

hopefield

#Weskus

Skull: ©Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism.



scenes around the town



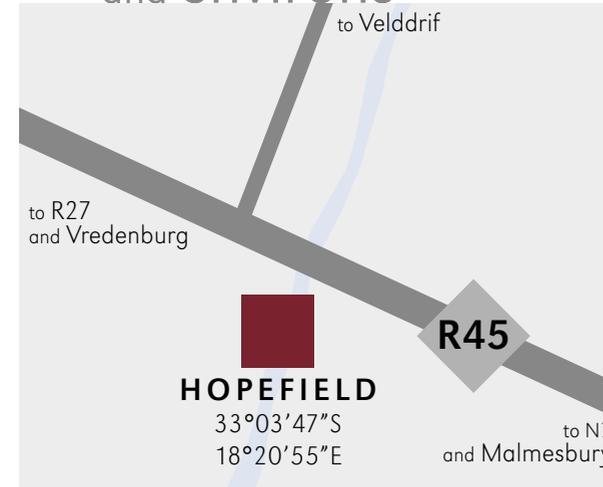
Source: unknown.



Source: unknown.



map of hopefield and environs



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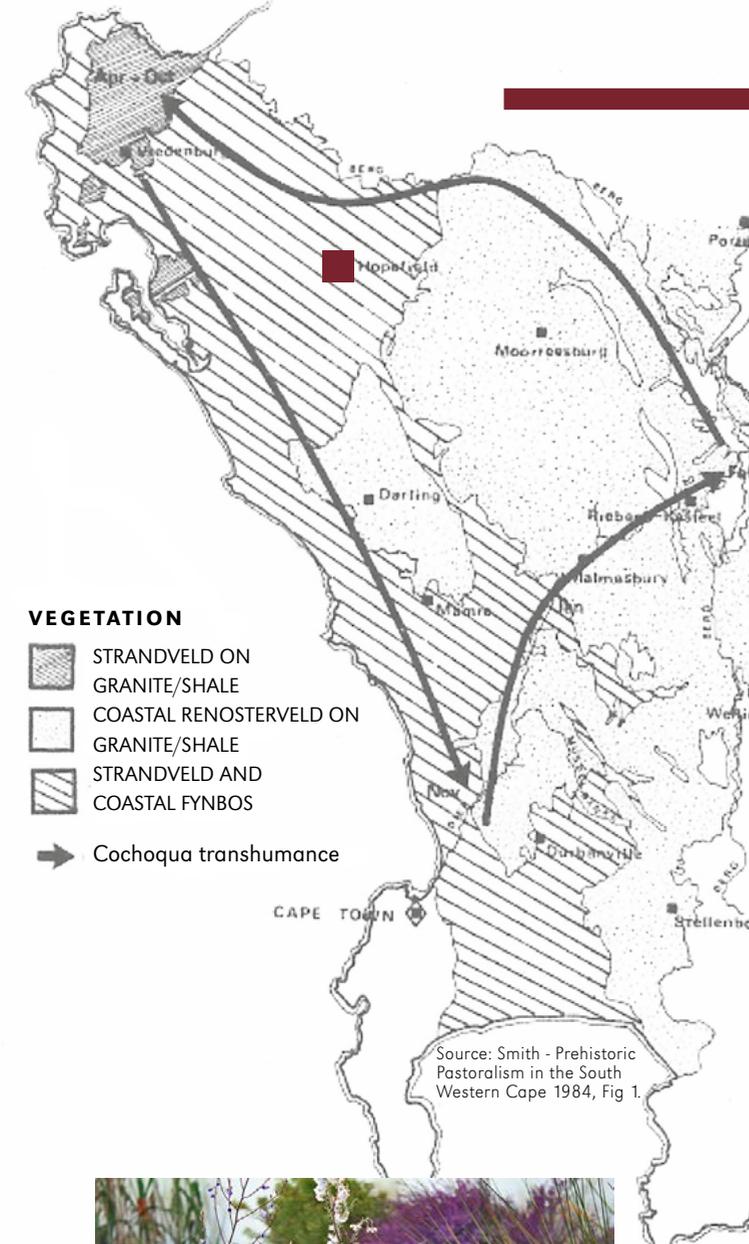
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an historical adventure



Source: Smith - Prehistoric Pastoralism in the South Western Cape 1984, Fig 1.

VEGETATION

- STRANDVELD ON GRANITE/SHALE
- COASTAL RENOSTERVELD ON GRANITE/SHALE
- STRANDVELD AND COASTAL FYNBOS
- Cochoqua transhumance



Hopefield and the surrounding area is redolent with history.

Fossil skeletons of long extinct species, such as short-neck giraffes, African bears, sabre teeth cats and others were discovered on the site of a now defunct mine. The area is thought to have been part of the estuary of the Berg River, and the animals

were deposited in the floodplain, only to be revealed some five million years later.



Today the **West Coast Fossil Park**

hosts these fantastic remains which are able to be viewed at the newly constructed museum.

Human evidence in the form of what was called Saldanha Skull (see cover), from the earlier stone age*, was uncovered on the nearby on the farm **Elandsfontein**.

During the early 18th century Europeans were expanding into the interior, beyond the confines of the original Cape 'borders'. The presence of the **San** and **Khoekhoe** was a deterrent too, so the choice was, in the 1720s to 1730s, to turn west towards the Sandveld.

The sandy, undulating plains were still a daunting prospect, but nearly three hundred years of intense grazing and cultivation have left a land that once supported game, elephant, rhinoceros, and vleis teaming in fish, birds and hippopotami severely depleted.



The colonial intruders also interrupted a relationship between the San and Khoekhoe that had existed for something like 1,500 years. Naturally periods of conflict

*Approx 2.5m - 250,000 years ago.

ensued, until the indigenes were finally subdued in 1739.

A very early record of grazing in the area was at



Coenradenburg, to a Burgert Pietersz van Dyk in 1712. The farm ultimately was granted to Pieter Smit in 1749, and has remained in the family ever since.

Another important farm complex is that of **Kersefontein**, and although a grant to Martin Melck in 1770, it was no doubt a loan-place for quite some time before. The farm is still owned by a descendent of the first Melck.

The establishment of Hopefield itself was in 1852 on the farm **Langekuil**,



and initially known as *Zoute Rivier*. It was, however, soon renamed after Major William Hope (auditor-general) and Mr Field (surveyor) who helped establish the town.

The local church congregation was first under *Het Zwartland* (Malmesbury), but became independent in 1851. Services were held on farms until capital could be raised



and a church was completed in 1879, and much enlarged in 1911.

Before the new West Coast Road was built the road to Saldanha was through Hopefield, although the first bridge across the river was only completed in 1945. Business was good and the town developed but Hopefield was bypassed when a new road was completed; businesses started stagnating and closing down.



Source: unknown



A rail link from Cape Town to Saldanha Bay also passed through the town, with the first passenger train stopping in 1903.

A notable style of architecture was seen here, that of the *hartebeeshuis* (*hardebiesieshuis*), which remained until the late 1970s. These homes made up an area called *Oudekraalfontein*, overlooking the Salt River, but were demolished to make way for a sports field. A replica house was built in 1985 and today is located in the grounds of the public library.



Source: Cape archives, Ravenscroft c1915, R1329.

Source: VASSA Journal No 23 June 2010.



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