PREFACE

This book is not meant to be a full history of Fish Hoek but is intended for those living here or visiting who wish to know more about the area. I hope you enjoy it and end up knowing a little more about Fish Hoek.

There are many people who have helped me and I would particularly like to thank Joe and Simone Frylinck, who really thought I could do it, Ethel may Gillard, for sharing her vast store of local information and fascinating reminiscences, Michael Walker and Clive Wakeford for encouragement and advice.

To anyone else who thinks that they ought to be on that list, thank you too!

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1. Peers Cave

Although the first plots in Fish Hoek were only sold in 1918 there have been people in the Fish Hoek Valley for many thousands of years, but it was only in the 1920’s that the early history of the valley was uncovered.

The names of Victor and Bertie Peers are remembered in Fish Hoek, and beyond, because of the discoveries they made in the cave which is now called after them. It was the Anglo-Boer War that brought Victor Peers to South Africa. He was born in Australia, where the family lived on a farm, and he grew up with an interest in plants. When the war broke out, in 1899, he joined the army and was part of the Australian contingent sent to support the British troops. He was wounded, and sent to the Cape to recover, and as his strength returned he walked in the mountains around Cape Town and discovered the Cape flora. When he was repatriated, after the end of the war, he married and emigrated to Cape Town with his young wife, Bella, and settled in Wynberg. His daughter always used to say that it was the flora that had brought him back to South Africa.

He took a job with the railways, working in the ticket office on Cape Town station. Being a railway employee was an advantage as he used the trains for his plant collecting expeditions, alighting in remote places and camping, as he looked for succulents and bulbs which became his main interest. Many of these plants he grew in pots at his home to observe and propagate them. Miss W. F. Barker, the first curator of the Kirstenbosch Herbarium, wrote in an article in Veld and Flora in March 1980, that "he contributed at least 700 numbered living collections of plants, mainly succulents and bulbs, coming from as far afield as Willowmore, Graaff Reiner, Riversdale, Worcester, Clanwilliam, Van Rynsdorp, Namakuland and South West Africa. Many others were sent to the Bolus Herbarium, where they were preserved and mounted for their permanent collection. Of these many were described as new species, a number being named in his honour."

In 1920 Victor and Bella Peers, with their son Bertie and daughter Dulcie, moved to the new village of Fish Hoek where they built a house in Fifth Avenue. It was not long before, exploring his new surroundings, he went into what was then known as the Schildergat Cave and picked up what he thought were early stone tools. He took these along to the University where John Goodwin, the first South African to train as an archaeologist, was busy establishing the Department of Archaeology. At that point no one could imagine the discoveries that were to be made in Southern Africa and as there was no qualified archaeologist available to excavate the cave Victor Peers and his son Bertie were instructed in archaeological techniques. After a practice dig in a cave above Kalk Bay they spent all their spare time for the next two years working in the cave.

As the excavation progressed they uncovered a shell midden up to one and a half metres thick and several thousand years old. The remains of six people, two women and four children, were buried below this layer and with them were found ostrich eggshell beads, shell pendants and a piece of rusted European iron said to have
been a spear head. There were also the remains of small leather bags that possibly contained medicine, for one of the women appeared to have been lame, together with pieces of mother of pearl and stone tools. Below the midden were the remains of two more people and then a ninth skeleton was found, a male of about thirty years old. National and international interest was aroused by these discoveries.

There was no sensitivity about human remains in those days and little was known of the first inhabitants of the Cape Peninsula. In the Cape Argus on 27 October 1927 the story of the discoveries was headed:-

"PIGMY SKELETONS AT FISH HOEK.
FRESH LIGHT ON LONG DEAD TRIBE.
CRIPPLE WITH NECKLACE OF CHARMS.
REMARKABLE DISCOVERIES IN A CAVERN.

This report was based on a lantern slide presentation which Bertie Peers had given the night before to the Cape Natural History Club at the University. Although the lantern slides have long since disappeared the script from which Bertie spoke has been preserved. In many of the newspaper accounts these people were referred to as Strandlopers, meaning people walking on the beach. This was a name given to anyone seen on the beach by the Dutch settlers, but Bertie, in his lecture, refers to the inhabitants of the cave by their correct tribal name, the San.

Although the stone tools were of great interest to those wanting to know how the San lived, it was the discovery of the skeletons that was headline news at the time. One of the skulls was taken to England and examined by Sir Arthur Keith, who is described in a "Guide to the Peers Cave" published in 1940, as "One of the foremost living anthropologists and a leading authority on the antiquity of Man." He wrote that "The excavation of Peers Cave revealed for the first time in South Africa a human skeleton embedded in an intact and datable Stone Age stratum." "It is the largest brained type of humanity so far discovered." The skull of what became known as Fish Hoek Man was then dated at 15 000 years old but has since been redated at 12 000 years old.

Interested sightseers and amateur archaeologists all came to see what they could find. There is no doubt that many stone tools were found in the area and taken away, as souvenirs, as other midden sites were found in the Fish Hoek Valley, most of which have since been built over. Dr Mossop, who lived in Fish Hoek, had a well documented collection for which he made a special wooden cabinet. This was left to the Fish Hoek Municipality and is now kept at the Fish Hoek Valley Museum. Under our current legislation anyone removing an archaeological artifact from the place where it was found would be liable for a heavy fine. If there is no record of exactly where it was found, and under what circumstances, its history is ruined. All it tells us is that somewhere an early man made a stone tool.
Bertie Peers other great interest was snakes, having been introduced to them by Cyril French, a teacher at Rondebosch Boys High School who lived in Fish Hoek. Travelling to school by train, with some of his pupils, he would often produce a snake from his pocket and Bertie soon became interested enough to start his own small snake enclosure in his garden. Later he opened a Snake Park near the entrance to Cape Town Pier where visitors could see and hear about the snakes. They were all “milked” and so were safe for him to handle. He often bought snakes brought in by those who had caught them and one day, in 1939, he was bitten by a new snake that had been put into the enclosure before being milked. Having treated himself with an injection he went home, only to become very ill later. He died in hospital that night, leaving a wife and a young son. Victor Peers, who was in poor health, died a few months later.

Bertie with one of his snakes

H. S. Jager, the first Mayor of Fish Hoek, was an enthusiastic amateur archaeologist and a founder of the South African Archaeological Society. He edited a Guide to Peers Cave which was first published in 1940 and ran into several editions. At his suggestion a ceremony was held in the cave on 15 January 1941 at which it was renamed Peers Cave. Both the Cape Times and the Cape Argus reported that the cave was to be declared a National Monument, and a Historical Monuments Commission plaque would be fixed to the wall of the cave during the ceremony.

However, although Professor van Riet Louw of the Historical Monuments Commission was present it did not become a National Monument. These reports have caused much confusion with regard to who was responsible for looking after the site. On several occasions the Fish Hoek Municipality wrote to the Commission asking for the path to be cleared and the area of the cave tidied. The Commission would write back to say that as it was not a National Monument it was not their responsibility. For some time there was doubt as to whether the Municipality or the Divisional Council was responsible for it. At various times it was suggested that the Municipality fence it off or that the area be declared a nature reserve so that the warden of the reserve could be responsible for the cave.

Nothing was ever done, although notices were painted on the walls of the cave and graffiti soon became a problem. In 1998 the National Monuments Council arranged for both the painted notices and the graffiti to be removed. The cave is now part of the Cape Peninsula National Park but there is still free access for those wishing to visit it.

In 1942 H. S. Jager investigated the Tunnel Cave. This runs right through the rock with an opening at each end, so although it was used it would have been a cold and windy place for living, whilst Peers Cave is a sheltered overhang. Jager soon became known as the local expert on Peers Cave. He had a collection of stone tools at his house, many of which he had found near the Tunnel Cave, which he was glad to show to visitors.

Further excavations were done by Keith Jolly in 1946, Barbara Anthony in 1964 and Royden Yates in 2002, but although there is more material that could be discovered, it has been very difficult to follow the records of the
original excavation and date what is found. At a meeting of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, held in Durban in 1932, Field Marshal Smuts said, in his opening speech, "The cave at Fish Hoek promises to be one of the foremost cave sites in Southern Africa." The sad fact is that it was excavated too early. Had it remained undiscovered until archaeology was well established in South Africa it could have been a world renowned site.

2. The First Explorations of the Fish Hoek Valley

On 29 May 1671 the Dutch ship "Isselsteijn" anchored in False Bay looking for fresh water and cattle for meat. They had left Texel, in the Netherlands, on 8 Jan 1671 and had run out of supplies. The "Isselsteijn" was a fluyt, a merchant ship of Dutch design with a narrow round stern designed to carry cargo as cheaply as possible as some European ports taxed ships on the beam size of the vessel. Having found water, but no cattle, they sent a message to the Castle asking for supplies. There is some doubt as to exactly where they anchored, Fish Hoek and Simon's Town both claim the honour, and the bay became known as Isselsteijn Bay. She sailed again in early June and her Captain reported that False Bay had provided a good winter anchorage.

As a result of that report the Council of Policy of the Dutch East India Company ordered that the Company employees in South Africa take possession of the area. Lieutenant Breitenbach and a party, described as experienced travellers and burghers, explored the area and it was reported that although Isselsteijn Bay provided a safe anchorage there was no fresh water and fuel available within easy reach although there was game for hunting. However, they found that on the south side a mountain range separated the bay from another bigger bay which would provide a very good winter anchorage. From this it seems probable that this expedition first anchored in Fish Hoek Bay and then moved round to what was to become Simon's Town. For some time this anchorage was only used in cases of emergency as the overland journey to Cape Town was very difficult.

In 1678 Simon van der Stel was appointed Commander of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape. Immediately he began to expand the settlement and look for possibilities for commercial development to help defray the expenses of the station. Having explored northwards and eastwards it was not until 1687 that he made what was the first complete exploration of the False Bay area. Travelling overland he met the galiot, Die Noordt, which he had ordered to sail into False Bay to meet him, to explore the Peninsula coastline and the
waters of the bay. Before boarding the ship it is recorded that the expedition saw "a large tiger" probably a leopard, and reference is made to the mines at the Steenbergen.

Anything which would bring in an income would be welcome to the Dutch East India Company, so having heard that silver could be found mining works were started. Three shafts were dug in the Silvermine Valley which can still be seen today, one on the Ou Kaapse Weg and one on each side of the valley below. The powder house for the storing of explosives was later incorporated into the buildings of a farm in the valley. This farm was deserted by the late 1920’s and it would appear that people building cottages in the area destroyed the buildings to use the stone for their own homes and so the farmhouse and the powder house disappeared, leaving only the foundations. No silver was ever found and the mines were soon abandoned.

Silvermine Farm 1910

The building on the right of the farm house is the powder house

Silvermine shaft

The expedition was very busy charting the waters of False Bay, mapping the coastline and marking the rivers. It was obvious that Simon's Town was the best anchorage and van der Stel marked the fact by giving it his own name. Nets were cast and many fish caught including some that they had never seen before. In 1690 a cattle station was established in the Noordhoek area and fishing rights were granted to free burghers applying for
licences. The licence fees brought in an income for the Company and the abundant fish were a good source of food for the burghers and their slaves. Although there was as yet no permanent community at Fish Hoek there must have been a floating population of fishermen and their slaves. A Watch House was built on the site of what are now the houses Uitkyk Oos and Uitkyk Wes on the Jager Walk, to ensure that the fishing was carried out in an orderly fashion by those licenced to do so.

In 1725 a mysterious ship, sailed into Fish Hoek Bay. It was August, wet and cold, so there was probably little activity. Any fishermen in the area and the men at the Dutch East India Company outpost, were concentrating on keeping warm and dry. Where had she come from and where was she bound?

Some of the crew came ashore, and claiming that she was an English ship, asked the men at the Company outpost for sheep and vegetables for which they offered to pay. A message was sent to Simon’s Town and the wharfmaster immediately dispatched a messenger to the Castle, in Cape Town, reporting that three officers and six men had landed, and claiming that she was an English ship, asked the men at the outpost for provisions.

The authorities at the Castle, suspecting that this might be a pirate ship, sent out Ensign Rhenius with fifty soldiers, two sergeants, two corporals and one drummer, with orders that if any of the crew landed and declared the ship to be English they were to provide documents to prove it. They were to be told that they could only get provisions if they sailed round to Table Bay.

Ensign Rhenius, who was finding this to be an uncomfortable mission due to the winter rains, reported that two deserters had declared the ship to be a pirate vessel from the Netherlands, with twenty-six guns and a crew of sixty. Her Captain was Pieter Dunn and she was supposedly bound for the West Indies. On hearing this reinforcements were sent and Ensign Rhenius was instructed to demand the ship’s papers and take the crew into custody. Captain Dunn came ashore with papers that appeared to confirm that she was an English ship, the Great Alexander, but further deserters said that there were many more men on board than the number declared, no cargo apart from guns and ammunition and that it was indeed a pirate ship. The Captain and the deserters were taken to Cape Town and imprisoned.

Those remaining on board must have decided that that it was only a matter of time before they were all arrested and the ship confiscated, so in the middle of a dark night they raised their anchor and sailed away. The ship was seen off Hout Bay so people on the west coast were told to stay away from the shore in case of further landings and the Harbourmaster at Saldanha Bay was warned that she might try and get provisions there. Ensign Rhenius was ordered to remain on Fish Hoek beach for another eight days but the Great Alexander was never seen again.

Was she a pirate ship? It was never decided, but it was certainly a possibility. Pirates were known to prey on ships returning from the East with rich cargoes of spices, silks and other valuable items. The crew members who had come ashore were kept in custody for a while, and then, because of the cost of feeding and housing them, were allowed to replace crewmen on other ships who had to be left behind because of sickness. The Captain had his papers returned and was also allowed to leave.

3. The Fish Hoek Farm

Although the first grant of land at Fish Hoek is usually said to be the 1818 grant, made by Lord Charles Somerset to Andries Brujins, there was interest in the land before that. By the late 1700's fishing had become more commercialised and there was a good living to be had from it. In June 1797 J. P. Kirsten applied to the Governor, Earl Macartney, for land at "the Visch Hok, that may be granted as a Loan Land without any prejudice either to Government or to any individual. Your Excellency’s Petitioner requests Your Excellency to grant the said Place called the Vischoek as a Loan Land to him on the usual rent of Rds 24 per annum." (rix dollars) The letter was endorsed "To lie over" so no grant was made at that time.

Later that year Johannes Isaak Rhenius, also applied for land to establish a fishing business in the bay. He was a member of a well known Cape family and in 1795 had been appointed Collector-General and Treasurer by the
Military Administrator, General Craig. Although it was not granted then, in March 1801 Rhenius was granted permission "to cause a cover to be put on the small Government Building at Visch Hoek Bay for the purpose of depositing his fishing materials therein on express condition that he shall be obliged to give the building up to the government whenever it shall be wanted." This government building was the Dutch East India Company's Watch House which had been deserted for many years and had fallen into disrepair. It was already being used by the fishermen but it would seem that Rhenius wanted to stake a claim to it.

In August 1801 he was given permission to cultivate a piece of land at what was to become Clovelly, "not exceeding two acres in extent, subject to six months notice by the Government, no house or building to be erected on it." So Rhenius was the first official farmer in the Fish Hoek valley. In August 1802 he was granted land for a fishery in the bay but as the Cape was in the process of being handed over to the Batavian Republic he had to reapply to the new Governor, General Janssens, for confirmation of the grant, which was approved. This must have been a profitable business as it was not long after this that an Englishman, Robert Row, also applied to General Janssens for land at Fish Hoek to operate a fishery. Rhenius protested, but after investigating the situation the authorities decided that there was room for both of them and Row received his grant. There must have been great competition between them as to who reached the shoals of fish first, they must both have had their lookouts posted and would race out into the bay as the signal was given. Rhenius gave up his business about 1805 and Row, who was described as being "a man of speculative tendencies", had many business projects going, but was eventually declared insolvent and left the area.

It seems that Andries Bruijns moved into Fish Hoek when Rhenius left. Whether this was by mutual consent or whether he just took over when the property became vacant is not known. However in 1806 he wrote to Sir David Baird, the British Commander at the Cape, stating there had been a fire in some of his buildings at Fish Hoek and he needed wood to repair them. He therefore asked for permission to cut two wagon loads of wood from "the Government woods near Noordhoek". This request was referred to the Inspector of Government Woods who replied that the wood was known as "Bosch Wood and is solely appropriated for such spars, stakes, rails etc. as are suitable to the erection of Huts. It comprises under that name various species, amongst which are the Wild Pear, the Olive, the Red Elser and the White". He was given permission to cut his two wagon loads of wood.

Although occupying the land Bruijns had never applied for ownership. However, it came to the notice of the authorities that he had a very prosperous business and was only paying a small rent for the land although he had improved and added to the buildings at his own expense. So in 1817 the Resident of Simon's Town, J. H. Brand, was instructed to sell the land at Fish Hoek, thus putting Bruijns into the position of having to buy the land himself or go out of business. Brand must have sympathised with him for he inserted a clause into the advertisement of the sale stating that if anyone other that Bruijns bought the land the buildings would have to be demolished. For anyone else buying the land it would have been it would have been an expensive business to rebuild, so possibly because no one else was interested in it, on payment of 250 rix dollars Andries Bruijns became the owner of the Fish Hoek Farm on 25 June 1818.

For many years farmers coming from the western end of the valley had used Fish Hoek as an outspan as there were springs for water for their cattle and themselves. To keep the cattle from fouling the springs a kraal was built, probably near the area of the traffic circle at the Simon's Town end of the Main Road. To preserve these, and other rights, six conditions were put into the title deed.

These were:

1. That the field lying behind the former Klip Kraal as far as the head of the mountain together with the watering place and dam which is situated a little beyond this, shall be used for the purpose of grazing and drinking cattle of people unteaming their wagons in frequenting the road, also a free passage to the left for cattle to and from Simon's Town, Noordhoek or elsewhere.

2. That he shall be obliged to keep the fountain in good condition for the use of travellers passing there but not for the drinking of any cattle at all.

3. That his oxen-kraal shall also be at the disposal of those who either go thither for the purpose of fishing or others passing by and unteaming their oxen.
4. That also a passage be allowed or left for the purpose of digging iron stones (if necessary) either by Government or any other.

5. Not to keep a Public wine house and finally,

6. That the right of fishing shall be free as heretofore and the strand itself quite open to the public.

Most of these conditions have lapsed, although there has been much discussion with regard to the last two.

Fishing had been the main business of those occupying the land until this time, but one of the conditions of the title deed granted to Bruijns was that the land had to be cultivated as much as possible within three years. He carried on fishing for two years and then on 9 July 1820 sold the land to Isaac Lesar at a good profit. Lesar was a fisherman and it was in October 1821 that the brig Waterloo sailed into Fish Hoek Bay to load whale oil from his catch. She must have dragged her anchor and was blown on to the shore and wrecked. Early in November the Cape Town Gazette and African Adviser printed a sale notice. “On Tuesday the 6th instant, a Sale will be held on the beach at Fisch Hoek Bay, of the Masts, Yards, Sails, Rigging, Boat, Provisions, Furniture, Material and Damaged Cargo, saved from the wreck, with the Anchors and Cables, and such part of the Cargo as is not recovered. The sale will commence at 11 o’clock.”

Lesar kept the land for two years before, on 3 May 1822, he sold it to an Englishman, Thomas Palmer, for £3000. Palmer took out a mortgage of £6 000 from a Cape Town businessman, James Richardson, for improvements to the farm. Although it is not known exactly when the first part of the farmhouse was built it was probably Palmer who built it. Built in traditional Cape Dutch style, E shaped, with gables, it was called Bellevue and situated on the beach, before the days of the railway, it must, indeed, have had a wonderful view of the bay. The date 1710 was added to one of the gables at some point, perhaps by a later owner who wanted to boast of his old house, however there was no recorded building on this scale at Fish Hoek in the early 1700’s.

Palmer was not popular with other fishermen. Stephen Twycross, the owner of the fishery at Kalk Bay, complained to the authorities in 1823 that "he has in a second instance this day sent his boat and crew to land and hover about my fishery". In 1827 Richardson was declared insolvent and as Palmer was unable to repay the balance of his debt to him the executors took over the farm. Realising that as most of the land was undeveloped sand hills it would fetch a better price if subdivided for sale they sold it off in three lots.

**The Fish Hoek Farmhouse 1910**

Lot A was the smallest but included the old Watch House. The whaling rights were included in this section which became known as The Great Whale Fishery. Lot B was the largest and included the farmhouse, Bellevue, and the fishing rights, this was known as the Harring Fishery, probably referring to the harders which were plentiful in the bay. Lot C was called Klein Tuin, some fields had been cultivated in what is now called Clovelly.
Lot A was sold to John Osmond of Simon’s Town, who owned a lot of property in the Peninsula. In 1830 he resold it to Thomas Thwaites who ran a whale fishery. One of the conditions of the sale of lots A and B was that the owner of A should have access to the spring on B, however Thwaites was denied access to the water and had to complain to the authorities. Possibly this is what ruined his business, something did, for he was declared insolvent in 1833 and the land sold to Collison and Co. run by Nicholas Collison and Joseph Starkey, who sold to J. H. J. and J. M. Muller in 1842.

When the land was divided, in 1827, Lot B was sold to J. G. Muller who kept it for only five months before selling to John Leibrandt for the same price for which he had bought it, £250. For this sum Leibrandt purchased 693 morgen which included the farmhouse. He was the owner of whom Thwaites wrote, “he has caused this spring or fountain of pure water aforesaid to be enclosed and unlawfully as it is contrary to the express conditions of sale at which the purchase of the said property was made, put the same under lock and key, which I fear must have been done with a malicious and cruel intent to deprive the fishermen employed on the adjoining property, lot A, amounting to nearly 30 persons, of the use and benefit of said water, which nature absolutely requires, thereby excluding them and the public from the enjoyment of their natural rights”.

Leibrandt only kept the land for three years, during which time the situation with his neighbours must have been very strained. He sold to John Hendrik Muller in 1830 who sold to the brothers J. H. J. and J. M. Muller, who on buying Lot A in 1842 became the owners of what was then the entire Fish Hoek Farm.

Lot C, Klein Tuin, was sold to Jacob Hurter in 1827. It changed owners several times before it became the property of Gwendolyn McIntyre, and in 1902 the land was subdivided for sale as residential plots. The area was marketed as Mayville, but soon became known as Clovelly. Cape Estates Ltd. bought land there and in 1922 laid out a nine hole golf course, the beginning of the Clovelly Country Club.

The Muller brothers, who were part of a well known local fishing family, fished and farmed at Fish Hoek until 1871 when they sold out to James McLachlan for £850. However he did not make a success of his business and by 1875 he was in financial difficulties and was lucky enough to be able to sell the farm to James Wilson for £2 000, a very good profit, which hopefully solved his financial problems. Seven years later, on 5 October 1883, he sold it to Hester Sophia de Kock.

A spinster, fifty one years old, when she bought the farm, Hester de Kock had run a small school in Wale Street, Cape Town before coming to Fish Hoek. Why she bought the land is not known, although various reasons have been suggested. Perhaps she inherited some money or sold her school for a good price, whatever the reason she must have been a very strong character as in those days it was not usual for an unmarried woman to go into business on her own. Whilst the previous owners had concentrated more on the fishing side of the business she was more interested in farming and laid out fields for growing vegetables and wheat. The farmhouse was by now quite an extensive building. About 1837 an addition to the farmhouse had been built, called Goede Hoop, and a coach house was also added later, known as Brighton.

On 8 June 1901, at the age of sixty-nine, Hester de Kock married Jacob Izaak de Villiers, a widower with a farm at Noordhoek. One of his sons took over that farm and he came to live at Fish Hoek where he and Hester farmed together. The business did well, but more cultivation needed more water, so in 1902 she bought the rights to the water from the Kleintuin spring at Clovelly and had water piped to Fish Hoek where she built a
small reservoir to augment the springs which supplied the farm. These water rights were passed on to the residents of Fish Hoek and were eventually leased to the Clovelly Country Club for a peppercorn rent.

Hester Sophia and Jacob Izaak de Villiers

The 1818 grant stipulated that public access to Fish Hoek beach had to be ensured and by the early 1900’s it was beginning to be known as wonderful place for a day’s outing. The extension of the railway from Kalk Bay to Simon’s Town in 1890, and the siting of a halt at Fish Hoek, made it easy for people from the suburbs of Cape Town to come and enjoy a day of sun and sea bathing. It was not long before they were asking permission from the de Villiers’ to be allowed to camp on their land. Being a shrewd businesswoman Hester de Villiers soon realised that that she could make money from this.

She let rooms in the farmhouse and converted her barn and coach house to provide holiday accommodation. The old Watch House, later to be known as Uitkyk, but then called Wharncliffe, although it had probably been called Uitkyk earlier, was also converted to rooms. Her accommodation seems to have been very comfortable with water from her reservoir piped into all her buildings. Although the beach was not part of the farm property Izaak de Villiers kept a very stern eye on the visitors, rowdy behaviour and littering were not tolerated. So, with its clean beach and safe bathing Fish Hoek soon became known as a wonderful place for a family holiday.
4. The Early Days of the Village

When Hester de Villiers died, in 1914, she left instructions in her will that "after the death of my husband, Jacob Izaak de Villiers, the farm Vischoek near Kalk Bay shall be sold." She asked that it be sold in building plots and that after sums of money had been deducted for three of her nieces, and for various charities, the balance was to be equally divided between her husband's children and her other nieces and nephews. Being a shrewd businesswoman, and realising how popular Fish Hoek had become, she obviously felt that more money would be raised for her heirs by selling it off in this way. She also asked that a sum of £150 "shall be placed in the savings bank at Cape Town and used for the maintenance of the family cemetery". An interesting addition to this clause reads that "no trees shall be planted in the cemetery." No explanation is given for this but perhaps she thought that the roots might undermine the graves. This cemetery, in which Hester and Izaak de Villiers are also buried, is alongside the Dutch Reformed Church in Kommetjie Road and is looked after by the Church Seniors’ Club.
There was great interest in the proposed sale of plots in Fish Hoek. On 7 December 1917 we read in the weekly paper, The Cape, that "Fish Hoek is at last to be laid out as a seaside residential resort." The writer hoped that "before passing the plans for the sub-division of the Fish Hoek Estate, a definite scheme of laying out the roads and erecting buildings should be followed. Without some such plan Fish Hoek will inevitably grow up anyhow, as Muizenberg has done. Visitors who are gifted with any sense of the picturesque become mentally ill when they see the town of Muizenberg for the first time, with its houses elbowing and crowding each other and facing all ways. The Divisional Council now has a unique opportunity of rendering a service to the Peninsula and the public by taking steps to see that Fish Hoek is, from the beginning, built on the lines of order and picturesqueness which will add to instead of detract from the natural beauty of the place." I wonder what the writer would have thought of Fish Hoek today?

On 16 March 1918 the first sale of plots was advertised.

"Colonial Orphan Chamber and Trust Company.
The Famous Estate, Fish Hoek near Kalk Bay
South Africa's Premier Watering Place.

Preliminary Notice of Sale of Portion of this most charming and delightful Seaside Resort.

First Sale by Public Auction of exceptionally valuable, most attractive and desirably situated.

Residential Building sites
In the Estate of the late Mrs. H. S. de Villiers

On Wednesday, April 24th
At 11 o'clock on the spot.

The Executors of the Estate will cause to he submitted a large number of lots on this Estate, in order to satisfy the wishes of intending purchasers.

Further and fuller particulars will appear in later issues.

Lithographic Plans will be available on and after the 10" April at this and the Auctioneers Offices.

Executors Testamentary

Cape Town, 91th March 1918. I. C. D. DE VILLIERS

J. B. ZOUTENDYK & CO J. C. FAURE-JURITZ

Auctioneers and Sworn Appraisers" Secretary

That sale, and a further one in May 1918, was very well attended and plots were sold at prices ranging from £10 to £140. The most popular sites being those overlooking the bay. In a reference book on the area, published that year, we read that "The estate has been cut up into building plots, of which nearly 3 000 have been sold, and houses are springing up in all directions." We are also told that "there is a postal delivery twice a day" and "for residences or camping, Fish Hoek is an ideal place and, owing to its situation, it enjoys three hours more sunlight a day than the neighbouring resorts on False Bay."
A newspaper advertisement for a further sale of "336 Splendid Plots" appeared in January 1921. It pointed out that "The keen competition for this land at earlier sales points to the necessity for prompt action if you wish to secure one or more plots before it is too late. The land is increasing in value every day: many who purchased at earlier sales have since resold at a good profit."

A cutting from 25 February 1929 tells us that nearly a hundred people assembled on the Outspan for a further sale of plots, which were mostly on the mountainside. As building on the higher plots would be more difficult they could be bought more cheaply than those lower down. High plots were sold for as little as £2 whilst those on Kommetjie Road fetched up to £100. Even at these prices profits were being made, a plot bought in 1918 for £35 had been resold in 1929 for £600.

![Plans from which the plots were sold](image)

The first residents were mainly weekenders, many of them having previously camped in the area, put up what they called "weekend shacks" which were wooden huts in which they could sleep overnight and leave their camping gear. The Robertson’s bought a wartime shooting box which they had railed to Fish Hoek. They built rooms on to the sides of it which meant that the shooting apertures were now between rooms and their children enjoyed opening the little shutters to chat to each other. The Ohlssen’s brought a railway carriage to turn into their home, much to the envy of their children’s playmates. “The Caboose” remained for many years, being used for extra accommodation after the building of a more conventional house. Gradually more permanent structures were built, most of them wooden cottages with roofs of corrugated iron, but many of them were still only used over the weekends and the Christmas season. In the early 1920’s Mr Rice caused a sensation by building a very imposing house on the top of a sandhill on what is now the corner of de Waal Road and Third Avenue. As most of the development in Fish Hoek at that time was on Elsie’s Peak, overlooking the bay, or at the top of the early Avenues, people thought that he was crazy. "Fish Hoek is never going to develop that far" they said, and nicknamed the house Rice’s Folly. The Rice family sold it, it became a hotel and then flats before being pulled down in the 1970’s, but even then was still known as Rice’s Folly.
The plan from which the plots were sold was based on hexagons, something quite different from the usual system of blocks, and one that has made Fish Hoek a very confusing place for succeeding generations. The open hexagons were to be recreational open spaces. On the one bounded by Central Circle, which now is the Civic Centre, sports fields and a bowling green were laid out. In 1932 a hall was built next to the sports fields. Known as the Recreation Hall this wooden building, with its thatched roof, became the centre of social life in the village. The sports clubs used it for changing and hospitality to visiting teams and many social events took place there. The Dramatic Society put on plays, there were film shows and many dances and parties at what was known as the Rec Hall. In 1960 the Municipality decided that Fish Hoek needed a bigger hall, the sports fields were relocated, and the Civic Hall and Minor Hall were built. In 1988 new Municipal Offices and a Library were also built there. With the building of the Senior High School the sports fields were again relocated to their present site.
5. Water and Electricity

There was no water or electricity supply when the first plots were sold. Candles or paraffin lamps were used for lighting and most people used Primus stoves for cooking, but as more houses were being built the supply of water became a problem. The early householders used water butts to catch the rain water but these did not always supply enough to see them through the dry summer season. Most of the earliest homes were built just above the beach, on Simon's Town Road, and these houses were allowed to tap into the water pipe that took the supply from the farmhouse to Uitkyk. Even so, as the population expanded more water had to be provided.

In 1920 a loan was raised to build a reservoir on the plot behind what is now the circle at the Simon's Town end of Main Road. Built by T. Stewart it was a concrete structure measuring 40 x 20 x 10 feet designed to hold 4 200 gallons of water. A pipe was laid from the reservoir to a tap on a plot behind what is now Connock Park and residents took their own containers and paid a fee for the supply. It was calculated that with the number of houses in Fish Hoek at that time it would supply each household with up to 150 gallons per day.

By 1921 it was already obvious that as Fish Hoek was becoming more popular, and as more houses were being built, more water was going to be needed. The Railways had already connected Fish Hoek Station to the Cape Town water supply and built a water tower to supply their steam engines. The Local Board asked the railway authorities if it would be possible to have a connection, with a meter, from their mains supply to the local reservoir. The railways agreed that this could be done as a temporary measure until Fish Hoek sorted out its water problems. The connection was made and the water started running into the reservoir in November 1921, with the account to be paid to the Railways. However, the Cape Town City Council objected to this, saying that the Railways were not authorised to resell water supplied to them and that they intended to install their own meter to measure the amount of water supplied to Fish Hoek. The sum would then be deducted from the Railways account and charged directly to the Local Board. This led to utter confusion as both the railways and the Cape Town City Council were demanding payment as there were now two meters, which were registering different amounts, and the one installed by the Railways appeared to be faulty. It took months to sort out the situation.

Whilst all that was going on the Local Board received a letter from Cape Estates Ltd. who had bought land at Clovelly. They noted that the Local Board were now the owners of the Kleintuin spring and that under the terms of the transfer from the de Villiers Estate the spring and the dam had to be fenced and maintained by the owner, and the pipe from the dam had to be two feet underground. As they intended to build a golf course on their land they demanded that work on ensuring that the pipe was properly laid begin immediately. As no one had any idea of the exact course of the water pipe this meant that the Local Board would have had to get approval from the ratepayers to raise a loan to engage a surveyor to trace the pipe and possibly have it re-laid, not something that could be done quickly. In the meantime the contractors had continued working and completed the nine hole golf course without any problems, fortunately nothing more was heard from Cape Estates Ltd.

In June 1920 it was reported that there were already 152 buildings in Fish Hoek with a further 123 being built, the population was estimated at about 830 people. More water was needed, so in January 1922 the Local Board inquired about connecting up with the Cape Town water supply which was done via a six inch pipe connection at Clovelly. Each house was supplied with their own water meter and the Local Board thought that the water problem was now solved.

Unfortunately these water meters were not very efficient and by 1929 the pipes had rusted and half the meters were not working. A ratepayers meeting was held in May of that year which asked that the Board improve the system and permission was given by the ratepayers for the raising of a £4 000 loan for a new water system. At several times over the years the use of the Kleintuin spring water was also suggested. Analysis of the water proved that it was not now suitable for domestic purposes but could be used for watering the sports fields and bowling green. However, because of the costs involved, this did not prove practicable.

Sewerage was another problem. The first residents merely erected an outhouse over a hole in the ground and moved the building once the hole was full. Dirty water went on to the garden. Later some of them put in septic
tanks and French drains. In 1923 the Local Board signed a contract for the removal of sewerage from the bucket toilets. The cart started the round at about 10 pm and those coming home late were often unfortunate enough to meet it on the way. As there were no street lights there was often spillage as the contents of the bucket missed their mark, which left the owner of the property with a smelly problem the next morning. So in 1930 the Board inquired about a non-flush system which used crystals put into the buckets, but it proved to be too expensive.

Whilst the village was still small the smells in hot weather were bearable, but as the village grew and more houses were built closer together the contractor could not cope and the residents were complaining. A waterborne sewerage scheme was needed. So in 1936 the Board obtained conditional assent from the Administrator of the Cape and the assent of the ratepayers to raise a loan of £49,000 for the scheme and to buy land for the pump stations. Final approval was given in 1937 and work started with a ceremonial turning of the first sod by the Chairman of the Village Management Board, Mr H. S. Jager, on 7 January 1938 at the corner of Recreation Road and Second Avenue. It was completed in June 1940 and Fish Hoek residents, no doubt, breathed a sigh of relief!

By 1921, as they lit their paraffin lamps each night, people in Fish Hoek must have been envious of the electric lights they could see shining in Clovelly. So in November 1921 the Local Board resolved, if possible, to bring electricity to Fish Hoek. Quotations were obtained for the installation and then a letter was sent out to all house owners pointing out that "this can only be undertaken provided the Board is assured that the majority of the properties are connected up and that a certain quantity of energy will be consumed." Each owner would have to sign an agreement with the contractor for the number of lighting points and power plugs required.

In September 1922 another letter was sent out to home owners stating that before taking out a loan the Board wanted to be absolutely sure that enough houses would be connected to make it worth while. They were asked to sign a form committing them to the installation and to paying the cost of a minimum amount of current for two years. Those who could not afford the initial installation costs could have it paid by the Board and pay it off in instalments at 7% interest. The provision of the electricity was estimated to cost £4,650 and it was proposed to take out a loan and not to have to levy a special rate to cover it.

As might be expected there were some who did not bother to reply to these letters. So in a circular in February 1923 they inform the residents that they had given up the idea. "After very carefully considering the whole question from the financial point of view the Board reluctantly came to the conclusion that under the circumstances they could not venture upon the scheme unless a larger number of persons were prepared to take the current." This must have at last roused those who had not replied before and when replies to this circular came in the Board decided that there were now enough house owners interested to go on with the scheme. They signed a contract with the Cape Town City Council for the supply of electricity which they would resell to their ratepayers.

The site chosen for the transformer house was on the Outspan, where the Garden of Remembrance is today. However, this area was covered by a servitude, it had to remain as open space, so no building could be erected there. Instead, it was built on the triangle at the end of the Main Road, now the circle. Meanwhile the poles were being put in and wiring was being done in the houses. On 31 July 1924 the current was switched on, it had taken three years to get the scheme completed and in many houses all the lights were switched on to celebrate the occasion.

In May 1930 the City Electrical Engineer wrote to the Village Management Board to tell them that the transformer house was now too small to supply the increased population of Fish Hoek and would have to be replaced. For some reason the Board did not want it touched, perhaps because it looked so pretty there surrounded by trees. In spite of a lot of correspondence on the subject they would not agree to the rebuilding. Eventually the City Electrical Engineer lost patience with them, he said that they were making it very difficult for the City Council to give them efficient service and he would not be responsible for any failure in the supply. If Fish Hoek found itself without power the Board would have to deal with the situation themselves. Still they did not react, and he had probably decided not to bother with them anymore, when in August of that year he received a letter saying that there had been an election in Fish Hoek, a new Board was in place, and they would like to settle the matter.
Originally provision had been made on the Triangle for a post office and a police station, so when, in 1942, it again became necessary to enlarge the sub station an exchange of land was effected to make space for the new building to be erected. When the new building was ready the old one had to be demolished. As this was during the Second World War a permit had to be obtained to do this, it was granted, but the Fish Hoek Council, being prepared for any eventuality, asked for it to be left for the duration of the war as it would make a suitable mortuary. Fortunately it never had to be used for that purpose.

6. The Railway Comes to Fish Hoek

Fish Hoek owes its access by rail to the fact that it is close to Simon's Town. The line had reached Kalk Bay, then a popular seaside resort, in 1883. The Simon's Town Dockyard was expanding and before long the Cape Government Railways was asked to extend the line to Simon's Town. Work began in 1889 and the first train arrived in Simon's Town station on 1 December 1890. There were problems with building the line across the Fish Hoek valley. The land was privately owned and had to be bought from the owner of the farm, Mrs de Villiers. A single track concrete bridge had to be built to carry the line across the Silvermine River, which tended to spread across the sands as it came down in flood in the winter. To try and prevent this flooding, 44 gallon drums filled with concrete were used to strengthen the river banks. Iron deck plates from the wreck of the Kakapo, on Noordhoek beach, were also used. At Sunnycove there was very little room for the line and it was laid on old iron water tanks filled with concrete, the tanks rusted away but the concrete foundations remained.

What was thought to be a reasonably sheltered site was chosen for the station, opposite what is now Windsor Lodge, but there was actually very little shelter from the elements. Initially this was just a wooden platform with a loop in the single line passing on each side and when the southeaster blew, or it rained, waiting for a train was an unhappy experience. It was not until about 1910, after many complaints from the passengers who used the station, that small waiting rooms were built at each end of the platform. After the sale of plots in 1918 the railway authorities decided that as a village was about to grow up here the station needed to be moved to a more convenient position. In 1919 a new station, with three platforms connected by an overhead bridge, was built in its present position. The station buildings date from 1927. To cater for local commuters a new timetable was drawn up which included trains that ran only as far as Fish Hoek and a turntable was put in to turn the engines for their return trip to Cape Town. A water tower had to be built to supply water to the steam engines which had previously been re-watered in Simon's Town.

![The first station 1910](image)
The new station proved to be right in the path of the southeaster which blew in so much sand that it drifted into the gap between the platforms making it impossible to get through. A lot of money and labour went into clearing this before, in the late 1920’s it was decided to remove the sand dunes on the beach at the back of the station. This was done at railway expense, with special trains being run to take the sand away. Most of it was dumped but some of it was taken to the railway works in Salt River to be used in engine sand boxes. Every steam engine had such a box so that the fireman could get down and spread sand on the lines when they were too slippery for progress. Old railway sleepers were also sunk into the sand along the edge of the beach to try and keep the line clear.

Fish Hoek Beach 1929
At the left the Windsor Hotel.
The white building is the station with sand dunes behind it.

When the line was electrified, in 1928, it was found that the pedestrian bridge over the line was too low for the overhead wires to pass underneath and it was removed. No provision was made for those using platforms
two and three and passengers had to walk across the line, it was only in 1938 that a subway was built. Because of the apartheid laws a second subway had to be provided in the 1950's and this proved to be a real problem. The excavation soon became water logged and it was impossible to complete it. New plans had to be drawn up with sheets of copper placed between a double layer of bricks and pumps, used to control the water seepage.

The stipulation in the 1818 grant, that there had to be public access to the beach, had to be complied with and so when the line was built, in 1890, a crossing had to be provided for carts taking away fish caught in the bay. The original crossing, in its present position, was a narrow road with a gates to keep out wandering animals. These had to be opened and shut by those using the crossing and there were also pedestrian gates. As the village developed so more people were using the crossing and although there were gates it was difficult to see trains coming from Simon's Town.

In 1937 the Village Management Board wrote to the Railways asking that the crossing be moved nearer to the station to make it easier to see the oncoming trains. This was not done but instead, in 1941, the crossing was widened so that two cars could pass each other and the gates were removed. The Municipality, worried about the safety of those using the crossing, asked for a flagman to be posted there or flashing lights to be erected.

Warning bells were put up but as this was during the second world war, the authorities did not want to put up flashing lights which might be used by enemy submarines as a marker to Simon's Town dockyard. Even after the flashing lights were put up there were several fatal accidents before booms were finally erected.

There are pedestrian crossings at the side of the Silvermine River and near the station. More road crossings were planned but were never built. In 1938 the subway near the restaurant was rebuilt as the open line over the heads of those passing underneath was thought to be dangerous, and a second subway, on the Catwalk, was built in the 1950's.

As more house were built at Clovelly the residents began to complain that they had a long walk to get to either Kalk Bay or Fish Hoek stations, but it was only in 1936 Clovelly station was built. There was very little room for building and it was squeezed in between the road and the beach with the overhead bridge providing access to the beach. There can not have been many stations with a notice reading "Fishing prohibited from this platform". The platform on the sea side having been declared unsafe the overhead bridge was closed and fora short time trains stopped only on the way to Cape Town before the station was finally closed completely. Clovelly commuters returning from work once again have to alight at either Kalk Bay or Fish Hoek.

Those living at Sunnycove had the same problem, it was a long walk to Fish Hoek station. They were fortunate to get their station in 1928 as a certain railway official lived there and objected to the long walk to catch his train. Both these stations were really halts, with no ticket offices, one had to pay the fare on the train. In the days when tickets were clipped by the guard on the train, instead of at the barrier at the station, the local youth often used to try and get a free ride to Cape Town.

They would get on the train without a ticket hoping that there would not be a guard on that train but if one did appear they would declare that they had got on the train at Clovelly. The guards soon realised what was going on and if the train was not full they made a quick check between Fish Hoek and Clovelly and those with no ticket had to pay double the fare.

There have been two railway accidents at Fish Hoek. An eyewitness account of the first one in appeared in the South African Railways and Harbours Magazine of July 1919. Dr Davies was on Fish Hoek beach about 5.15pm on the afternoon of 24 May 1919. He saw a train from Kalk Bay come into the station and a train coming from Simon's Town run into it. Fortunately one train was stationary and he estimated that the other was only moving at about eight miles per hour. There were no fatalities although Dr Davies said, "I jumped through the train and gave all the medical assistance I could to those injured. The first man I saw was practically dying and I sent messengers over to call for medicine and other help and to the surrounding houses for linen etc. These were soon forthcoming, many people supplying many articles very rapidly and generously." The second accident was more serious.

On 24 January 1928 an engine jumped the points on the Clovelly side of the station and the train was derailed. Six people were killed and twenty four injured.
Rail accident at Fish Hoek 24 January 1928

In 1900 a company called Kommetjie Estate Ltd. purchased a large tract of land at Kommetjie and laid out a township where plots were advertised for sale in 1902. To make this area more accessible the company decided that a railway line from Kommetjie, linking up with the existing line at Fish Hoek, would enhance the value of the plots by making it easy to commute to Cape Town. An engineer was employed to survey the area and plans were drawn up. An Act of Parliament had to be passed to sanction the building of a new railway line and, the plans having been approved, Act No 14 of 1903 was passed. This authorised "The company styled "The Kommetjie Estates Ltd." to construct and work a railway line in the Cape Division between Fish Hoek and The Kornmetjie." This was going to be an expensive project. The land had to be bought from the owners, who were probably not very pleased at the idea of a railway line through their property, and the area had a high water table which would make construction difficult. The Anglo-Boer War having just ended it was not easy to find investors and the line was never built, but what a convenience it would have for the for those living in Ocean View and Masiphumele.

7. Vischoek, Vishoek or Fish Hoek?

It is difficult to say when Fish Hoek was named. Many names appear on early maps and at various times it has been described as Visch Baai, Visbaai, Vishoeks Baal and many other variations. The name Vischoek was first given to the promontory between Kalk Bay and Fish Hoek and later extended to the bay beyond. The title deeds of the farm used the name Visch Hoek, however when the first plots were laid out for sale the plan had both Visch Hoek and Fish Hoek on it. Why the English word fish was used but the Dutch word hoek retained is not known. It is very confusing for tourists who, not knowing that hoek is Dutch for corner, often ask if the town is called Fish Hoek because the bay is shaped like a fish hook!

As most of the first residents of the new village were English speaking they called their village Fish Hoek. They were therefore most annoyed when the following report, headed "Vis Hoek not Fish Hoek" appeared in the Cape Times of 16 May 1934.

"Road sign posts at Fish Hoek will in future show the name of the locality as Vis Hoek. At yesterday's meeting of the Divisional Council a recommendation to this effect was agreed to. It is understood that the railway proposes re-naming the station as Vis Hoek and the Council's Engineer reported that all official plans of the locality have its name spelt this way."

The Village Management Board Immediately queried this with the Divisional Council who replied that the report was correct. "The Automobile Association has informed the Council of the decision of the Railway Department to re-name the station Vis Hoek and inquired which spelling the Council desired should be adopted in the manufacture of road signs. In view of the change of name of the station and as all original plans of the diagram refer to the farm as Vis Hoek the Council decided to keep this spelling of the road signs."
A protest meeting was held in the village and angry letters were written to the newspapers. It appeared that in 1928 the railway authorities had decided that "the name of stations, sidings etc., of which one half appeared in the one language and the other half in the other language should be changed so that a pure name was retained in the one or other official language." This was being implemented when stations were painted and no double names would be allowed, therefore Fish Hoek would now be known as Vishoek. However, it was pointed out even Vishoek was not correct as the original farm was called Visch Hoek.

A petition against the name change was circulated and the Chairman of the Village Management Board wrote to the Divisional Council stating that the Board had "unanimously resolved that they will not countenance any alteration in the present name of the Township." The residents were getting ready to fight! The Automobile Association, having also received an irate letter from the Village Management Board, backtracked, and wrote to the Divisional Council suggesting tactfully that "under the circumstances" it would be better to retain the name of Fish Hoek. The Divisional Council rescinded the motion and the name remained Fish Hoek.

Feelings on the subject were very heated and there were many letters to the press. One correspondent wrote that as "The Fish Hoek Village Management Board is a proper, legally constituted, and legally named Board. Think how interesting Deeds of Transfer will be in the future. They will read, I think, something like this. Certain piece of land being Lot No..... situate at Vis Hoek, in the Village Management Board area of Fish Hoek, part of the Visch Hoek Estate."

Another correspondent, citing the very long names on some Welsh railway stations suggested "why not call the station Vishoefishoekvischoek?" Now that would have really put us on the map!

**8. Beach Development**

One of the reasons for the popularity of Fish Hoek has always been the beautiful beach with safe bathing. However, as more visitors began using the beach, although the residents wanted it to remain as natural as possible, more facilities needed to be provided. When Villeria Flats were built, in the 1920's, on what is now the open space behind the first subway, bathing cubicles were built underneath them. People were more modest in those days and would not have dreamed of changing public or going home in a wet bathing costume. So in 1927 the Local Board decided to build some bathing boxes on the beach. The residents were informed that they could be hired at a monthly rate which varied, with the time of the year, from £2 per month in December and January to 5 shillings per month from June to September. The first six bathing boxes were built in 1929, more being erected as visitors from Cape Town, and further afield, discovered how useful it was to have somewhere to change.

About 1922 a large raft, from a ship, was bought at an auction in Cape Town and moored off the rocks. It was a big box-like structure kept afloat by empty drums and was much used by bathers. Unfortunately, being rather heavy, it tended to break loose in rough seas and wash up on the beach where it eventually broke up. Later a diving board was erected there but was removed after a bather was injured by diving off it at low tide.

The first tea room was built in 1925, a wooden building known as the Pavilion. It was built on stilts to allow extra high tides to wash underneath and many of our older residents remembered scrabbling in the sand under the Pavilion looking for coins that had been dropped through the gaps in the floor boards as people pocketed their change. It was replaced by the first part of the present building in 1954 and this has been added on to several times. In 1957 the Fish Hoek Women's Association presented the clock on the front of the restaurant. Although this was regarded as a useful addition by most people the local children now had no excuse for being home late for supper!
In 1931 the Village Management Board employed a chartered engineer to draw up plans for a cement path from the beach to Sunny Cove. The rocks along the side of the bay were a favourite spot for sunbathing and swimming and the easiest way to get there was to walk along the railway line, which for safety reasons was not a good idea. Nine people submitted tenders for the first section, to be built as far as the second subway. A tender of £440, from J. H. Tyler, was accepted with the work to be completed by 31 October 1932, in time for the summer season. Eight tenders were received for the second section, which would complete the walk. It was built by J. Gordon at a cost of £275 and completed on 9 January 1933. The new walkway was named the Jager Walk after H. S. Jager, the Chairman of the Village Management Board. Who first called it the Catwalk is not known, there are several claimants, and although there is a name board up with Jager Walk on it, it is always known locally as the Catwalk. A 1785 map marks a path along this area called “Diamanten Pad”. A possible explanation of this is the presence of crystals in the granite boulders along what is now the Catwalk which sparkle in the sun, alas, no diamonds have ever been found there!
The Catwalk area 1910

To accommodate the gentlemen a changing booth, open on the sea side, was built on the first section of the Catwalk and labelled “Men Only Changing Booth”. Many visitors to Fish Hoek used it, including General Smuts. On hearing this Mr Jager offered him the use of his bathing box which was gratefully accepted. "Men Bathers", as it was known locally, was part of the history of Fish Hoek until the Fish Hoek Municipality was replaced by the South Peninsula Municipality. Suddenly it was remodelled, a wall being built down the middle with ladies being permitted to change on one side and gentlemen on the other, perhaps the authorities felt that Fish Hoek was being sexist! Whatever the reason, it created a problem as the beach law enforcement were having increasing trouble with vagrants and drinking and drug taking on the beach. When challenged wrongdoers soon discovered that the place to take cover was the ladies side as the male law enforcement officers were not supposed follow them in there. There was talk of demolishing the building but instead it was decided to take out the dividing wall and restore it to the original ”Men Only”.

Jager Walk, locally known as the “Catwalk”, with ”Men Bathers" 1974

In 1935 a local resident submitted plans for a new foreshore development. This was to provide a promenade, a pavilion and a tidal pool. Steps would lead up from the beach to a sundeck and restaurant and a second storey would have a hall suitable for dances, films and other entertainments. At beach level there would be two hundred bathing cubicles. Each of the corners of the sun deck would have a tower housing a water tank. This was to be in about the same position as the present restaurant. Other areas would be developed for parking, games and walkways and the water from the tanks in the towers was to be used to wash away piled up sand. A grandiose scheme indeed, which would have been completely impractical when the high spring and autumn tides washed up. Perhaps it is just as well that the estimated cost of £30 000 was way beyond anything the Village Management Board could raise, even if the scheme had been practicable.

In the 1920’s the beach was the centre of entertainment for those living in the village. Hockey and cricket were played on a gravel pitch at the back of the beach opposite the station, known as "the black pitch". The local children learned to swim at an early age and as they grew up spent many hours at the beach. Impromptu
games of touch rugby were played in the summer evenings, as they still are today. On 5 November, Guy Fawkes Night, a huge bonfire would be lit and everyone in the village gathered to watch the fireworks.

Donkey rides were very popular. In 1940 Mr and Mrs Ayres, who ran a private hotel, Bellaire, in Second Avenue, bought two donkeys and named them Hurricane and Spitfire after the aeroplanes used by the Royal Airforce during World War 2, which had just started. The Ayres thought that donkey rides would be a good way to raise funds for the war effort and the Municipality agreed, so every morning, Tek, who looked after them, could be seen, in his white coat, taking the donkeys to the beach. For almost twenty years they, and later their baby, Meteor, were a source of pleasure to many children, with all the proceeds going to charity.

But by 1958 Fish Hoek was no longer the small village it had been and quite a large fee was being demanded for the right to take the donkeys on to the beach. As all proceeds from the rides had always gone to charity their owners were not happy about this, so the donkeys were retired to their paddock on the site of what is now the Second Avenue carpark. Such a quiet life was not to their liking, and after several "escapes" and the accusation by one irate gardener that they had eaten his dahlias, they were sent to live out their lives in a field at the SPCA. Many local residents were very annoyed about this and visited them regularly with sympathy and bunches of carrots.

In January 1954 the Fish Hoek Echo advertised — "See a moving picture of real life in colour at the Camera Obscura on the beach. Admission 6d, children 3d." The camera obscura is a fascinating show consisting of a round table on which a moving picture of what is actually happening around the building at that moment is projected from a periscope on the roof. A small building was specially erected but presumably it was not a paying proposition as it lasted for only one season.

The swings, slide and roundabout provided enjoyment for children for many years before a climbing frame and a boat named "Samson" were added to the playground. Samson Mankai was employed by the Fish Hoek Municipality for more than thirty years, clearing the seaweed and litter from the beach. He was well known to all the locals, particularly the children. When he retired, in 1987, the Council decided to name the boat in the children's playground after him. Perhaps an ironic decision when you realise that for all the years he worked there Fish Hoek was a "white" beach and neither he, nor any member of his family, could use the beach for recreation.
By 1958 the members of the P Sea Scout Rover Crew were performing unofficial lifesaving duties at the beach. The idea of Lifesaving Clubs with the members being trained for duty came from Australia, and in March 1958 the Fish Hoek Surf Lifesaving Club was officially registered. Initially they had no facilities and it was not until 1963 that they were allocated land to build a hut. The club members built this themselves in the workshop at the Windsor Hotel on Beach Road. It was then taken across the railway in sections and erected on the beach. Although, in time, it was extended it did not compare with the facilities at other clubs and providing hospitality for visiting teams, when it was Fish Hoek’s turn to host competitions, became quite an embarrassment. It was not until 1993 that their present clubhouse was built.
It was not long after the first plots were sold, that that the first controversy over the use of the beach erupted. Plots had been laid out where the bathing boxes are today and further along the beach proposed roads were set out on the plan for later development. One of Fish Hoek’s well known residents, “Bull” Pritchard, who had built his house, "Drano", on the Catwalk in 1919, first drew attention to the situation. He was a surveyor in the Government Survey Department and on looking at the plans realised that houses on the sea side of the railway would ruin the beach.

The administrators of the de Villiers Estate insisted that this area was above the high water mark and was therefore part of the farm. The original survey had been done before the 1818 grant of land to Andries Bruijns and the eastern limit of the farm was set down as the seacoast. The Government Surveyor at the time had taken this as a straight line between two pegs, one at the Fish Hoek end of the beach and the other one at the Clovelly end. Over the years attempts to stop the sand encroaching on the railway line and variations in the course of the Silvermine River, had altered the shoreline and so the legitimacy of the plots hinged on exactly where the high water mark had been in 1818.

The local residents were very concerned and to canvas for support a public meeting, chaired by W. H. Wardley, Chairman of the Fish Hoek Ratepayers
Association, was held in the Metropolitan Hall on Greenmarket Square, Cape Town, on 7 November 1919. A fund was opened to provide money for any legal proceedings but it was not until three years later, on 10 October 1922, that the case came to court. It was brought to the attention of the public by a notice that appeared in the Cape Times.

"We, the Ratepayers of Fish Hoek, hereby assure our Local Area Board that they will have our wholehearted support in all steps they take to assist the Surveyor-General in his forthcoming case regarding our Foreshore, and we earnestly trust that he will be successful, as the grave public interests involved are vital to our future welfare."

It was submitted that the shore line had changed over the years, and that the tide had at one time washed over the area where the railway line was built, so that the land on which the plots were laid out had been below the high water mark in 1818. On 19 December 1922 judgement was given in favour of the de Villiers Estate but an appeal was lodged and on 1 April 1923 the case went to the Appellate Division in Bloemfontein, where a panel of judges, in a fifty page judgement, upheld the decision of the lower court.

The Government had been watching the judgement with interest in case it led to other cases of disputed coastline, and were anxious to have it settled as soon as possible. However, the matter dragged on and it was not until December 1926 that an agreement was made between the Fish Hoek Local Board, the Ratepayers of Fish Hoek, the Administrator of the Cape Province, the Government of the Union of South Africa and the de Villiers Estate. It was arranged that on payment of £3 000 the Fish Hoek Local Board could become the owner of the disputed plots. Even then the matter was not settled as the Local Board could not raise a loan unless they held the title to the land and the de Villiers Estate could not part with the title until they had the money. It was a deadlock!

To finalise the matter the House of Assembly adopted a resolution on 20 June 1927, which was then passed by the Senate, concerning "The sanctioning of certain arrangements between the Fish Hoek Village Management Board and the Executors in the Estate of the late Mrs Hester Sophia de Villiers." This resolution enabled the Village Management Board to raise a loan which was to be paid back over thirty years, finally being settled in the late 1950's. The disputed land was returned to the Government whichranted it to the Village Management Board in exchange for £3000 to paid to the executors of the de Villiers Estate. A Supreme Court order was issued and the transactions took place simultaneously on 7 March 1928 subject to "the condition that the land shall only be used for public purposes and shall not be capable of being sold, and to such further conditions as the Government may approve." It took nine years, but the residents of Fish Hoek had saved the beach.

Another controversy arose over the building of a new sea wall. By the early 1970's the palisade of railway sleepers, put in to try and control the sand being blown on the railway line, was in a bad state. Having been there for over forty years, the wood was decaying and the high tides were washing through and undermining the path in front of the bathing boxes. In 1976 the railway authorities declared that the first subway, under the line at the back of the beach, was unsafe and unless the Fish Hoek Municipality would agree to pay half the cost of reconstruction it would have to be bricked up.

The Palasade of wooden railway sleepers 1980
The Council decided that the subway had to be kept open so plans were drawn up to rebuild the subway and extend the Catwalk, which at that time started at the subway, to the front of the restaurant and put steps down to the beach. The second stage would be the replacing of the old railway sleepers with a new sea wall. Also included were plans for a new caravan park, which until then had been behind the Lifesaving Clubhouse, and a clubhouse for the Beach Sailing Club. When the plans were published this became the hot topic of discussion in the town and a strong anti-wall lobby soon appeared. It was said that extending the Catwalk would encourage the sea to swirl around in the corner and make bathing unsafe.

It was also suggested that the sand would all wash away from the area leaving only exposed rock, or alternatively that the sand would pile up and cover the walkway.

The subway, path and steps in front of the restaurant were completed by the end of 1976 but on 19 February 1977 a high tide flooded the new subway and exposed rubble which had been buried instead of being removed after construction. A new pump had to be purchased and the rubble removed. Older residents pointed out that perhaps the builders of the old wooden Pavilion had had the right idea when they built it on stilts so that high tides could wash underneath it.

Meetings of the Residents Association at this time were very argumentative. The second stage of the development had been designed by the Fish Hoek Town Engineer specifically for the local conditions and was to be built using municipal labour, an idea which many thought to be impossible. An oceanographer was asked to speak on the subject and a group of engineers was asked to prepare a report on what many thought would be a colossal mistake. At a meeting in December 1979 a motion of no confidence in the Fish Hoek Town Council was proposed by the anti-wall lobby which was defeated by 42 votes to 36. Someone pointed out that as the Council had been re-elected unopposed at the last election it might prove difficult to replace them should they be forced to resign en bloc! Despite all this the Council expressed confidence in the Town Engineer and the wall was built, being completed in 1982 at a very reasonable cost of R38 869. Many visitors do not even realise that it is there. The only outward sign is a small brick wall on the sea side of the path at the back of the beach but under the sand below that wall is a V shaped trench filled with interlocking concrete blocks. It fills with sand but in some way prevents the sand from building up and covering the pathway.

In comparison to the sea wall controversy the building of Seaside Village only caused minor dissatisfaction. Some residents were not happy that because the land on the foreshore could not be sold, the houses could be bought but the land had to be leased from the Council. Others felt that as people walking their dogs in the sand dunes in the area had been mugged it was perhaps a good idea. It was also said that it was a very ugly development and for some time after completion was referred to as "Noddy Town". Initially permission was given by the Administrator of the Cape for the land to be leased for ten years for the construction of what was intended to be a holiday village. At the end of that period an application to the Deeds Office for renewal of the leases for a period of 25 years was refused on the grounds that the land should not have been built on in the first place. Without a valid lease on the land, transfer could not be taken, so no sales could be completed and as yet this has not been sorted out.
A proposal to fence off the beach and charge for admission enraged most residents. As this could not be allowed, being in conflict with the stipulation in the 1818 grant to Andries Bruijns that the beach should remain open to the public, it was proposed to levy a parking fee instead. It was pointed out that that the beach would still be open to the public in that the payment is for parking a car and pedestrians do not pay. The residents demanded that as they paid municipal rates which were used for the upkeep of the beach they should be given free passes. This was one they could not win as it would have been impossible to ensure that those giving local addresses really were local residents, but a season ticket was introduced. It was also stipulated that all parking fees had to kept in a separate account and used for the upkeep and improvement of the parking area. Unfortunately when the Fish Hoek Municipality was absorbed into a larger area parking fees went into the big municipal pot.

10 Fish Hoek Main Road

Coming through Fish Hoek in the 1800’s you would have had to negotiate the Trappies before crossing the Silvermine River. This was a series of step like excavations cut into the hillside to ease the steep descent. Crossing the river, before the building of the bridge, had to be done with care as there were quicksands and everyone knew the story of the rider and his horse who were swallowed up and never found. The road then went along the back of the beach before turning up to go behind the farmhouse and on to Simon’s Town. The first bridge across the Silvermine River was a single track wooden bridge with hand rails, at that time quite sufficient to take the animal drawn traffic.
In 1902 a bus service was started between Muizenberg and Kommetjie. Passing through Fish Hoek was quite a problem, as the road was often covered with sand making it almost impassable. The unreliability of the early engines, and the fact that the passengers objected to paying high fares if they had to get out and push, led to the service being discontinued. Transport in the area returned to the horse drawn cart or ox wagon until the reliability of the petrol engine was improved.

*The Bus stuck in the sand on the Fish Hoek Main Road near Clovelly*

When the railway station was moved, in 1919, it was decided to resite the Main Road from its position along the back of the beach as the sand drifting across it was still a hazard for the increasing number of motor vehicles using it. Sandhills had to be taken away and the Post Office had to move a telephone pole that stood in the middle of the new route, for which they charged £14.5.11. By the early 1930’s the single track bridge was not safe for the increased motor traffic and in 1932 the old bridge was removed in preparation for a bigger concrete bridge to be constructed. A temporary wooden bridge was put up between the road and the railway line to provide access to Fish Hoek and Simon’s Town until the new bridge was finished.

The Victorian Times pub is now the oldest building on the Main Road, being one of the few wood and iron houses, dating from the early 1920’s, left in Fish Hoek. Number 3 First Avenue is another one, which has been changed very little apart from the stoep having been enclosed. The grandson of the original owner still lives there. Warwick House was also built in the 1920’s and at various times has been a boarding house, flats and shops. Whitstable, on the corner near the traffic circle, was originally the Fish Hoek Farm stables. The road having been built up it is now below road level.

*Main Road house built in 1920’s, now The Victorian Times.*

As the weekenders were replaced by a more permanent population, shops started to appear. Initially these were built on street corners for the convenience of those living in the area. The shops on the corners of
Kommetjie Road and First and Second Avenues were some of the first to open. As the village got larger more shops were opened, mainly on the western side of the Main Road, the eastern side remaining mostly residential for many years.

The Village Management Board built offices in the Main Road in 1933 and as Fish Hoek grew the municipal complex expanded to take over a whole block between Main Road, Central Road and Beach Road. The house behind the offices, which had at one time been the Lounge Tea Room, became the Town Engineers Department and the Library, Traffic Police and Fire Department were all sited there.

In the 1940’s there were at least two commercial libraries in Fish Hoek, one at the Red Roof Tea Room on Simonstown Road and one in G. W. Morris's shop in the Main Road. Later Jane Eliza Hasted, an author herself, opened a bookshop with a subscription library. In 1953 the Committee of the Fish Hoek Women’s Association, having heard that a Provincial Library Service was being started, wrote to the Fish Hoek Town Council asking for a Library to be opened in Fish Hoek. The Council invited representatives of local organisations to a meeting to discuss the project and it was decided that Fish Hoek should become part of the Provincial Library Service and open a free library for residents of the town. People outside the town boundaries would be able to join but would have to pay a subscription.

A room was made available in the Town engineers building and applications were invited for the post Librarian. As the library was only to be open for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening there were over forty applicants for what was seen to be "a cushy job"! They were all interviewed by the Mayor and the Town Clerk and the post went to Ethelmay Gillard, who having been brought up in Fish Hoek had, at the age of twenty-one, contracted polio and was trying to cope with a permanent disability and become independent. Little did they know that Miss G, as she later became known to her staff, was to run the Fish Hoek Library for thirty-six years, seeing them through vast expansion and two moves. On her retirement she returned as a volunteer helper and was elected Chairman of the Friends of the Library.

The Provincial Library Service delivered a thousand books, which had to be fitted into a 1 Oft by 6ft room. By the time that shelves were fitted on all the walls there was very little space left fora chair and table for the Librarian. This was the second Provincial Library to be opened, the first being at Cordons Bay. A Library Committee of local residents was elected at a public meeting and the library opened on 1 April 1954. The opening day was chaotic, the queue stretched right around the block as people waited to be registered. The evening hour was so busy that helpers from Toc H volunteered to help put the books away as they came in.

Because of the apartheid laws the library was for whites only and there was much discussion as to whether elderly borrowers should be able to send their maids in to change their books. Eventually it was decided to allow this provided the maid brought a note from her employer! The library was so popular that it was not long before two more rooms had to be used. In 1956 a story hour for children was started, this was the first to be held at any library in the Cape Peninsula. More space was soon needed and the Provincial Library Service asked that a proper building be provided. The new library, with a reading room, a children’s room and a hall, financed by the municipality with the aid of a government subsidy, opened in Beach Road in 1958.
Immediately forty Librarians from all over the Cape Peninsula converged on Fish Hoek for a two week training course held in the new Library Hall. The patrons were not pleased, as THEIR librarian was on the course there were strangers on the counter in THEIR new library who did not know what kind of books they liked!

Fish Hoek Library built in 1954 demolished in 1988

Dogs were not allowed in the library but there was one small dog, Blackie, who had his own place there. Fish Hoek being "dry" the dog's master went by train to his favourite watering hole in Kalk Bay every morning. The dog would walk as far as the library with him and spend the morning behind the counter where he had his own supply of biscuits. On hearing the whistle from the goods train which went through shortly before his master's usual train he would take himself off to the station to wait for his boss.

The Traffic and Fire Department was located next to the municipal offices in the Main Road, the traffic cops also serving as firemen. The first photographic evidence we have of a fire on Elsie's Peak dates from 1910 and mountain fires have always been a threat. On 24 April 1936 a fire started in the Glencairn Valley and came over the mountain to threaten the houses on the slopes of Elsie's Peak. A school boy on his way home from school in the train saw the flames beginning to appear over the top of the mountain. He rushed home to change and with a friend went up the Ravine to see the fire. It was only when some of the beaters started shouting at them that they realised that they were in danger of being surrounded by the fire and had to run for their lives. At that time the only way of fighting a fire in Fish Hoek was to call out local volunteers but this fire was too big for local resources. The Cape Town Fire Brigade was called and the Navy and the owners of the Glencairn Quarry also sent men to help. The nearest fire hydrant was on the Outspan there was a problem getting sufficient water pressure for the hoses. By this time the highest house on the mountain was being threatened and our schoolboy was helping to remove the owner's possessions. In the kitchen he was given a box with jars of preserved peaches to carry out, the temptation was too much for him, having had nothing to eat since his school lunch that jar of peaches tasted really good!

The house was saved and the fire extinguished but then came the accounts from all those who had sent men to fight the fire. It was suggested that the cost be divided amongst the owners of the homes that had been threatened, who, as you can imagine, were not very pleased with this idea. Their insurance companies were approached and agreed to meet the cost of fighting the fire as it would have cost them much more if the houses had burned down. However, it took six months to get the home owners to submit their claims and refund the money to the Village Management Board who had paid the bills.

In 1947 the original house of the Fish Hoek Farm, which was the Homestead Hotel, burned down. Perhaps as a result of this the Fish Hoek Municipality decided to act on a suggestion from one of the Town Councillors, Capt. Fairley, and start their own Fire Brigade. The contract with the Cape Town Fire Brigade was terminated as not only did it take them some time to get to Fish Hoek but it was becoming increasingly more expensive. Capt. Fairley located a Ford V.8 troop carrier and a trailer pump which were bought from the War Store Disposal Board and combined into a homemade fire engine. The Town Engineer, Mr J. N. Griffiths, and another municipal employee, Mr W. G. Mair, worked in their spare time to produce the fire engine in less than three months at a total cost of only £900, all the mechanical work being carried out in the Fish Hoek municipal workshops. The finished engine was valued at £4 000. It was 26 feet long and designed to operate from both hydrants and other water sources with a 50 gallon tank to deal with fires in isolated places. It had 2 000 feet of hose and a ladder which could be extended to 35 feet.
Recognising that without Capt. Fairley the building of the fire engine would not have been possible it was named the Capt. Fairley Fire Tender and a plaque bearing the name was attached to the vehicle. It remained in service until 1971 when the Fire Station moved from the Main Road to its present building.

The Captain Fairley Fire Tender

By the 1980’s the library and municipal offices were too small for the growing town. The site between the Main Road and Beach Road was sold to the developers of the Town Square Shopping Centre and a library, municipal offices and engineers department were added on to the Civic Hall at Central Circle, the new complex being opened in 1988.

Until the middle 1920’s there was no police station in Fish Hoek, it was included in the Simon’s Town area. In case of emergency it took time for the police to arrive so in November 1921 the Local Board requested a mounted policeman to patrol the Fish Hoek area and this was agreed. The first police station in Fish Hoek was opened in the 1920’s and was not in the Main Road but in Recreation Road on the site of Calders Kings Hotel.

In October 1921 what must have been the first prosecution for speeding in the village, a charge of “furious riding” in the Main Road, was thrown out of court when the Magistrate at Simon’s Town discovered that when the Police offences Act of 1882 was drawn up, the area of Fish Hoek was not included. The Board had to write to the department of Justice to get the matter rectified and on 5 May 1922 a proclamation in the Government Gazette made it illegal to break the speed limit in the Fish Hoek area.

In October 1927 it was recorded that in the previous three months there had been fifteen cases of housebreaking, six of theft and four of breaking into shops. Additional police were requested to cope with this “crime wave” and the complement at the Fish Hoek station was increased to three. This must have solved the problem as the crime level dropped, and presumably the personnel became bored, because in April 1932 a complaint was laid that both the sergeant and the constable on duty had been seen in the Kalk Bay cinema on the same night, leaving Fish Hoek without police protection!

It had become so peaceful that in November 1934 the Village Management Board was informed that the police station was to be moved to Kalk Bay, to a house on the Fish Hoek side of Clairvaux Road. The residents were outraged, and the Board was asked to request the immediate return of the station before crime in the village escalated again.

Letters were written to the papers and a letter of protest signed by most of the prominent residents was sent to General Smuts, who was then a Cabinet Minister. In view of all this protestation it was decided to build a police station in Fish Hoek on a site in Beach Road opposite the station. So the police returned to Fish Hoek to a brand new building which opened on 2 May 1936.
This police station closed at the end of May 1984 when the site was sold and a new station was planned in the Main Road. In the meantime a house on Highway was to be used. The neighbours were not pleased about this and protested that there would be noisy police vans coming and going at all hours, not to mention the shouts of recalcitrant prisoners. The editor of the Fish Hoek Echo wrote a tongue in cheek article about how lucky they would be to have a cell with a view. The Station Commander at the time must have had very little sense of humour as he wrote a letter protesting that the article undermined the dignity of the police, which only amused the readers even more! However, the authorities realised that a residential area was not the best place for a police station and a Divisional Council building in a more isolated spot in Brakkloof, near the Sun Valley traffic lights, was used instead until the present building was completed in December 1988.

For many years if you had said "Mardi Gras" to anyone in the Cape Peninsula they would have replied "Fish Hoek". From small beginnings it grew to be an annual event drawing hundreds of people to watch the procession in Fish Hoek Main Road. It was started by Lynette Barling, who soon became known as "the Queen of the Mardi Gras". Well known in local handicraft and Dramatic Society circles, and as the wearer of enormous hats, Lynette was also a wonderful organiser.

In 1959 Fish Hoek was trying to raise funds for the building of a home for the elderly, and what better than to involve as many people as possible by having a Mardi Gras procession through the streets of the town. Probably no one realised just how much work this was going to be, but Lynette and her friends and family just went ahead and did it. Every year her home became a workshop as floats were designed and costumes made. Traditionally it was always held on 2nd January and 1960 saw the very first Mardi Gras. £393 was collected which was made up to £500 by donations. This was presented to the fund for what was to be Carlisle Lodge. It was obvious that although it took a lot of effort it was a fun way of raising money.

It became an annual event, growing in size each year, with fundraisers being held for the money for materials as local groups vied with each other to build the most ingenious floats. After processing along the Main Road they ended up at the sports fields where the judging of the various categories took place. It had become such a part of the town that everyone was horrified when, in 1978, it was cancelled as Lynette was not well and could not get anyone to take over for her. At this point the Town Council decided that if the Mardi Gras was to continue it must have a properly drawn up constitution and reasonable notice must be given of proposed activities. They also asked that the number of floats be limited, with no more than forty being allowed, so by then it had had become a really spectacular procession.

In 1981 Mardi Gras celebrated its 21st birthday with a very wet procession. It was reported that the Mardi Gras Queen “looked lovely in wet white” and the kilts of the pipe band “swung wetly in marchtime”. That year there were also twenty five marching groups. With no one willing to take on the overall organisation there was no
procession in 1982. However, a group of local young people, dressed in black, walked the route on the afternoon of the 2nd January. They carried a mock coffin, draped in black, and placards proclaiming the death of the Fish Hoek Mardi Gras.

Although it has recently been revived it is, as yet, only a shadow of Mardi Gras in its heyday, but perhaps it will grow, until once again Fish Hoek Main Road is the only place to be on Mardi Gras day.

11. Early Businesses

Even before the first sale of plots, in 1918, business opportunities were being explored. The Delbridge brothers, who were builders, realised that the sandstone in a kopnie on Elsies Peak was ideal for building and particularly good for flooring as it polished very well. A lease was negotiated with Mrs Hester de Villiers, the owner of the Fish Hoek Farm, allowing the stone to be quarried. In the late 1700's farmers from the western end of the valley had built a track over the mountain as a short cut to Simon's Town. This was not used for long as a better route was found and was opened up again to give access to the quarry site. It started opposite the Primary School, in Kommetjie Road, taking an easy gradient to about three quarter of the way up the ravine opposite Second Avenue, after which it ran up more steeply to the quarry. The wagons containing the stone went up and down on rails opposite the Main Road circle. They were presumably powered by a mule or donkey operated capstan at the top as the remains of horse shoes have been found on the site. As there was only one set of rails there must have been some sort of braking system for the empty wagons coming down.

The stone was cut and dressed on site, only the finished product being brought down to the road where it was then loaded into carts to be taken to local building sites or to the railway siding near the farmhouse. In 1896 Fish Hoek stone was railed to Wellington for the building of Cummings Hall at the Wellington Training College. The business closed about 1905, possibly as a result of the opening of the larger Glencairn Quarry. The Delbridges had building businesses and were not dependent on the Fish Hoek Quarry, so presumably closed it when it became uneconomical.

In 1903 Lambert Colyn opened a quarry at the side of the Clovelly Road on the site of the present electrical sub-station. He was given permission to build a railway line to the siding at Fish Hoek to load his stone. To do this he had to build a bridge over the Silvermine River and a line that ran alongside the Simon's Town line to the siding near the farmhouse. The railway line remained after the closing of the quarry and by 1930 had become rather hazardous to traffic where it crossed the Main Road as the lines were slightly below the road level. The remains of the supports for the bridge could be seen in the Silvermine River for many years.

The Railway Line and bridge from the quarry on Clovelly Road
Another type of building material, ash blocks, was made in a building on the foreshore in 1924/5. They were made from a mixture of coal cinders from the railway, sea sand and shells with a little cement to bond the mixture together. The Local Board thought that the railway authorities had given permission for this business to be carried on there and the railway authorities thought that permission had been given by the local Board!

It was only in March 1925 that someone realised that no permission had ever been given and they were forced to close. In 1930 an application was made to start a fish smoking business and in 1931 there was an application for a fish processing factory. Both applications were refused as Fish Hoek wanted to remain a residential area only.

Tea rooms and cafes soon appeared as more visitors came to the beach. In 1925 Costa and Maria Pnematicatos took over a cafe in Beach Road. This became the local rendezvous for the young people coming and going from the beach. For visitors it was the place to go and buy their delicious ice creams. In October 1923 the Local Board passed the plans for a cafe on the corner of Main and Recreation Roads. It was called Santoy Tea Rooms and in an early advertisement is described as “five minutes from railway station” and tells us “Table Boarders a Speciality.” A stoep on the Main Road side was a very popular place for tea. It was taken over in 1925 by an owner who changed the name to “The Green Parrot Tea Room” and brought her parrot with her.

Polly soon became very popular with the customers. The stoep was built in so that it could be used in all weather but when the Main Road was rebuilt in the 1940s it was discovered that it was actually built on public land, so the stoep had to be removed to make room for a sidewalk. The business changed hands several times but the parrot remained. The building was demolished in 1964 and replaced with the present building, but if you look up at the corner on the Recreation Road side you will see a picture of a green parrot and the name Green Parrot Place.

Green Parrot Tea Room 1929

On the corner of Main and Recreation Roads, opposite the Green Parrot was a low lying site which flooded in winter. This remained empty for several until Ted Holwill bought it in 1941. He already owned the adjoining block of shops and on his new site he built Devonshire Court flats and opened Kents Stores underneath on the Main Road side.

By 1944 he owned the whole block as far as A. P. Jones and in June 1986 the old shops were demolished and the building of the Arcade was started. It took a year to build, being completed in June 1987. The property still belongs to the Holwill Family Trust.
Wakefords Furnishing and A.P. Jones are the only two of the original Fish Hoek businesses still running. In 1920 Albert Wakeford came to Fish Hoek on holiday with his parents. He met an elderly couple who owned a grocery shop at the end of the Main Road and they asked him if he would run the business for them. Service was much more personal in those days and he would set out on horseback each morning to collect the grocery lists from his customers. In the afternoon the horse would be harnessed to a cart and they would set off to deliver the orders. In 1922 he bought the grocery shop and four years later another two plots further down the road, where in 1929 he built a garage, the Triangle Garage, so called because the present circle at the end of the Main Road was then a triangle. During the 1940's he started selling second hand furniture at the garage and realising that as Fish Hoek was growing and there was a demand for furniture he converted the garage into shops and so Wakefords Furniture was born. In 1945 he bought the Fish Hoek Garage, where Pep Stores is today, which was renamed the Triangle Garage.

A.P. Jones was a Cornishman who had worked in a gentleman’s outfitters before joining the army during World War 1. Although he got his old job back after the war prospects for advancement were not good, and he joined his two brothers who had immigrated to South Africa and lived with one of them in Rondebosch. In 1921 his brother moved to Fish Hoek and he came too. Although there was plenty of entertainment for a young
bachelor he could not forget his Cornish sweetheart, so he sent her a ticket to Cape Town and they were married at Holy Trinity Church in Kalk Bay in 1925.

After living with his brother for a while they moved to a flat in Tamboers Kloof where their first daughter was born.

As a founder member of the Commercial Employees Association he fought for improved conditions for shop workers until he started travelling as an agent for Garlicks, taking orders for their good in the country districts. Travelling by train and staying in country hotels his route took him three months to complete. This was not a good job for a man with a wife and two children so his brother persuaded him to buy a grocery business in Kommetjie Road. As more shops were opening up in the Main Road he approached Mr Burton, the owner of some plots between Warwick House and Wakefords who agreed to build a shop and let it. Now A.P. Jones began to sell clothing and materials as well as groceries and the shop was built with two doors for the different departments.

As Fish Hoek grew the clothing and material side became so popular that he sold the grocery side, and when Oxleys, a ladies clothing shop in Warwick House was put up for sale he bought it. The ladies department was moved there whilst the mens department moved further down the Main Road. Running two separate shops was not ideal so he bought a plot next to the bank and built a shop big enough to take all their departments. As the business prospered a house behind the shop was demolished and the premises extended through to First Avenue.

In November 1948 a meeting was held to consider the formation of a Business Association. Fifteen people attended with G. W. Morris, who had a shop in the Main Road, acting as Chairman. A resolution was passed that "An Association of Business interests be formed in Fish Hoek." The Fish Hoek Business Association represented local interests until 1953 when, at their Annual General Meeting, a resolution was passed that the Fish Hoek Business Association be wound up and its assets transferred to a newly formed Chamber of Commerce. They would then be able to send a delegate to meetings of the Association of Chambers of Commerce.

In 1956 "a sub-committee for propaganda for promoting Fish Hoek as a shopping centre" was formed. Special attention was to be drawn to "Easy Parking arrangements in Fish Hoek, Competitive Prices, Competitions, Leisurely Shopping". The idea of competitions was discarded as "Fish Hoek residents (particularly children) being in the majority would probably carry off everything – which was not the aim of the project." "It was therefore considered that the approach to the scheme should be a dignified attitude, advertising our shopping area to draw custom from outside areas and presenting all we have naturally and "in our stride" and to cut out all competitive stunts." How times have changed!
12. Local Government

When the first plots were sold in the new Fish Hoek Township, in April 1918, the area was administered by the Divisional council of the Cape. A Vigilance Committee was formed to keep an eye on affairs in the new village. This was a voluntary organisation with no legal standing, although they probably had quite a lot of influence amongst the residents. It was not until 1921 that a group of residents held a meeting at which it was decided that a Local Board should be formed to control the village. A Board consisting of three members was elected, L. Jacobson, E. W. Rice and F. H. Daniels.

At their first meeting, held at Dynevor, the home of E. W. Rice, in September of that year L. Jacobson was elected as the Chairman. Working behind the scenes was Reg Kemp, a well known estate agent and the owner of several properties, who organised the Ratepayers Association and compiled a voters list. He never held office, either in the Ratepayers Association or on the Board, but campaigned vigorously for residents rights, often crossing swords with those in authority.

It was proposed to levy a rate for general purposes, this was to be one halfpenny in the pound, to be payable in November of each year. In the meantime the Administrator of the Cape was asked to sanction a bank overdraft of £200 for necessary expenditure until the rates were paid. This Board had to start from scratch in raising money and providing services for the residents. At the first meeting they also discussed the provision of a post office, the sanitary arrangements water supply and the naming of the streets.

By 1927, with the increased size of the village and its facilities, it was given added status as a Village Management Board and H. S. Jager was elected as the first Chairman of the new Board. The village continued to grow and develop. The annual revenue of £1 625 in 1921 had grown to £12 000 by 1933 and the property valuation had risen from £64 000 to £436 000 in the same period. The Village Management Board moved into their new offices in the Main Road, having previously been housed in a shop building in Beach Road, the water supply was improved, electricity installed and the sewerage scheme started.

The roads were upgraded and the turning into Hillside Road from Simonstown Road was improved. On this corner stands the large rock known as "Sewe Mans Klip" where, according to tradition, the rock had rolled down on an early roadmaking gang and had killed seven of them. The story goes that it was impossible to move the rock and the bodies are still lying underneath it.

In 1929 a group of residents, dissatisfied with the way the Village Management Board was running the village, proposed that the Cape Town City Council be approached with regard to Fish Hoek being amalgamated into the City Council area. They seemed to think that the incorporation of another coastal resort would be welcomed. A list of twenty points in favour was compiled and presented by the leader of the group.

1. It is the considered opinion among influential people that the time has arrived for someone other than the Village Management Board to take Fish Hoek over.

2. That the Board has outlived its usefulness and that Fish Hoek has grown too large for the Board to manage satisfactorily.

3. That he felt sure the Fish Hoek Ratepayers would agree to amalgamation.

4. That the City Council would then appoint a Committee to discuss terms of the union with Fish Hoek authorities.

5. That he was satisfied that Cape Town would receive the application and consider it favourably.

6. That Cape Town should remember there is an asset in Fish Hoek that would counter balance most of the objections to taking it into the Cape Town area.

7. That favourite places like St James and other False Bay resorts were crowded out and had reached the zenith of their development.

8. That Fish Hoek is not progressing as it should.
9. That the primitive sanitary system greatly retarded the growth of the village as a holiday resort and was a continual inconvenience.

10. That the Board has neither the funds nor the officers to carry out things satisfactorily.

11. That the ordinary rate is 2d but that this was the same or higher than the 4.8d rate in Cape Town taking all things into consideration.

12. That the Board bought water at 2/6 and sold it at 4/6.

13. That from 1918 Fish Hoek had grown enormously (from no valuation then to £4000 now.)

14. That the sanitary arrangements were worse than Cape Town 20 years ago.

15. That bath water flowed down the streets.

16. That there was no drainage for storm water.

17. That it was only a question of time before there would be a dangerous epidemic.

18. That there was only one way to improve these conditions for the Cape Town Corporation to take Fish Hoek over.

19. That two Councillors would represent Fish Hoek adequately when it joins Cape Town.

20. That the movement for amalgamation appears to be too deeply rooted to allow of its being rejected.

At the next meeting of the Ratepayers Association the Chairman of the Village Management Board addressed the members saying "I appeal for Fair Play. Is it fair play on the part of the Executive of the Ratepayers Association to have caused assertions to be made in the Public Press damaging, or at least calculated to damage, the interest of our Township and its Board in particular." "It has been asserted that the Board has outlived its usefulness and that Fish Hoek has grown too large for the Board to manage satisfactorily. What are the specific details or what can be the charge against the Board, what justification is there for such a sweeping assertion?

In the first place there is no specific charge and therefore it must be argued that your Board has not outlived its usefulness neither has Fish Hoek grown too large to manage satisfactorily, except in so far that it cannot manage the unruly tongues of unruly residents, who rush into the affairs of management of which they have neither sufficient knowledge concerning the facts, not enough care to be sure of any facts before rushing into the glaring light of publicity."

In the course of a long speech he also remarked, "With reference to bath water and storm water, what damage can there be if only bath water flows down the streets. If those present knew the number of cases where rice and other debris have been seen in the gutters and that the Board has had to threaten residents, it would be surprising."

A public meeting was held on 10 June 1929 to discuss unification with Cape Town "and other matters" and the Village Management Board was informed that a resolution had been adopted "by a crowded meeting with one dissentient" that unification should be investigated. The Board decided that they needed to consult with the Administrator of the Cape as if the Village Management Board was to be abolished his permission would be required. However, the reply was that they should first discuss the situation with the Cape Town City Council.

So, probably reluctantly, the Board set up a meeting. Present were the Mayor of Cape Town, the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and six other Councillors, the Chairman and Secretary of the Board and four members, one of whom, Mrs H. Downes, was the only woman present. The meeting did not appear to go very favourably. The first item was representation on the Council but it was pointed out that the valuation of properties in Fish Hoek did not justify equal representation with any of the other wards of Cape Town. The Board replied that the residents did not wish to be part of the Muizenberg-Kalk Bay ward. There was no water borne sewage system but they hoped that "should unification result, this problem would receive immediate attention", the roads and water supply also need attention.
The Village Management Board waited for a year to hear the result of this meeting and eventually, in September 1930, wrote to the Town Clerk of Cape Town asking for a reply on the matter. Still there was no reply so they wrote again in October 1930. The Town Clerk replied that on a definite proposal from the Village Management Board, which could form the basis of further negotiations, they would resume talks. A new set of proposals was drawn up which included representation as a separate ward, the provision of a water borne sewage system, a storm water scheme, the making of additional roads, the provision of more street lighting and that the Cape Town City Council take over the Board’s existing loans. The reply came a month later and was short and to the point. "The matter was considered but the proposals do not forma basis for negotiation." The City Council would have gained nothing but expenses, but perhaps the Board had been very clever in insuring that the unification did not take place, if it had the development of Fish Hoek might have been very different.

In December 1939 the Provincial Secretary wrote to the Board to say "It is considered that the time has arrived for the status of the Fish Hoek Village Management Board to be raised to that of a Municipality." There was much discussion of the matter and it was not until 30 August 1940 that the Board resolved that Fish Hoek should become a Municipality. An election was held on 20 November 1940 when six Councillors were elected, H. S. Jager, who had been the first, and only, Chairman of the Village Management Board was elected as Mayor. The Cape Town City Council presented the new Municipality with a Mayoral Chair and a Mayor’s Chain was bought. This chain is unusual in that it consists of linked silver plates on a velvet ribbon and the name of every Mayor of Fish Hoek is inscribed on it.

Many prominent residents served on the Council and in 1959 the Council decided to honour H. S. Jager, who served for thirty-two years on the Village Management Board and Town Council, by making him the first Freeman of Fish Hoek. A local calligrapher, "Robbie" Roberts produced a special book in which the photograph and particulars of Freemen were recorded. The Freedom of Fish Hoek was awarded to Herman Scott Jager on 27 October 1959 and he is recorded as having introduced the Fish Hoek Town Planning Scheme and being the first President and a life member of the Fish Hoek Bowling Club. He was also the joint founder, with Dr Eric Noble, of the South African Archaeological Society and was a member of the Council of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science. As well as being represented in the Freedom Book each Freeman was presented with an illuminated scroll in a wooden box.

On 16 September 1974 Charles de Stadler became a Freeman of Fish Hoek. After service in both world wars he was a founder member of the Fish Hoek MOTH Shellhole. As a Councillor for fourteen years, he was Deputy Mayor of Fish Hoek for three years and Mayor for four years. He was an executive member of the Fish Hoek Music Society, and a founder member of the Fish Hoek Association Football Club of which he was Chairman for forty years, also a founder member of the Fish Hoek Central Sports Association and the Chairman for two years.

The third Freeman was Alleyne Yeld, who was awarded the Freedom of Fish Hoek on 24 November 1988. After a distinguished Public Service career he was a Town Councillor for eighteen years, Deputy Mayor for six years and Mayor for three years. He served as a Justice of the Peace in the Simon’s Town district and was a founder member of the Fish Hoek Association for the Welfare of the Elderly and an Elder of the Dutch reformed Church in Fish Hoek.

The last man to be awarded the Freedom of Fish Hoek before the Municipality disappeared was Hilary Langley. After serving as a pilot in the South African Airforce during World War 2 he married a Fish Hoek girl and worked for the Cape Town City Council, retiring as City Property Manager, making his retirement final after a further five years with a property company. He was a Councillor for 22 years and mayor for two years. During this time he was Chairman of the Fish Hoek Primary and High School Committees and a member of the Cape School Board for twenty three years, a Councillor on the Cape Divisional Council for eight years and a Regional Services Councillor for four years. He was convener of a special committee appointed by the Fish Hoek Town Council which led to the formation of the Fish Hoek Valley Historical Association who were responsible for the establishment of the Fish Hoek Valley Museum.

A special freedom award was made in 1987. In the days when young South African white men had to do two years national service they were then liable for further service, being called up for a month a year for two years and three months in the third year for a period of twelve years. A special naval unit was formed in Simon’s Town to accommodate the young men on temporary call up and named SAS Yselstein after the first
ship to be recorded in the bay. As many of them were from Fish Hoek the unit was awarded the freedom of
the town. This entitled them to march through the streets of the town on all ceremonial occasions with swords
drawn, bayonets fixed, drums beating and colours flying. On 28 November 1987 this right was exercised when
the Mayor of Fish Hoek, Councillor John Florence, presented to the unit, under the command of Cdr C. T.
Harris, a scroll awarding them the freedom of the town. Although national service is a thing of the past, SAS
Yselstein continued to exist as volunteer unit, staffed by those who had previously served in the South African
Navy, but all reserve units are to be decommissioned and the reservists used in various naval posts. Those who
served in SAS Yselstein will continue to keep in contact through the Yselstein Association but another piece of
local history will disappear.

With South Africa's new Constitution in 1994 came a new thinking on local government. All the small
municipalities were swept away, Fish Hoek lost its independence and became part of a Fish Hoek/Kommetjie/
Noordhoek Transitional Municipal Sub-structure until local government elections were held in 1995 and the
South Peninsula Municipality was formed, stretching from Wynberg to Cape Point. At the elections in 2000 the
South Peninsula Municipality was incorporated into the Unicity of Cape Town. Seventy years later the
residents who had asked for unification with Cape Town had finally got their way, although none of them lived
to see it happen!

13. The War Years

With the advent of World War 2 in 1939 the residents of Fish Hoek were determined to do all they could to
support the allied cause. It was still a relatively small community, a census taken in 1940 tells us that there
were 1 200 white residents, 136 coloured and 37 black servants living in the town. Although there was no
conscription, by September 1941, 152 men and 2 women had volunteered to join the armed forces, and there
were others who enlisted later.

In May 1940, at a meeting in Fish Hoek, the Deputy Commissioner of Police enrolled over 80 men as Police
Reservists. A few weeks later the Civilian Protection Services, the South African equivalent of the Air Raid
Precautions in Britain, was formed. Local men and women were trained to deal with air raids and possible
invasion, although their main task here was the enforcement of the blackout. As a precaution against enemy
ship attacking the harbours at Simon’s Town and Cape Town the whole of the Cape Peninsula was blacked out.
No lights were allowed to be shown from doors or windows, street lights were not lit and car headlights and
torches had to be screened. No unauthorised access was allowed to Simon’s Town and a barrier was put up at
Glencairn. The Fish Hoek Red Cross Detachment trained with the Civilian Protection Services in the treatment
of casualties, with the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts acting as “victims”. This was fun for a while, but boring if you
were not supposed to be very badly hurt and had to wait your turn to be treated. One young man got so fed up with waiting that he drew the international scouting sign for "gone home" and did just that!

There was much fundraising for the war effort. The Fish Hoek Women's Association was particularly active in this field. They had been very busy raising money for local causes since the Association was formed in 1934. In 1936 they were responsible for persuading the Divisional Council to open a clinic at Noordhoek which they supported with funds and voluntary workers. In 1938 they supported the formation of a Voluntary Aid Detachment in Fish Hoek and when war broke out the VADs performed valuable service in many parts of the world.

The Women's Association War Markets were held monthly in the Recreation Hall. Each month the proceeds went to a different cause, amongst them were the Air Ambulance, the Red Cross, the London distress Fund, the Merchant Navy Fund, the Lifeboat Service, St Dunstans, parcels for troops and prisoners of war, Russian Relief and the South African Women's Auxiliary Services funds. One particular cause received their regular support. Mrs Waterson, the Governor General's wife had visited one of their meetings in Fish Hoek to speak about the Red Cross. In 1941 she sent a cable from London asking if they could contribute towards equipment urgently required for the treatment of facial burn cases. An altra red lamp and a steriliser were bought with their first donation and this was the start of their support for the Plastic Surgery Unit at the East Grinstead Hospital where so many airmen were treated. A plaque acknowledging the contributions made by the Fish Hoek Women's Association was put up in one of the prefab wards at the hospital and unveiled by Mrs Waterson. In 1946, when many men were still being treated there, a consignment of dried fruit was shipped to them.

They also had a "Spinning Contingent' which operated from a shop in the Main Road, spinning pure wool into yarn to be dyed and knitted into garments to be sent off to the troops. One of the ladies, Mrs Margaret Cobern, had a "sock machine", which knitted a long tube, the width of a sock, with only the heel having to be turned by hand.

The South African Women's Auxiliary Services, known as SAWAS, had a very active branch in Fish Hoek and one of their main activities was entertaining, the men from troop ships passing through Cape Town and sailors from ships docking in Simon's Town. At first the Recreation Hall was used for this but when Reg Clark joined up, his garage, in the Main Road, was taken over as an entertainment centre with the Municipality paying half of the rent. Meals were provided and dances and parties were held, with everyone, including the local lasses having a good time. Some of the men came from Cape Town by train but transport was mainly provided by local residents who would meet the troopships at the docks and open their homes to those men who could stay overnight. At the Homestead Hotel a group of young ladies, known as "The Good Companions" provided company at social events for sailors passing through Simon's Town.

Of the Fish Hoek men who volunteered to serve in the armed forces fifteen did not return. In 1946 it was proposed that some sort of war memorial should be erected. Unfortunately agreement could not be reached on what should be done. Several schemes were suggested, one of which was a proposal by the MOHTs for a complex which would cost £30 000 and entail the Municipality taking out a thirty year loan and levying an extra rate to repay it. A more modest idea for a hall and communal centre for ex-servicemen would only cost £10 000. A very poorly attended public meeting was held where two other ideas were put forward, the endowment of a ward in the Red Cross Children's Hospital or a Children's Park and Garden of Remembrance to be built on the sports fields. No decision was reached, so the Women's Association asked for the money they had donated to be returned to them to be banked in an interest paying account until the matter was settled.

By April 1947 still nothing had been done and the Mayor wrote to the Women's Association suggesting that "a strong sub-committee be formed from this Association" to try and get something done. They were obviously known as ladies who got the job done! By this time they were considering only two plans, the building of a hall or the laying out of a park at the sports field. In November 1947 it was reported that the residents of Fish Hoek were losing interest in the war memorial and the committee was having difficulty in finding a site suitable for the building of a hall.

In April 1949 it was suggested that the money that had been raised should be used to enlarge the Recreation Hall, which would then be renamed the Fish Hoek Memorial Hall. This would require an assurance from the Town Council that the hall would never be demolished and "a suitable plaque would be affixed in the hall." By
August 1950 the various organisations who had been raising money for the memorial had handed over their contributions to the Council and it had been planned to build the hall in the school grounds using the money collected with the addition of a loan of £1 000 to be raised by the Council. However at a meeting of the War Memorial Committee it was discovered that this would not be possible as the Ratepayers Association had vetoed the raising of a loan and it had been discovered that any hall built in the school grounds would become the property of the School Board. It was also said that a hall on school property “would restrict activities for the MOTHs, noticeably billiards.” In desperation it was decided that a meeting of representatives of the Women’s Association, SAWAS and MOTHs be convened to decide on what form the war memorial should take. The Women’s Association instructed their representatives to vote for a children’s play park, but as nothing was being done they lost interest.

The matter dragged on for several more years until finally it was decided to lay out a Garden of Remembrance on part of the Outspan, which was designated as public open space. In 1965 the MOTH cairn in the park was dedicated and the saga of the war memorial was finally ended.

Street collection for war funds

14. The Steps and Lanes

The Fish Hoek Municipality used names associated with the history of Fish Hoek for the steps leading up from Simonstown Road to Hillside Road and Highway. Starting from Sunnycove Steps, which are very short and used as a shortcut to Sunnycove Station from Hillside Road, and walking towards the Main Road, Mossop Steps are next. They are named for the Mossop brothers who, in the 1918 sale of plots, bought the cottages, on the site of the Dutch East India Company Watch House, which had been used by Hester de Villiers as holiday accommodation. Dr Ernest Mossop, the medical superintendent of Somerset Hospital, was an amateur archaeologist who in the 1920s and 30s collected Stone Age tools in the Fish Hoek Valley. He kept careful records of where they were found and made a Cabinet in which to store them. They were presented to the Fish Hoek Municipality and can now be seen at the Fish Hoek Valley Museum.

Hobbs Steps remember the Hobbs family who, having come to Fish Hoek on holiday from Kimberley in 1925, saw a business opportunity, bought plots on Beach Road and built a hotel. The original Windsor Hotel was a single storey building but there were many visitors coming to Fish Hoek and the hotel was often full, so it was not long before another storey was added. When tourists stopped coming to South Africa most of the hotels in Fish Hoek went out of business. The Windsor Hotel was demolished in October 1972 and a block of flats built on the site, however, the name was kept and the flats were called Windsor Lodge. Mrs Hobbs was a prominent member of the Fish Hoek Women’s Association and 1944 became the first woman to be elected to the Fish Hoek Town Council.
Ballyclyme Steps are named after the house built by Tom Mossop next to the steps. His daughter married an architect, a Mr Roberts, and they lived in the house for many years. Why the name? Well, perhaps because it was a “bally climb” to get there!

Pritchard Steps recalls the Pritchards who have been very closely associated with the history of Fish Hoek. Bull Pritchard built his house in 1919, overlooking what later became the Catwalk. He called it Orano after the ship that rescued him, after several hours in the water, when the troop ship Galway Castle was torpedoed and sank during World War 1. Being a surveyor it was he who organised the residents protest against the sale of plots on the beach. He was a very strong swimmer and as his house overlooked the beach he several times saw swimmers in difficulty and went to rescue them. An empty plot next to his house was bought by a family from Kimberley who had a holiday house opposite it on the top side of Simonstown Road. They bought it to stop anyone building on it and spoiling their view and suggested to Bull Pritchard that if he added it into his garden it would solve the problem of keeping it tidy. The Pritchards had two small daughters and for their amusement he put miniature buildings and people into the garden. Passersby stopped to look at it and during the war it was open to the public and money was collected for the war effort by means of a wishing well. Bull was also a founder member of the Kosy Korner Koffie Klub made up of retired gentlemen who met at the Green Parrot Tearoom, and later at the Homestead Hotel, every morning for coffee and conversation, which also got them out of their wives way!

Sign on the garden gate of “Orano”, the Pritchard’s house

Zoutendyk Steps are called after another family who lived in the village for many years. Mr Zoutendyk was the auctioneer who conducted the first sale in 1918 and subsequent sales. He liked the area so much that, having married a granddaughter of Mr de Villiers, he built a house, on Simonstown Road, and came to live in Fish Hoek. Both he and Bull Pritchard were founder members of the Fish Hoek Sports Club.

Outspan Steps go up to Outspan Road, overlooking the original outspan area used by the farmers from the western end of the valley. A stream flowed down the mountain there and a small dam was built across it to provide a pool from which the oxen could drink. This stream, now underground, floods in very wet weather and water flows down the steps.

De Villiers Steps run up the side of the de Villiers cemetery next to the Dutch Reformed Church and are named for Hester and Izaak de Villiers, the last owners of the Fish Hoek Farm, who with other members of their family are buried there.

If you continue along Kommetjie Road you will notice that behind the houses on the mountain side of the road there is a second row of houses with access to Kommetjie Road via short lanes. The lanes start just after the end of Hillside Road with Burton Lane which runs up beside the house occupied by the Burton family for many years. Mr and Mrs Burton bought several plots in one of the early sales of land, including some in what is now the Main Road business area. They decided to build their house, Ionia, on the corner of de Waal Road and Seventh Avenue, which at that time was almost in the country! They built a tennis court, as did several of the early residents, and such was the enthusiasm for the game amongst the young people of the village that it was not long before the Fish Hoek Tennis Club was formed.

The Burtons were also very active in church affairs. When St Margaret’s Church was built, in 1934, they donated the altar in memory of their parents and brother and in 1941 Mrs Burton donated a table and
bookshelves for the hymn books. After the death of Mr Burton, in the 1930s, Mrs Burton and her daughter Loline moved to Kommetjie Road where they lived for many years and where Mrs Burton celebrated her one hundredth birthday with a visit from the Mayor and Mayoress.

Rickard Lane can be found alongside 51 Kommetjie Road. Dr and Mrs Rickard and their two children came to Fish Hoek in 1925 and lived at number 47. The residents were very pleased to have a resident doctor and the family was soon absorbed into local life. Dr Rickard was a Justice of the Peace and was soon elected to the Village Management Board whilst his wife was a leading member of several local organisations. Cronwright Lane runs between 63 and 65 Kommetjie Road. Peter Cronwright brought his family to Fish Hoek from Kalk Bay, bringing with them his wife’s small herd of cows. In the 1920s the cows used to wander all over the village and W. T. Cobern, who lived in First Avenue, was probably not the only resident who used to herd them into his garden to crop the grass! Fresh milk being a very salable commodity in the village this was the beginning of Cron Dairies, run for many years by Peter’s son Louis, after whom the lane was named. He was very prominent in local affairs, serving as a Fish Hoek Town Councillor and also as Mayor. His son, Morthland, also a Councillor and Mayor, took over the business and when small dairies were no longer viable closed it and built the Valyland Centre on the land where the dairy had stood. This is still owned by the Cronwright family.

The land beside the Fish Hoek Veterinary Clinic is Ross Lane. Mr Ross, a cartage contractor with a flourishing business in the area, had his stables at the top of it until the arrival of motor delivery vehicles.

Cobern Lane, at the side of the Fish Hoek Home Nursing Centre, is named after W T. Cobern who was a well-known local character in the early days of the village. Having retired from business at the early age of 45 he had plenty of time to keep an eye on how things were being run. If the Ratepayers Association wanted to get a good turn out for their meeting they had only to let people know that Mr Cobern was going to register a complaint and everyone would come to hear him! The Guy Fawkes Day celebration on the beach was his special task and every year he organised a big bonfire of old railway sleepers and a firework display. He was also Father Christmas at the annual Christmas party for the children of the village. His son, Malcolm Cobern was a founder member of the Fish Hoek Valley Historical Association, and wrote a history of the area, The Story of the Fish Hoek Valley.

15. Our Local Newspapers

In June 1951 Mr Francis attended a meeting of the Business Association to talk about starting a local newspaper, this was to be called the Fish Hoek News. The cost of production was to be covered by the advertising and one thousand copies would be printed and distributed to the public free of charge. An editing sub-committee was appointed to look at any articles "of a contentious nature" and "to avoid any possible irritation to any section of the local community." An almost impossible task! It appeared monthly until October 1952 when it ceased publication. This was partly because of the lack of enthusiasm on the part of local advertisers, and perhaps also because it was said that "too much space is being given to Social Notes which leads to jealousies and misunderstandings" and that it was not really necessary to publish a long sermon in each edition. However, the few issues that did appear give us a fascinating look at the Fish Hoek of that time.

The advertisements tell us that films were being shown at the Recreation Hall, now the MOTH Hall, every Friday night, admission 1/4d and 3/8d. This was before our currency was decimalised and at that time there were twenty shillings to the pound and twelve pence to the shilling. When we changed to the rand, in 1961, the exchange rate was R2 to the pound, so the prices were then under 50c. It was proposed to build a cinema in the Main Road seating almost 800 people but as the films in the Recreation Hall could not draw a big enough audience to keep them going the cinema was never built. If it was entertainment you were looking for you could go to the Dalmally Cafe, now Dalmally Flats on Beach Road, where there was dancing nightly, except Sunday and Monday and they kept open until 11 pm on Saturday nights!

Westbrook's Pharmacy, on the corner of Recreation and Main Roads, was advertising their Cough Curer at 1/6 and 2/6 and Ban-Tick for your dog at 1/3d. At A. P. Jones you could buy Rite-Fit Frocks in half sizes, 38in to 50in for 75 shillings. Rabkins Stores, next to Wakefords Furniture, had "the very latest in chic hats" and at CNA you could buy Munro's Bowls Encyclopaedia for 15 shillings, "a book every bowler should have". At Morris' Bazaar,
in the Main Road, you could buy sock wool at 1/7 per ounce to hand knit your socks and it was "guaranteed shrinkless"! Male thoroughbred Pekinese puppies were offered for £5.5s and females at £3.3s. You could even buy a plot for £300 or £3 monthly.

The Fish Hoek Women's Association Morning Market had been a great success, raising the grand sum of £184. The 4th Annual Flower Show organised by St Margaret's Horticultural Club raised only about £40 for the organ fund "probably because it was such a shocking afternoon".

In the Mayor's Report for 1950-51 it was noted that Fish Hoek was growing. Plans had been submitted for 63 new dwellings, 21 blocks of flats, 6 blocks of shops, flats and offices and 74 for alterations and additions to existing buildings, but we are not told if they were ever built. There was talk of widening the Main Road but this was not to be considered for several reasons. "The cost would be prohibitive and beyond the means of the Fish Hoek ratepayers. The proposal will cause undue hardship to property owners. The traffic requirements at present and in the foreseeable future do not justify it. Despite parking on both sides of the road there has never been any congestion." If only they could see it now!

At the 8th Annual General meeting of the Ratepayers Association more police protection was asked for as there had been several cases of housebreaking. Three burglaries had been reported at one shop in Kommetjie Road but only a small amount of meat was taken each time! There was a complaint about growth on vacant plots which were "a harbouring place for rats, snakes and also for ill-doers." There was also a complaint about the noise from milk deliveries, which started at 1.40am. It was suggested that Gam would be a more suitable hour. However Cron Dairies replied that Fish Hoek had now become so large that if deliveries only started at 6am some people would not get their milk until after 8am and this would not be acceptable. Who could foresee the day when there would be no home deliveries.

In 1953 the Business Association supported the publication of the Fish Hoek Magazine by Mr Playfair. He felt sure that "of the possible 10 000 visitors to Fish Hoek during the season an appreciable number would purchase the Magazine." At sixpence per copy he visualised a thriving business, but although three editions were published the expected volume of sales did not materialise and there were no more.

Mr Francis started the Fish Hoek Echo in 1953. This was much more successful, perhaps he had learnt what sort of paper the Fish Hoek public wanted, or did not want, during his short stint as editor of the Fish Hoek News. He soon took on an assistant, Cedryl Greenland, who had lived in Fish Hoek since 1921, when her father decided to make his holiday home his permanent residence. As Mr Francis used the pen name of Porpoise she wrote under the name of Dolphin and was soon reporting on more and more of the events in the town. In 1963 she took over the paper completely and ran it until 1978. It was then a monthly paper with reports on all the Fish Hoek weddings, funerals, parties, meetings and other occasions. She attended most of these events herself and being a gentle little lady tried never to offend anyone. Her accounts of social occasions were warm and friendly, brides were always beautiful and their mothers elegant, and the obituaries were written from her heart, for most of these people were her friends.

The paper was printed in Caledon and railed to Fish Hoek where Ceddie and a young helper would get out her basket on wheels and deliver it to all the local shops. Trade was good on "Echo days" as everyone came to the shops to get their copy. It was always a "good read" sometimes running to sixty pages. She also found time to write several books. Starting by editing a cookery book, Tasty Tips, for the Fish Hoek Women's Association she went on to write Before We Forget, a book about the early days of Fish Hoek, a book on Peers Cave and the Peers family and a small book of poetry, Land of Colour and Contrast. She published a book of her most interesting articles from the Fish Hoek Echo, called Echoes of Yesterday and her last book was A Century in Shreds, an account of her parents early lives.

After her death, in 1985, her many friends contributed to a fund to erect a statue in her memory. A local sculptor, Ernest Lodge, was commissioned to produce a statue of a family of three dolphins which was first erected on the grass area behind the first subway but, after having been vandalised several times, was moved to a more central location on the edge of the parking area. On 12th December 1987 a group of her family and friends gathered at the newly erected statue. The Mayor, Councillor John Florence performed the ceremonial unveiling and one of her poems was read by Ethelmay Gillard.
In June 1978, when Ceddie felt that it was time for him to retire from the Echo, she sold the paper to Joe and Lyn Frylinck who published it fortnightly and printed it in Paarl. The printing costs almost caused a charge to be made for it until the advertisers agreed to increased rates to cover the extra costs and so it has remained a free paper.

In 1984 it was bought by Stoffel Lotz and his son Barry. It later merged with the False Bay News, an Argus publication, and so the False Bay Echo was born. As a part of Cape Community Newspapers it reflects a wider area so that some in Fish Hoek were aggrieved that it no longer carried so much Fish Hoek news.

Seeing this, Joe Frylinck, who had returned to Fish Hoek with his second wife, Simone, saw an opportunity and started the People’s Post, which continues to be “our local newspaper.”

16. The Battle of the Bottles

One of the conditions included in the original grant of land at Fish Hoek made to Andries Bruijns in 1818 was, in the original Dutch, “dat by aldaar geen tapneering zal mogen dryven”. This was translated in the English version as “not to keep a Public Winehouse”. The exact meaning of these words has been argued about ever since but it would appear from other documents from that time that this was meant as a complete ban on liquor sales.

The first sale of plots at Fish Hoek having taken place in April 1918, the first application for a liquor licence in the village was made in August 1918. This application was made by Stephen William Cavanagh who had owned the Grand Hotel in Muizenberg. The application, which was for the recently opened Homestead Hotel, was refused by the Magistrate at Simon’s Town. In 1922, at a public meeting held in Fish Hoek, it was resolved to fight any applications for liquor licences. A letter from the Fish Hoek Vigilance Committee was published in the Cape Times on 24 February 1925 stating that the residents were completely opposed to the granting of liquor licences.

In October 1928 the proprietors of both the Homestead Hotel and the Windsor Hotel applied for licences. The Fish Hoek Village Management Board submitted a petition objecting to this, which was signed by the majority of voters in the village. The Magistrate refused to grant the licences but the applicants appealed to the Cape Supreme Court where, after much discussion and reference to archival documents, the appeal was dismissed with costs. However, licence applications continued to be made as businessmen realised that a licence in Fish Hoek would be a paying proposition, but the residents, by submitting petitions against them, continued to keep Fish Hoek “dry”. It was not that those residents were teetotallers, far from it, in fact it was said that the
delivery vans from the bottle stores "up the line" could be seen in the streets of Fish Hoek every day. It was just that they did not want a bottle store in the area to encourage "layabouts".

In 1955 a special organisation was formed specifically to fight liquor licence applications and called the Defenders of Fish Hoek. They had no written constitution and no subscription but donations were accepted and annual meetings were held to elect officers. In 1956 there were nine applications for licences. A petition against them being granted containing the signatures of 1393 registered municipal voters, out of a total of 2083, and a further 1409 residents who were not voters, was presented by the Defenders. This was estimated to be nearly 85% of the total adult population of the town. The licences were not granted and another six applications were successfully contested in 1957. This had become an annual event!

After the publication of the draft Liquor Amendment Bill in 1963 a delegation consisting of Councillors, members of the Defenders of Fish Hoek and the Ratepayers Association, met with the Minister of Justice. They asked that a stipulation that no further liquor licence applications in Fish Hoek would be considered for at least ten years be included in the Bill. Speaking at a public meeting in the Fish Hoek Civic Hall the Minister of Justice, B. J. Vorster, replying to a vote of thanks for his help, said that the period could be fifty years, or longer, if the residents wished. In future the onus would be on the applicant fora licence to prove that the residents were not opposed to it being granted.

In the 1970s the granting of a club licence to the Fish Hoek Sports Club was hotly debated. A referendum was held in June 1981 at which the granting of such a licence was rejected by 1055 votes to 758. Out of an estimated 5057 eligible voters only 1816 people voted, three of those being spoilt papers. The newer residents did not seem to care very much whether there were licences or not.

After the new Government was elected in 1994 election the new Liquor Act did not contain the provision about Fish Hoek. Businessmen soon discovered this and there were soon five applications for licences in Fish Hoek. The Residents Association held a public meeting and after much heated debate it was decided to regularise the situation, in which liquor was being served illegally in local restaurants, by agreeing to the provision of restaurant and bar licences but not to off sales. So it was that for the first time one could legally buy an alcoholic drink in Fish Hoek. However the debate goes on, the Battle of the Bottles is not over, the Defenders of Fish Hoek still exist and are waiting for the next round!

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