

## **Short History Article prepared for the visit of the VOC society to the Tygerberg.**

### **Where was Simon van der Stel's sheep kraal?**

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#### **Why was the Tygerberg important to the VOC?**

The Tygerberg region was where the first large free burgher (vryburger) expansion took place after the Liesbeeck Valley. This expansion was of significant historical importance as related to the supply of wheat, meat and wine to ships, the beginning of rural development, the occupation of land and the impact on the Cape Koina.

Within a year of settlement the company (VOC) set out exploring and supporting meat-procuring parties. One of these, as recorded in Van Riebeeck's diary for 1657 (Dagregister), records Abrahams Gabbema journey passing through "de Lupaertsberg". Lupaertsberg (or Luipaertsberg) later became Tygerberg - a story for another day. Several other journeys passing through the Tygerberg followed: Jan Danchert 1660, Pieter Cruythoff 1661, Pieter Meerhof- 1661.

It took some time after allocating land to the free burghers next to the Liesbeeck River before the first farms became available in the Tygerberg and the Koeberg. One of the first documentary evidence of a loan farm in the Tygerberg was in 1679 when the company awarded Pieter Visagie and Jan Mosterd land named d' Buffelskop. There are good reasons to believe that it was the hill west of Welgemoed. Nicolaas Loubser also farmed in the area around 1677, probably on the loan farm Welgemoed. He became the registered owner of Welgemoed in 1704.

Many farms were allocated to free burghers around 1698 to 1705 according to the quitrent deeds. However the deeds were in many cases only issued decades after the original grants!

Another hint that farmers were already in the Tygerberg comes from the famous visit of Simon van der Stel. To put this in perspective it should be noted that when he started his governorship the total population of free persons at the Cape was 259. We are therefore talking of a handful of farmers which were virtually doubled by the arrival of the French Huguenots in 1688-1689.

After a quarter of a century after Pieter Meerhof's visit in 1661 ( who according to some researchers could not find any pearls in the mussels in the Mosselbank River!), Simon van der Stel took an epic journey to Namakwaland in 1685 passing through the Tygerberg. One of the Koina captains he passed was Kuiper, hence the name Kuiperskraal. He was impressed by the fertility and water rich soil of the Tygerberg: "*zijnde meest kleiagtige gronden, redelijk bewaasen met gras, en verzien van water*". This impression led him to build a sheep kraal and outpost along the Elsieskraal River called Eljes Coreal and to kick the free burghers out.

Unfortunately there were no maps showing the location of Eljes Coreal. Using old related maps, quitrent grants and surveyor drawings as well as modern technology such as google-earth the author is convinced that the location can be narrowed down to a few meters in the Bellville area and call for the erection of a VOC monument.

Elsjes Coreal was not the only important VOC outpost in the Tygerberg. Vissershok towards the north west of the Tygerberg was established in 1683 and was sold in 1791.

### **The Outpost Elsjes Coreal**

Since 1682, three years before Simon's visit, the company already grazed their sheep under the protection of soldiers in the Tygerberg. The exact of the location of the house/hut "opstal" was never accurately indicated. In 1682 there were 3 soldiers. Three lions were shot within three weeks and some 995 sheep were kept in the kraal in 1685.

The problem of predators led Simon to consider the construction of a wooden kraal and quarters (posthuis) for the shepherds to replace the original kraal made from branches. The VOC also wanted the best agricultural property and Simon van der Stel gave the free burghers six months to vacate the area and promised restitution in the form of other land (a familiar pattern from the old as well as the new government in South Africa today!)

In February 1688, after eighteen months grace to the free burghers, Simon went ahead and ordered the preparation of wood to construct a kraal, 300 feet ( 91,5 meter) square. After a long and extended tour of the VOC outposts in October he spent two days overseeing the construction of the kraal capable of holding 4000 sheep.

Simon's secundus (Deputy Governor), Andries de Man, was in charge of the building. Andries was planning to marry Elsje van Zuurwaarde, daughter of the beautiful Magrietjie Meeckhof and Hendrik van Zurwaerden. Walters claims that Andries or his officials named the little river flowing past the kraal after Elsje whom he married in 1689. Andries en Elsje de Man requested land close by and were officially awarded the farm De Tijgerberge (today Altydgedacht) in 1698, three years after the death of Andries. Their daughter, the pretty Maria Elizabeth de Man, became the wife of governor Jan Del La Fontaine. Jan sold De Tijgerberge (Altydgedacht) in 1711 to Samuel Walters, the progenitor ("Stamvader") of the author.

With the pending collapse of the VOC the company decided to sell the outpost and farm, now known as Elsieskraal on a auction held at the Cape Castle in 1700. Pieter van Der Westhuizen, progenitor of all South Africa's van der Westhuizen's, bought the farm but due to some irregularities it was only transferred in his name in 1714. In 1813 the size was dramatically increased from 60 Morgan to 508 Morgan as part of the land reform of governor Cradock.

Elsieskraal had numerous owners, was rezoned, sold and redeveloped since 1879. These include the suburbs Oakdale, Bloemhof and Ridgeworth.

## Where was the original farm and kraal located?

From the Cape quitrent grant we get a very accurate surveyor map of the original farm. The diagram of Elsieskraal clearly shows the little river making the east/west placement very easy. Researchers at the National Archives compiled a detailed map based on these drawing of the early farms on a modern Mercator projection. Using this map it was possible to overlay it with a modern street map using two main beacons for size and location namely the Elsieskraal River and the "Groot Weg", later the Maitland Road and still later Voortrekker road to improve north/south accuracy.

It was now possible to verify the map using existing farms and their topography. It must be kept in mind that these farms were small (approximately 60 Morgan) and nestled into well identifiable topographic and geological features. Several farms and features were used to calibrate and verify the position of Elsieskraal. The Maastrich/Race course junction on Altydgedacht is close to the original junction as described to be on the farm, Welgemoed and the location of the old farmhouse, Lobbenstein (today Loeventein) and its position along the Tygerberg, Maasstrich on the saddle of the Tygerberg, Onrust (today Van Riebeeckshof) and its position relative to the small river feeding in to the Elsieskraal River and finally Doordekraal which helped with north/south placing due to its location south of Altydgedacht and north of Elsiekraal as well as the river flowing through it. Slight adjustments were made to achieve the best fit.

In addition descriptions of the land in the various quitrent grants were used: Eg. Lobbenstien: "*N na Claas Laubser ( Welgemoed), **ONO na Woeste land van Elsjeskraal**, Z na Woeste land vlakke*". From this we can deduce that south of Lobbenstein the land was rough as well as to the east towards Elsieskraal. This clearly means that Elsieskraal can not lie to far South (eg. Voortrekker Road).

This information was used to enlarge the map and overlay with google-earth as shown below. This drawing finally gives us some vital clues. The white line is the boundary from the original quitrent map of 1714. The map encloses the north east section (Stellenbosch Business School) and the Tygerberg southern quarry. The northern boundary lies south of the Velodrome. The south pointing section bridges the Elsieskraal River and crosses the DF Malan sport fields. The river can clearly be seen in the northern section as well as the southern tip. Please note that the river is channelled beneath the DF Malan sport fields. It is also clearly visible in the Jack Miller Park just north of Frans Conradie and South of the N1.

It is absolutely amazing to see how well it fits. To the north and North West there are hills that obviously were used to demarcate the boundary. To the South the extension is approaching the "Groot Weg". The hump to the north- west nicely surrounds the old quarry making the author believe that there was originally a small natural dam.

An interesting feature is the small rectangle to the left. This is normally called an annex and is not uncommon. **It is the author's believe that this section was the original Elsie's Coreal** and was sold with the rest of the farm. The size makes it an attractive candidate. It is 100 by 400 meter. As stated before the kraal was approximately 100 by 100 meter. Van Der Stel originally planned two build kraals but decided on a location for only one. In addition the "posthuis" and other outbuildings were also erected. A 100 by 400 cleared area in the rough would suffice nicely.

It must also be taken in consideration that the small Elsiekraal river may flood in the winter months. It therefore makes sense to locate the kraal some distance from the river. In this case it is about 150 meters which turns out to be a very practical flood line estimate. From the topography the floodplain would lie toward the west of the river further strengthening the debate about the position of the kraal.

The three main recognisable features (see map below) in the the "annex" where the kraal could have been erected are: the Totius Primary School Rugby field in the south, the DF Malan School buildings in the Center and/or the Danie Uys park to the north ( just across Frans Conradie).

### **Conclusion**

Finally some light was shed on the location of Simon's kraal and may stimulate further research. We hope that the two schools will be excited by these findings and will promote this heritage proudly. Their roots lie deeply imbedded in this important part of our history.

The friends of the Danie Uys Park are requested to consider erecting a small VOC monument in their park in consultation with the VOC society of South Africa, depicting this history. The DHS will gladly assist in providing historical information to be placed at the monument.

Any small deviations in the exact location will not change the significance and impact of this vital part of the history of the Tygerberg and its development. The park still remains a viable and appropriate site for a monument.

### **Sources**

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**Original Elsiekraal boundaries according to the Quitrent grant QTR 10/1714 superimposed on the latest google-earth image.**

