

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE RIEBEEK VALLEY

There is evidence to suggest that peoples of the Earlier, Middle and Later Stone Ages existed in the area of the Riebeek Valley. The tools uncovered, however, are mostly from very disturbed agricultural sites which makes it difficult to establish the location of exact sequences.

The San were the original modern human occupants, known by various names such as *Sonqua*, and remembered in the Berg River farm, *Sonquasdrift*. The San were nomadic, hunter-gatherers.

It is estimated that from around 2 000 years ago the Khoekhoen made an appearance in what is now the Western Cape, with a route from the Kalahari. These people were pastoralists, driving their cattle and sheep according to the seasons.

Mostly co-existing there was some conflict over territory when the herds and flocks were moved into traditional hunting grounds, and the domesticated animals were sometimes taken as easy prey.



THE STONE AGES

Earlier Stone Age: 3/2.5m - 250,000 years ago

Evidenced by large, bifacial (roughly flaked on both surfaces) artefacts. Homo habilis and homo erectus were the main hominid species in existence.

Middle Stone Age: 250,000 - between 30,000 and 22,000 years ago. Skillfully prepared tools producing regular triangular or parallel-sided flakes.

Later Stone Age: from about 22,000 years ago. Smaller tools, sometimes bone or ivory, became evident along with blades for knives or arrowheads. Burials and rock art made an appearance during this phase.



Top: An example of a San painting found near Riebeek West.

Bottom: A Khoekhoe painting close to the summit of Kasteelberg.

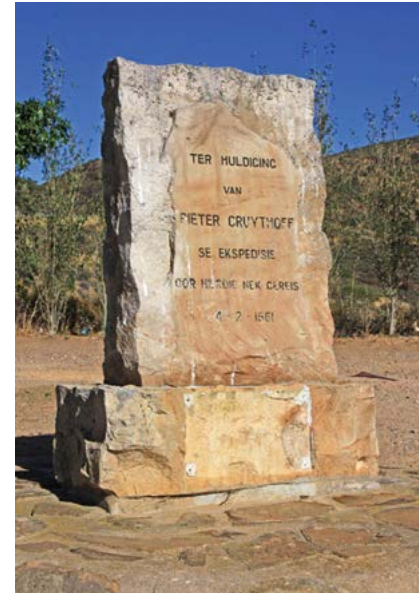
European seafarers regularly passed the Cape of Storms from the late 15th century, seeking to establish trade routes to the east. Eventually a settlement was established by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) under the command of Jan van Riebeeck, in 1652.



Before he left the Cape he ordered a number of expeditions to the interior, some seeking to trade with the Khoekhoen, one in particular to seek a famed city of gold, called *Monomotapa* (which was never found). Led by Pieter Cruythoff and seconded by Pieter van Meerhoff they arrived in the vicinity on 4 February 1661.

Describing abundant wildlife, including being harassed by lions, they observed that the area was ripe for agriculture, before naming the mountain in honour of the commander, *Riebeeck's Casteel*.

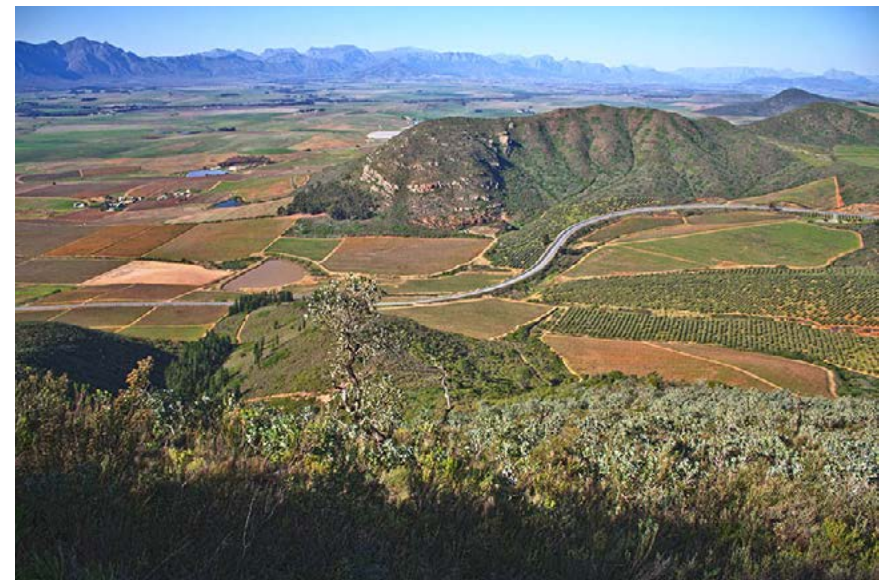
By the end of the century hunting and grazing licences had been granted and the Riebeek Valley was changing. After a visit to the region by Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel, a number of farms were granted in 1704: Goedgedacht, Kloovenburg, Allesverloren and Vleesbank.



The Pieter Cruythoff Memorial on Botmaskloof Pass, now at the Riebeek Valley Museum.



Wines commemorating Pieter Cruythoff and Pieter van Meerhoff(f).



The modern Botmaskloof Pass over which the first European explorers made their way beyond Kasteelberg.

Like many other settlements in the Western Cape the growing population led to the need for the creation of villages, centred around a church. Somewhat unusually a dispute amongst the community created an environment for the establishment of two congregations within a short distance of one another.

The *Moederkerk* in Malmesbury granted the dispensation so leading to the creation of Riebeek West and Riebeek Kasteel.

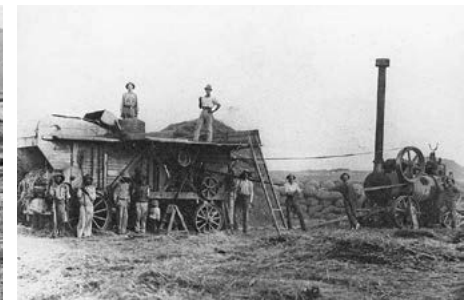
Hermion only came into existence with the advent of a railway line in 1873, creating a focal point for local farmers to despatch their produce. The village was at one time thriving, but when the line was extended into the Valley it stagnated.



The Dutch Reformed Church in Riebeek Kasteel which replaced the earlier one.



Agriculture became the economic backbone of the area, at first concentrated on wheat, and tobacco which has largely disappeared; latterly viticulture, soft fruits and olives have been added.



The late 19th and 20th centuries were notable in the Valley for being the birthplace of JC Smuts (*Bovenplaats*) and DF Malan (*Allesverloren*), both leaving an indelible mark on South Africa and the world for different reasons.

Dutch Reformed mission stations were also established, in Hermon and Riebeek Kasteel.

The Riebeek Valley was not to escape the ravages of apartheid, however, and one was the forced removals in 1965 of people living in a part of Riebeek Kasteel called *Oukloof*. The hurt felt by this escapade is still being felt today and a process commenced in order to try and heal the wounds.

Ref: **www.oukloof.riebeeklegacy.org**

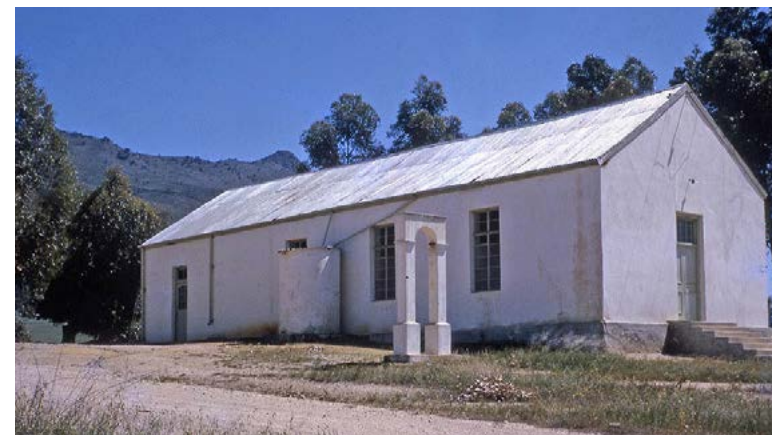
Smuts sitting on an outcrop overlooking the Riebeek Valley.



Left: Bovenplaats (also known as Ongegund), birthplace of JC Smuts. Right: Allesverloren, where DF Malan was born.



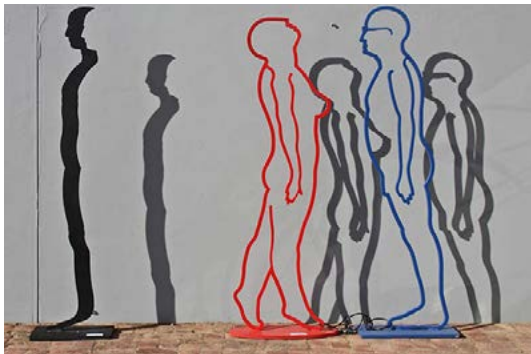
A section of Hermon mission village – the buildings have since been renovated.



The mission church in Riebeek Kasteel which was demolished during the forced removals.

Towards the end of the 20th century and continuing to this day a new wave of residents moved to the Riebeeek Valley, bringing with them numerous skills, creative abilities, entrepreneurship, resulting in a change in the atmosphere and economic structure.

Around the existing hotels new guesthouses, retail outlets, supermarkets, art galleries and restaurants made their appearances, along with increased support, such as medical. Structures were renovated to accommodate these businesses and residents, and new ones were built, notably the attractive Short Street.



Examples of visible legacies of the past are three items commemorating the Great Trek in 1938; on the square in Riebeek Kasteel, a cement ox created by local Christoffel Basson. A further example is a cannon, used to indicate the arrival of ships in Table Bay, brought down from the farm Swartdam in the same year. And lastly an ox wagon on the old market square in Riebeek West.



Commemorative memorials to the Great Trek, and the warning cannon.

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