop in the world price of wool, were threatened by a tax on their main income to boost colonial revenue. Nothing could have been better calculated to arouse the ire of Overberg agriculturists. They began to appreciate the necessity of defending, rather than complacently accepting, the manifold advantages conferred on them by being members of an elite and privileged agricultural society. Material betterment and an enhanced self-image fostered political awareness and an embryonic national consciousness.

Since the 1830s, rural Overberg society has been intimately intertwined with the production of wool-bearing sheep. Until the end of the nineteenth century wool remained the major income for Overberg farmers. The large-scale cultivation of wheat, which transformed the landscape into vistas of cultivated grainlands, was a development of the twentieth century, following upon the completion of the railway over Sir Lowry’s Pass. But in spite of the swing to cultivation, which was partly an unnatural development fostered by government subsidy, the Overberg continues to flourish on the foundation laid by the golden fleece.
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1/2/2/1/1 On Granting Land in Freehold to Hottentots 1854
1/2/2/1/2 On Railways 1855
1/2/2/1/3 On Immigration 1856
On Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots 1856
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