A Traditional Way of Life

The story of the Kalk Bay Fishermen

George Stibbe
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Foreword

There are few easy ways of earning a living and fishing is certainly not one of them. Nature in the raw is seldom mild and the fisherman confronts nature in all its moods. Their work is hard, dangerous and success dependent on many unpredictable influences such as weather, seasons, water temperatures, boating mechanical problems and injuries. Plain luck also plays a large part, combined with the experience learned from years of mixed fortunes.

In spite of all problems, fishing is enormously fascinating. It is such a gamble, long disappointing times can be suddenly compensated by the sudden bonanza of gigantic catches, big runs of fish, happy days.

Most fishermen and their wives are characters, their children little characters. The whole way of life sets them wide apart from most things conventional. Like prospectors, they can spin wonderful yarns, describe adventures in language which is often picturesque. In this book you will find a delightful assembly of the history, stories and people of Kalk Bay. You will make friends with them, get to know them, their Traditional Way of Life, courage and fortitude, and be understanding of their problems, patience, hardships, disappointments, exploitations, and share their feelings of triumph, happiness when times are good and the silver fish are just longing to be caught.

T. V. BULPIN
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In the past there were many small fishing villages along the South African coast. Today only a few remain devoted solely to fishing. Most have been overtaken by marina developments, residential complexes or tourist orientated establishments. Several have lost their identities altogether without leaving any trace of the original fishing communities.

Along the False Bay coast there were several fishing centres. The main ones were Gordon’s Bay, Strand, Kalk Bay and Simon’s Town. The only one left today is Kalk Bay. However this small harbour and the fishing community are hard pressed to survive the pressures from other interest groups and that confusing word “progress.”

Kalk Bay’s fishing is not a multi-million rand industry but a small, almost subsistence one, providing work for several hundred people and a source of food for thousands. It is a Traditional Way of Life that has survived past developments and is now unique.

All over the world there are people with fond memories of a visit or holiday at Kalk Bay. Perhaps even of a fishing trip on one of the commercial boats. Today visitors still flock to the harbour to watch the boats off-load their catches. The cries of the sellers ring out as the hawkers bid on the catch; women gut and clean fish on the concrete tables; fishermen wash down the boats; shipwrights replace timbers on the boats on the slipway. It is an exciting, working, living harbour, and a heritage worthy of preserving.

This is an account of the fishing industry and records some of the background stories. It is by no means complete as many unrecorded events took place and influenced the picture. Many individuals have played important roles in the developments, some we have mentioned, others we have missed. Of some there were records while of others only “tales” passed down from generation to generation and retold by descendants of those early pioneers.

Together it weaves into a complex but fascinating story. It is divided into sections covering the developments as they unfold, many of which overlap each other. An extensive background has been given to certain areas, such as the whaling, guano and shark industries in order to keep these developments at Kalk Bay in perspective.

Much of the early part is based on sketchy facts recorded by previous researchers and officials. Material for the latter section comes from numerous taped interviews with fishermen and their families. The local history is complex and the fishing community equally so. It is impossible to include everything or everyone in a single volume, or to unravel all the connections, so some names may be found to be missing.
“In Kalk Bay we find a way of life which exists nowhere else in Cape Town and is created largely by the fishing community.

We must be sure that whatever happens we safeguard the character of the area.”

Neville Riley, City Planner, Cape Town, 1990.
Early explorers and Table Bay

In very early writings mention is made of the “fearless seafaring nation of Phoenicians” who ventured into regions where no one else dared to go. They are said to have circumnavigated the African continent from east to west in 600 BC. There are no further records until the voyages of the Portuguese navigators, travelling from west to east in the 15th century.

The continued losses to shipping in Table Bay during the winter storms eventually led to Simon’s Bay being used as a winter anchorage with Kalk Bay as a transit station from which goods were dispatched in small boats.

In the latter part of this period the political situation in Europe changed and the Cape was taken over by the British after the Battle of Muizenberg.

Table Bay where it was hoped that, along with all they had taught him, their trading opportunities would be made easier. The idea did not work and years later the Dutch found Coree hindering their trade efforts and decided to hang him.

False Bay

Many years ago the Cape Peninsula was divided by the sea through what is now known as the Fish Hoek valley. Prehistoric man lived on these shores 15 000 years ago, feeding on marine shellfish and fish, as confirmed by the skull found there in a cave by Victor Peers and his son in 1927.

Once the sea water had receded, the peninsula was joined to the mainland. The bay which was thus formed, was fringed by a mountain range to Cape Point and the Hottentots Holland range to Cape Hangklip. From these two Capes, rocky shores make a circle from east to west, with an occasional inlet and sandy beach. They meet the stretch of white sandy beach 29 km long between the Strand and Muizenberg.

Fed by both the warm Agulhas and cold Benguela currents, this 29 km wide bay is rich in marine life. The early inhabitants trapped fish in shallow pools and feasted on perlemoen and oysters. Evidence of this is found in fossilised shells embedded in the surrounding mountains showing a sea level some 20m above that of today.
The early mariners knew that the waters off the Cape were rich in marine life and there was a superstition that “it would be unlucky to pass the Cape... without delaying to catch fish.” Most passing ships would spend time catching and curing fish supplies for their long journey.

Exposed as it is to the vast stretch of Southern Ocean, extending unbroken around the globe, Cape Point is subjected to the might of uninterrupted sea and wind. It is no wonder that these gallant explorers named it the Cape of Storms. Many of them must have sailed into False Bay by accident or for shelter. When Bartholomew Dias sailed into the bay in 1488, he called it “Golfo Destro das Sierras” the “Bay Between the Mountains.”

It is commonly accepted that the bay was named False Bay because ships returning from the East mistook Cape Hangklip for the Cape of Good Hope and turned into the bay. A more plausible theory is that the name Cabo Falco or Kaapvals, which referred to Cape Hangklip was often confused with Cape Point. It was written in large letters to the west of Hangklip on charts from 1590 and gradually became associated with the bay until charts were produced using the name False Bay.

Years before settlers arrived some pilotage notes were made regarding False Bay by John Davis in 1615. He described Bellows Rock near Cape Point and, like many explorers before him, mentioned a large river flowing into the bay.

Explorations into False Bay
Shortly after the Dutch established a refreshment station in 1652 a party of soldiers and sailors deserted with the intention of reaching Mozambique. There they hoped to board a ship back to Holland. They were supposedly the first Europeans to reach the northern shores of False Bay. Their diet of biscuits and dried limpets and a frightening encounter with a rhinoceros persuaded them to return to the Fort and settle for a punishment of lashes and years in “irons.”

Early “Official Expeditions” were occasionally undertaken, such as in 1654 when two ships were reported to have anchored in False Bay and soldiers were sent to investigate. They returned without having sighted any ships in the bay. At that time it was forbidden for the settlers to stay more than three hours travelling distance from the Fort in Table Bay. Plans were soon being discussed to dig a canal through from Table Bay to False Bay, across the Cape Flats, mainly for protection against cattle thieves.

Reports of another ship in False Bay brought soldiers round from the Fort. On their way they met a party from the Dutch vessel Orangien, then at anchor in False Bay with 29 crew dead and some 150 ill from scurvy. She was on her way to the East and, with the help provided from the Fort, she managed to sail to Table Bay, land her sick, and gather sufficient crew to continue her voyage.

Early fishing settlements in False Bay
By 1670 there was an established fishing station at Vischbaai (Gordon’s Bay) catching for the Governor’s table and feeding the slaves and farm labourers. Many of the slaves brought to the Cape from the East were skilled fishermen and some were employed by their masters to fish full time. Once they had gained their freedom, many engaged in fishing independently.

After the Dutch vessel Ysselsteijn had been forced into False Bay to seek shelter and water in 1671, the Company decided to investigate her reports of “a good anchorage, plenty of water and firewood.” They sent a party under Lieutenant Coenraad van Breitenbach and surveyor, Jan Wittebol, to False Bay. Their findings were very promising regarding the water, suitable lands, cattle and good fishing. (Some burghers were found to be catching haarders and bream with nets.) A chart of the area was made. the vessel Bruidegom was later sent to look for suitable landing places in the bay, with the hope that goods from the Hottentots Holland area could be transported by sea and avoid having to cross the dunes of the Cape Flats. Suitable anchorages were found, but only for very small vessels so the idea was abandoned.
The next year the Dutch, French and British were at war and a post, consisting of a sergeant and 12 soldiers, was set up on the bank of the Lourens River. At the time a small, popular type of vessel used by the Dutch for fishing and earning less important cargoes was called a hooker. It had two masts, similar to a ketch, but with a square rig on the main mast. One such vessel, the *Goudvinck*, was sent round to False Bay to set up a signal station and be on “standby” to set sail and warn the homecoming fleet should any of the enemy arrive at the Cape. While examining the bay, they found survivors of another hooker, *de Grundel*, which had been wrecked near Hangklip on her return voyage from Batavia.

**Another look at False Bay**

On another expedition Simon van der Stel found a route along the coast to Ysselsteijn Bay (Simon’s Bay) where he saw there was plenty of firewood, water and shelter for ships. He also visited Seal Island where the number of seals and gannets left little room for them to get ashore. Also noted was the good fishing and the large sharks that took their lines. Kalk Bay he recorded as a good fishing spot, having favourable shallow water stretching a kilometre from the shore. As a result, a fishing station was set up to supply the Governor’s farm in Constantia.

After severe storms in 1692, 1696 and 1697 in which several valuable ships were lost in Table Bay, another survey was made of False Bay. Willem Adriaan van der Stel had taken over as Governor from his father and, using oxen, found he could only get as far as Muizenberg. From there onwards it was only possible to continue on foot through dense bush along the steep mountainside. The overland difficulties, once again, prevented any major development of False Bay.

**Fishing receives attention**

In these early days the Dutch East India Company did not allow the fishermen too much profit. Simon van der Stel had already upset the free burghers by giving his son, Willem, the monopoly of fishing in False Bay. After complaints to the Company, he had to withdraw this and instead imposed a licence fee for fishing. The fishermen were already dependent on the Company for boats, vats and their fishing equipment and were often obliged to sell their catches to the Company at fixed prices. The local market for fish was limited and cheap meat was often a substitute. The taste for cured fish from the Netherlands by the settlers and the many dangers faced by the fishermen, from visiting vessels and hostile natives, resulted in many species of local fish being ignored for conventional fishing and curing. However some Malays started fishing in remote bays to supply their own needs and it was not long before fish became the staple diet of the slaves, along with rice and seal meat. The haarders were much sought after as they preserved well when salted and dried, and they were stored for vessels calling at the Cape.

When the Company realised in 1708 that the fish was costing as much as the Hottentots’ sheep they decided to make “proper and more satisfactory arrangements to obtain salted fish both at Saldanha and False Bay to feed the slaves, convicts and passing ships.” It was still very difficult for the Company to offer protection to burghers setting up stations beyond Table Bay and Saldanha Bay and impossible for them to prevent illicit trade and smuggling.

In 1710 it was recorded that, after a very heavy storm accompanied by spring tides, the Cape Flats were covered by the sea and thousands of fish were left high and dry. Not long afterwards concern was expressed about the depletion of bushes on the Cape Flats because of all the wood being used to fuel the lime kilns. The risk of the area becoming a sandy desert was realised and unsuccessful attempts to remedy the damage were made by employing slaves to plant grass.

**Kalk Bay’s Name**

In 1674 Governor Isybrand Goske recorded that three free burghers had been contracted to gather the abundant shells washed up on the reef in front of Kalk Bay and burn them in kilns to make lime. The area became known as Kalkhoven Baai. His records also show that they were paid three guilders a ton and the lime was transported to the Castle and was used to paint houses.
Simon’s Bay considered again

Violent storms in 1722 in Table Bay caused the loss of an entire Dutch fleet, three English vessels and 600 lives. Attention was focused once more on False Bay as an alternative anchorage for the winter months. Antoni Visser was granted a lease in 1724, on some land in Simon’s Bay, at the rental of 12 Rix-dollars and a tenth of his produce. He built a two storey house which is shown on charts dated 1740. (Later the house was bought by the British Navy in 1814 for 130 000 guilders.)

The grave danger to those in Table Bay of having an uncontrolled area so close to the settlement was highlighted by an event in 1725. Deserters from a vessel which anchored in False Bay, the Great Alexander, reported her as a pirate ship with 26 guns. Soldiers were sent round to keep an eye on her but in the darkness she slipped out of the bay. In 1729 Governor Pieter Gysbert Noordt sent two vessels, the Victoria and the sloop Fortuyn to examine, chart and make a detailed report on False Bay and Saldanha Bay with a view to establishing harbour facilities.

The survey was carried out by former skipper Jacobus Muller, retired Captain Jan van Heere and cartographer Isaak van Els. They made a long and detailed report on their findings which suggested Saldanha Bay as the better choice but for the lack of fresh water. Simon’s Bay would be suitable if small vessels were used to transport goods from the sandy cove at Kalk Bay. Unfortunately favourable winds were needed to enter the bay and their report discouraged any official steps. The option to use False Bay for shelter in the winter months was left to the respective ships’ captains.

Simon’s Bay “official” winter anchorage

Following the loss of eight more ships in a storm in 1737, instructions were issued for Simon’s Bay to be used as a “temporary anchorage” in the winter months. The Pallas limped into Simon’s Bay in the same year with only 17 fit men aboard, the others having already died or having been near to death from scurvy. She was the first vessel to be fully catered for at Simon’s Bay.

A decision was taken to station troops along with a surgeon and to build a hospital at the new anchorage station. At Kalk Bay a house was built to store supplies and two decked boats were sent around from Table Bay to ferry goods during the winter months. Kalk Bay was, for a while, named Gustav Willems Bay. This was after the commissioner, who had called to inspect the area onboard the battleship Herstelder in 1743 and on whose instructions these developments took place. Simon’s Bay became the “Official Winter Anchorage” from May to mid-August.

To load cargo on the vessel Dieman in Simon’s Bay by transporting it from Table Bay in the smaller vessels, Hector and Termeyer, took two weeks. This proved too expensive and time consuming. Efforts made by using ox wagons over land were also unsatisfactory and storage facilities had to be built in Simon’s Town. This attracted merchants from Cape Town who built several warehouses. Other entrepreneurs built houses to provide lodgings for the ships’ officers and passengers. Among these was Jeremias Auret, who resigned from his post as bookkeeper with the Company to open a guest house. The Governor too had a house built and would spend time there while the ships used the anchorage. It did not take long for the place to develop into a busy port in the winter months. Dutch, English and French ships made use of the facilities that had been developed. A wooden wharf built in 1768 allowed passengers to be landed with more dignity than when they had to be carried ashore through the surf on the back of a sailor or slave.

The hospital was able to cope with sick sailors and accommodation was available for the passengers. All the necessary stores and provisions were available for the ships and communication with Table Bay was by means of small sailing vessels. The road along the coast from Simon’s Town was still very poor and dangerous. A patch of quicksand at Fish Hoek swallowed the horse from under an English Officer who narrowly escaped the same fate. Fourteen sailors, a mason, carpenter and wagon maker were stationed at Kalk Bay to assist with the ferrying of people and goods in small boats to Simon’s Town, thus avoiding the dangerous shore route. After the winter months there was an exodus back to Table Bay and Simon’s Town was deserted apart from the garrison which was relieved every two months.
In August 1778 the Colebrook was badly holed on the, then uncharted, Anvil Rock about one and a quarter miles South East of Cape Point. She managed to stay afloat long enough for her Captain to beach her at Kogel Bay. In 1792 Christiaan Martin Seerderblad requested whether he could purchase the farm Fish Hoek, unused by the Company, at a reasonable price. He applied to purchase what he termed the adjoining "farm" of Kalk Bay and would give the Company the right to chop wood there for the ships. He also requested that he be allowed to fish at Kalk Bay.

The Battle of Muizenberg

The Dutch strengthened their fortifications in False Bay at the start of the French Revolution. When Holland fell to France in 1795 the fleet of nine warships that entered False Bay were suspected to be a French invasion fleet. The captain of the lone Dutch frigate Middenblik anchored in Simon’s Bay, rowed out to investigate the warships. His long absence caused alarm and reinforcements were rushed to Simon’s Town. When he did return, it was with the news that it was a British fleet including some 800 troops under the command of Vice Admiral, Sir George Elphinstone. The Vice Admiral had brought dispatches from the Prince of Orange, in exile in England, ordering the Cape to accept the British protection against the French.

Many local settlers, unlike the Governor, were not Orange supporters and at a Council meeting voted not to accept the British. With only 1 500 men and no chance against the fortifications in Table Bay, the British decided to wait for reinforcement from St Helena. When they heard that the Dutch intended to burn Simon’s Town, the British decided to occupy the town and set up headquarters. Soon they learned that the Dutch were not as well organised as originally thought and, on 7 August 1795, British soldiers and sailors marched along the coast while the ships cruised offshore and covered them with their guns. The Dutch were taken by surprise and only put up a token of resistance before withdrawing, and Muizenberg was taken in three hours. There were minor attempts to counter-attack by the Dutch but they waited too long and by 3rd September a fleet of 14 British ships with 3000 troops arrived in Simon’s Town. Two weeks later the Cape was in the hands of the British who immediately strengthened defences against any counter-attack. The Dutch were hoping for help to arrive in the form of French support and their own Admiral Lucas from the East. By a twist of fate the British had learned of the proposed rendezvous of the French and Dutch warships at Saldanha Bay. The Lord Hawkesbury, a small British whaler, had been captured by the French who left three Englishmen aboard with the small prize crew. The Englishmen gained the trust of the French and were working as crew when they rounded the Cape. One of the English was at the wheel and managed to steer close to the shore and put the vessel aground in the British occupied area. As soon as the French and Dutch fleets’ intended plans were learnt the British sent land forces and a fleet of ships to Saldanha. The French sailed on past the Cape to Mauritius and the small Dutch fleet was captured.

On their return from the chase after Admiral Lucas, H.M.S. Indent was damaged in False Bay near Miller’s Point and the subsequent survey by Lieutenant Whittle led to the marking of the Whittle rock as a danger to navigation.
A very early chart showing Cabo Falco indicating Cape Hangklip. (British Museum)
CHAPTER TWO
The Whaling Era

1500 - 1982
Whaling was a large industry in the northern hemisphere before the Dutch East India Company decided to establish a replenishment station at the Cape. The early settlers found an abundance of whales on their arrival and were keen to start their own industry. This was in contradiction to the intention of the Dutch East India Company and their efforts were not encouraged. By 1700 the Americans had become active off the shores of the Cape and, when local burghers were finally allowed to get involved, it was under very strict conditions. Only after the British occupation did the local industry get properly established.

This was the first serious form of industry at Kalk Bay since the lime kilns, the small fishing station and its use as a “supply depot” for Simon’s Town. In order to keep the whaling in perspective a broader picture of the industry is given alongside the developments at Kalk Bay.

Background to the whaling era
Vasco da Gama had reported on the whales off the South African coast in 1497. One hundred years later a fleet of British ships, which put into Saldanha Bay to allow their crew to recover from the effects of scurvy, found an abundance of whales near Penguin Island (Robben Island) and spent some time hunting them.

By 1630 the Dutch had a large whaling fleet and hundreds of men operating in Arctic waters. The British were soon to follow with a growing fleet of whale catchers operating in the northern hemisphere.

One of Jan van Riebeeck’s frustrations as Commander of the station in Table Bay from 1652 was the sight of whales and the lack of skilled manpower and equipment to catch them. After much effort on his part the Council of Holland was persuaded to show an interest in the idea of setting up a whale fishery and dispatched four boats with instructions to their “outward bound” ships to hand over all empty casks at the Cape. Because of the difficulty in getting skilled harpooners and the fact that the whales were found to be smaller with an inferior yield of oil compared to those in the North, the Council changed its mind and shelved the idea. Efforts were concentrated on obtaining oil from seals rather than from the whales.

Governor Simon van der Stel spent a day hunting whales in Table Bay and also attempted to rekindle the Company’s interest in the industry. But the Cape was only to be a "refreshment station" for their ships travelling to the East. It was feared that the burghers would declare themselves independent if a strict restraint were not imposed and so any form of private enterprise was discouraged and even fishing prohibited.

By 1700 the American vessels, or Yankee Sprouters as they were called, began to expand on the scene. Using brick ovens (try-works) on the decks of their ships to process the whales, the fleets could stay at sea for as long as it took to fill them up. Their Captains were encouraged to explore the oceans in search of new whaling grounds and within a few years were heading for the African coast. They hunted in the bays from Walvis (called Woolwich, Walfish or Whale Fish by the whalemen) as far as Natal.

Many of these vessels belonged to William Rotch, a famous whaling merchant from Nantucket. (He was also the owner of the ship from which the tea was dumped in Boston Harbour.) Great Britain was the major market for the whale oil but had imposed a heavy duty on imported oil. For a while Rotch had managed to work under the British flag out of Nova Scotia and escape the heavy duty and later, when the British had turned down his terms for transferring his fleet to England, he established himself at Dunkirk. It was only a matter of time before a fleet of over 40 Yankee Sprouters, flying the French flag, set off to hunt whales all over the world.

Not only did the Americans hunt the whales along the African coast but they took the seals in vast numbers. The skins were a lucrative business and the length of a voyage would be only nine or ten months hunting the seals as against the three to four years it took to fill up with whale oil. Life aboard the whalers was particularly hard and “crew deserters” were a major problem for the ships’ captains. They chose, therefore, to avoid settled areas and rather to call at obscure bays where they could barter with the local farmers and natives for food, water and wood supplies. In return they paid with soap, tobacco, tinware, muskets and
gunpowder. The latter two items added to the anxiety of the Dutch and later the British authorities. Neither of them could do anything to stop the large number of whalers operating off the South African coast. Proclamations prohibiting such activities issued by the Dutch in 1787 and again in 1794 could not be backed up and had little effect.

The burghers at the Cape, restricted as they were from entering into any enterprise, could only stand back and watch as the foreigners went about their business. One vessel is reported to have infuriated the Colonists by towing his catch very close to the beach in front of the Castle with the British flag flying from a staff stuck in the whale’s back. During 1790 twenty American whalers were reported to have cut the heads off some 400 whales in St Helena Bay removing the baleen and dumping the carcasses back in the sea. This led to a protest from the local burghers. The Governor was forced to take steps against the Yankees in Table Bay because they were boiling the blubber too close to the shore and carcasses that washed up were causing a dreadful stench and creating a health hazard.

Finally the Dutch opened the whaling to the local burghers but with a host of complicated conditions attached. The vessels employed and equipment used, had to come from Holland. The ships carrying the oil back to Europe had to be chartered through the Company and all the oil had to be sent to the Netherlands. Because protection could not be offered to the catchers their activities were further restricted to Table Bay and False Bay.

In 1792 Jacobus Arnoldus Kirsten stated that “due to the large numbers of whales in Table and Simon’s Bay, whaling would be to the advantage of the Colony.”

A civil commissioner, Jakobus Johannes Vos of the brigantine ship Helena Louise bought her from the Company in 1792 for the purpose of whaling. He then renamed the ship the Dankbaare Africaan.

Fehrsen and Co tried to operate in Table Bay under all these conditions but were hampered by the lack of skilled men, in particular harpooners. Their annual catch of 16 whales yielded 1 000 lbs of whale bone and 20 barrels of oil. For a while it looked promising but when their vessel, fitted out to carry the cargo back to Holland, was captured by the British in 1795, they found themselves in a very difficult situation. They had no other ship to take their growing stocks to Europe and, as there was no local market for the oil, they tried to make soap using available seaweed. By all reports the soap they made was good except that they could not remove the offensive odour and when a cargo of “fancy” soap from a prize ship was sold cheaply on the local market, they were forced to close down the business.

When the British took control of the Cape an English merchant, John Murray, bought the whole plant at an auction. The proclamations issued by the British prohibiting the foreign vessels operating in the Colony’s waters in 1795 and 1796 were backed up. A man-of-war was sent up the west coast and took possession of the bays, denying them to the Americans and French. It was, however, impossible to stop their activities in all areas because there were too many of them and their business was encouraged and welcomed by traders.

Developments in False Bay

For a while Murray did well but by 1803 the Batavian Government had taken over the Cape and he was forced to sell to Dutch merchants, although allowed to retain some shares in the business.

In the same year the operator of a “fishery” at Muizenberg, Abraham Klopper, applied to Governor Jansen for a grant of land at Kalk Bay where he wished to start a whale fishery. He received two acres with instructions to fence it off and not to build any more houses than required by his family and fishery. Two years later in 1805 Von Halle, Sappe and Muntingh started a whale fishery at the end of Bree Street, Cape Town (in line with the “new” pier later built in 1842.)

An estimate, made at the time, of the number of whales expected to be caught, was 1 350. This total was made up from the expected catches in Table Bay (as far as Dassen Island) 150; False Bay 300; Saldanha and St.Helena Bays 500, and 400 from
A TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE

Agulhas to Algoa Bay (including Mossel and Plettenberg Bays.)

The next year, with the British again in control of the Cape, the Governor Lt. General Sir David Baird granted a piece of land to the south of Simon’s Town (Seaforth) to Messrs Cloete, Reitz and Anders on so that they might start a whale fishery in False Bay.

Pieter Lourens Cloete had been the vice-president of the Law Council and was now a Cape Town merchant. William Anderson owned a ship chandlering business in Simon’s Town and Jan Frederick Reitz was a former Dutch Naval Officer who arrived on the frigate de Zephir and stayed behind to “recover” his health. They were also given the sealing rights on Malagassen Eiland (Seal Island.)

In 1788 two men, namely Capt-Lieutenant Dirk Gysbert van Reenen of the Cape Burgher Cavalry and Lieutenant Hendrik Cloete of the Stellenbosch Burghers, had a fishery at “Swarte Klip” and were killing seals on the island and selling the oil to the Company. By 1822 the seals on the small islands on the east and west coast were being hunted and 8 000 skins on average were being exported annually.

Whale oil was used as an illuminant and lubricant and also to seal the cow dung and bamboo roofs. The tough and flexible whale bone was sent to England for the manufacture of items from chair springs, whips and corset-stays to shoe horns and umbrellas.

Within a short time the smell of burning blubber in Simon’s Town became too offensive, causing “inconvenient suffering” to the garrison and inhabitants of Simon’s Town and the company was restricted from carrying out their operations on the shore at Seafirth. With the season well advanced there was little time to find a more convenient spot and the prize ship Truth was hired so that the blubber could be rendered onboard. As their operations had to be “sufficiently removed” from the town, the ship was anchored off the cove at Kalk Bay, which was considered the safest place. It was soon learned that no vessel, however well secured with anchors and cables, could ride through the winter outside the shelter of Simon’s Bay. During the height of the whaling season the commanding officer of the Truth, Captain Findlay, had to remove the six members of the service who were on board as “ship keepers” because he believed their lives to be in danger. Towards the end of the season the south-east winds set in and the danger to lives and property became so grave that it was decided to continue operations ashore at Kalk Bay. Permission had to be obtained from the new Governor, Lt. General Grey, but complaints had already reached him about the offensive smell coming from the whale fishery. In lengthy correspondence it was explained that the smells came from carcasses which had accidentally washed ashore in the strong winds and could not be removed immediately because of “a scarcity of hands.” The labour used in the industry was a mixture of slaves, wage earners and, with special permission, the occasional prisoner of war. The company also pointed out that the station in Cape Town was not more than two hundred yards from the nearest dwelling and, with the strong north winds blowing over the town, there had been no complaints.

The Governor considered the matter, weighing up the large investment and considerable losses that would be incurred if the operations could not continue. He then gave permission for temporary buildings to be erected in the neighbourhood of Kalk Bay. This was on condition that they be pulled down whenever ordered to do so and that the cutting up of the whales continue alongside the anchored ship. The carcasses must be prevented from washing ashore and if they did they must be removed with the least possible delay. They were also advised to take particular care not to interfere with the public road nor prevent the fishing boats from their usual launching and landing on the beach.

Cloete, Reitz and Anderson erected a temporary furnace on the beach and continued the whaling business on land leased from a Mr Jennings. During their second season working ashore at Kalk Bay, Lord Caledon commented on the viability of the whaling stations in False Bay. He referred to the fact that the whales that were being hunted were females who were coming into the Bay to breed.

An account written a few years later by a traveller passing through the area noted “considerable numbers of whales from twenty to thirty feet in length resort here between the months of May and October and are taken by the fishermen, principally of the Malay race. The present is considered a very successful season, sixteen having already been cut up and the oil extracted.”

To prevent smuggling, all small boats were required to be registered and numbered. From sunset to sunrise they were chained on the beach in front of the Secretary’s Office in Simon’s Town. This included all the small fishing boats; and those in Fish Hoek and Kalk Bay had to be drawn out of the water onto the beach. No boats were allowed to go to the ships at
anchor in the bay and any goods brought ashore had to be landed at the Simon’s Town wharf.

Cloete, Reitz and Anderson advertised their company for sale in January 1811. In November that year they sold it to Mr Stephen Twycross, including the grounds, appliances, and seventeen slaves as well as the schooner Isabella. He advertised the following year for eight slaves who were to be employed during the season, so bringing the total to twenty five slaves. Their pay was 14 Rix-dollars per month, excluding victuals and drink and their masters were assured that none of the slaves would be employed on the boats. Twycross was from London and he married a local woman, Helena Liesching and had two daughters and a son. Twycross tried to sell the business five years later in 1816 “with about 250 leaguers of whale oil and considerable quantity of whale bone.” As there were no buyers, he continued to operate.

Another station was being operated off Danger Beach by Jan Hendrik Muller who had been a quarryman for the Company. He was granted a large section of the land near Kalk Bay and St James and was a member of one of the leading fishing families in the area.

Andries Bruyns (the original owner of Fish Hoek) sold his whaling station in 1820 to Isaac Lezar. Lezar continued hauling the whales out onto the flat rock of Skeleton Pool for cutting up and rendering the blubber to oil.

Over the next few years the stations at Simon’s Town, Fish Hoek and Kalk Bay changed hands several times. Lezar sold to Palmer, who went insolvent; the Trustees divided his estate and sold sections to John Osmond, George Muller and Jacobus Arnoldus Hurter.

With a high oil price the whaling industries in the Bay remained prosperous. The Kalk Bay station is recorded as having melted down as many whales as all the other stations together. In 1820 the Chamber of Commerce records ranked the whale fishery next to agriculture and vineyards.

R.B. Fisher in his writings The Importance of the Cape of Good Hope as a Colony to Great Britain, said that the two great drawbacks to the whaling industry were the scarcity of skilled men and the want of capital. The inshore whaling industry he wrote, “contained within itself the seeds of decay by killing the breeding stock.”

Only two years later, Captain Owen RN in Travels to Explore the Shores of Africa wrote: “There are three whaling establishments in False Bay, viz. Fish Hoek, Kalk Bay and Gordon’s Bay. The cow whales generally come into the bays on the coast for still water and sand, both which are said to be necessary to the black whale in parturition. These shore establishments, therefore, are extremely destructive to the species, which has in consequence become very scarce, and although three good whales will generally pay all expenses, they do not now always succeed in getting that number, whereas on the first establishment of the fishery at Kalk Bay they sometimes killed up to forty in a season.”

William Wilberforce Bird in his State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822 stated that “the fisheries might be more beneficial to the Cape, if followed with diligence and enterprise.” He remarked that “the catching and salting of smaller fish, which are abundant, is almost wholly neglected.” He also noted
that the foreigner often “fills up on the coast on his return from the Southern Ocean.”

The area of Fish Hoek and Kalk Bay had, up until then, been protected from vagrants and other "disturbers of the peace" by its geographical position. When the Acting Resident Justice at Simon’s Town, Mr F.R Pinney started to receive complaints he was very concerned and undertook a careful inspection of the area. He then advised the Colonial Secretary that “there were about five distinct fisheries established, two of which were engaged in whaling and between them employed nearly two hundred people. There appeared no breach of the peace and the conduct of the fisheries appeared orderly.” He went on to suggest the establishment of a Branch Post Office and regular weekly visits by the Resident Justice and the occasional presence of a Police constable “upon uncertain days of the week” and on Sundays. He also decided to write to the proprietors of the different fisheries and caution them to “maintain good and peaceable conduct of their respective crews” and to remind them that they could forfeit business rights if there were disturbances.

Twycross had been the chairman of the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, when he died in 1828, aged 49. There were no buyers for his business. The Trustees of his insolvent estate advertised the fishery in 1831, with its boat, buildings and equipment for hire for 12 months. In 1838 the Kalk Bay fishery was again advertised for lease.

The “Great Whale Fishery” as it was called, which had passed from Lezar to Palmer and then to Osmond was sold to Thomas Thwaites in 1830. It was then sold to Johannes Hendrick Muller and John Martinus Muller, owners of the Harrington Fishery (also one of the Fish Hoek divisions sold by Palmer’s Trustees.)

When a whale was sighted in the Bay the competition between the boats was fierce. The first boat to harpoon the whale claimed ownership but in the enthusiasm many a whale was chased right out of the bay again. If a “right whale” could be landed, it would fetch £400-£600 which was enough to cover the expenses of maintaining the whale boats and equipment. Occasionally a humpback whale was killed but this would only fetch between £20 and £200. The industry was described as: “a lottery in which there are too many tickets for the number of prizes.”

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With the British in control of the Colony the whale industry had spread all around the coast from the Cape to Algoa Bay. The main target was the Southern Right Whale for its oil and bone.

In False Bay the local stocks were not only being depleted by the inshore operators but by foreign catchers intercepting the whales as they moved up the coast. The problem with foreign whalers had not been solved. They continued to operate openly in the bays and, even at the popular refreshment station of Simon’s Town, were not shy to lower their boats and hunt down a whale. This was in direct competition with the local shore industries whose crews were threatened with violence should they get in the way.
One incident with an American whaler caused considerable annoyance to the authorities in Simon’s Town. The ship, while at anchor in the Bay, cut up a whale and allowed the carcass to wash ashore where it lay across the roadway. Not only was the smell a problem but the carcass was endangering the lives of travellers using the road at night. The whaler showed no inclination to remove the carcass and the authorities requested the customs to detain the ship. The matter was resolved some weeks later when the carcass was towed out to sea.

Foreign vessels were not shy about launching their boats and hunting a whale in Simon’s Bay

To ship chandlers these visitors were most welcome, while it was the unfortunate local fishermen and public who suffered. The Americans, through their consulate, were trying to get permission to transfer their oil cargoes at the Cape without paying “bond duties.” The local industry in its protests against these activities and the privileges granted to the foreign vessels wrote to the Acting Governor Col. R Wade and pointed out that the local fisheries had to be licensed and no English vessel was allowed within three leagues of the US coast. The local industry expected the same protection.

An indication of the large amount of whale oil cargoes passing through the Cape during this period is revealed in the records of vessels carrying such cargoes that were lost. In 1839 the French whaler Protee, eighteen months away from her home port and with 15 barrels aboard, went ashore at Muizenberg. Six months later the British barque Admiral Cockburn, homeward bound after four years, followed her onto the shore at Muizenberg. Part of her cargo was saved and sold on the Parade.

The son-in-law of Jan Hendrik Muller, an Englishman named Robert Langley, arrived from America in 1846 and took over the operations carried out from Danger Beach. The houses Villa Capri and Pentrich were used to store boats, equipment and barrels of oil.

The following year in 1847 allotments of land of the Kalk Bay fishery were leased by auction. The Cape of Good Hope Fishing, Salting, Whaling & Sealing Company moved from Table Bay to Kalk Bay that same year. Neither lasted very long, for Langley retired and sold the Danger Beach operation in 1853, and the Kalk Bay company had failed by 1855.

From then onwards the whaling was undertaken by individual operators who had boats and crew standing by at various spots in the Bay. The boats used were narrow and double-ended, lighter in construction than the normal fishing boats and steered by a long sweep oar. Usually five crew were at the oars with a harpooner in the bows and the skipper at the steering oar. The boats operated in pairs with one standing by, should the other encounter any problems. On some occasions the boats were upturned by the whale, men were injured but, very rarely, killed. The standby boat was always ready to rush and assist the other boat.

The whalers at Simon’s Town were George Muller and a syndicate formed by Edward Hblutzl, Arie Thomas and Budge. At Boulders beach there was Rietman, at Seaforth, Carnie and Co with George Cotton as their harpooner (before he operated on his own from Seaforth.) At Miller’s Point there was Donald Currie and there were also boats at Smitswinkel Bay.

The Aurets, with their trekking at Muizenberg, had a loose control over the activities at Kalk Bay. Abraham (Jeremias’ son) took up fishing. Abraham Auret’s two sons, Hendrik and Frederick, operated two boats, the Springbok and the Bloubok, from Kalk Bay. When a whale was killed they enlisted the help of other Kalk Bay boats to get the whale back for cutting up or they chartered a steam tug from Simon’s Town. The large block and tackle needed to turn the whale over when cutting it up on the rocks at Kalk Bay was hired from a Mr Stephens for £40.

A traveller passing through Kalk Bay in 1857 described it as a “little fishing hamlet where an immense number of fish were hung to dry in the sun” and said that the whale rib bones were used for fencing the gardens, walls were built with the vertebrae, stairs with the shoulder bone and the large jaw bones used as arches at the entrance to their “huts.” The same traveller was offered a piece of flesh cut from the jaw of a whale and boiled in fat but did not find it very appetising.

By 1860 whaling in False Bay was a sideline and efforts were concentrated on the line fishing. Whale hunts became few and far between. In 1855 only two were caught by the Kalk Bay whaling station and by
1882 none were caught in False Bay.

In the *Standard & Mail* of 29 August 1876 it was reported that “At noon on Friday last the greatest excitement was caused in Simon’s Town by the appearance of a whale in the Bay. It was immediately attacked from the whale-boats and Mr Muller succeeded in getting fast to it. The fish fought well and was not dispatched until about four o’clock. Upon being beached it was found to be 35ft long (10m), very broad, and that its blubber was about ten inches thick (25cm).” Earlier that week a shark “measuring upwards of nine feet (2.7m) in length” was killed by Mr Raven and a boatsman in the harbour. A second one was seen which got away.

A report in the *Wynberg News* of 7 June 1902 reads, “Three whales were seen blowing in the Bay and the news was telegraphed to Messrs Auret. Their two boats, at Kalk Bay were quickly launched and gave chase. They caught up with the whales off Muizenberg station where a considerable number of people had gathered to watch events. The whales disappeared as the boats arrived within striking distance and did not appear again. The boats then sailed back to Kalk Bay.”

Just before the turn of the century public pressure and the opposition from the Council forced the Aurets to move their operations away from Kalk Bay to the beach beyond Muizenberg. Here they had to process the whales, which could take up to two weeks, and then transport the casks of oil back to Kalk Bay beach to await shipment to the buyer.

While men chased after the migrating whales in open boats with hand-held harpoons there was still the chance of them escaping and the overall impact on stocks must have been small. Once the ships started arriving at their feeding grounds, the whales began to be slaughtered in their hundreds and thousands.

Initially in Spitzenberg (Arctic region) in the 1630s the ships put down their anchors and the whales milled around. They had no idea of the force that had come to kill them and made no effort to escape. When ships were full they lifted their anchors and sailed for home. The same thing occurred off the American coast and later in the Antarctic when the feeding grounds were found. Once the whale stocks became scarce the whalers scoured the oceans until new stocks were found. With the improvements in catching and processing and the development of sophisticated equipment, faster ships and aircraft, the whale stood little chance and was simply slaughtered.

With the invention and perfection of the swivel grenade gun by the Norwegian Sven Foy in 1860 and the advent of steam ships, the numbers of whales being killed worldwide grew drastically. Those that were once too fast or too dangerous, could now be hunted. It was no longer a problem that some whales sank when killed because powerful winches pulled them alongside and compressed air was pumped into the body. Reports of vast numbers of whales encountered by the Antarctic explorers had been released and by 1900 the whaling fleets had started entering the Southern Ocean. Successful shore stations in South Africa, namely Donkergat and Durban, also engaged in “off shore” operations using factory ships.

The International Whaling Commission

This was established in 1946 with the aim of “exploitation without extermination” but unfortunately, not all nations became members.

In the 1950s and 1960s fleets of whale catchers and their large factory ships gathered in Cape Town harbour for their expeditions to the Antarctic.
Between 1900 and 1960 it is estimated that the whale population had been reduced by 85% and in 1970 there was involvement by South African operators in “pirate whalers.” They operated in contravention to the IWC Conventions and had one of their catchers sunk in Lisbon by conservationists using explosives.

Only in 1982 was an agreement reached on a moratorium on whaling. This resulted from strong pressure by environmental groups, Green Peace in particular.

Today “whale watching” has become a big tourist attraction and money earner for several nations. South Africa has a number of popular spots along its coastline where the growing population of whales arrive each season to the delight of the locals and visitors. In False Bay the number of whales arriving each year to calve is increasing and their presence a boon to the local tourist industry.

The dispute today is about whether anyone should be permitted to operate passenger boats to take people out to the whales and how close boats should be allowed to approach these mammals. With dedicated people like Nan Rice of the Dolphin Action and Protection Group a satisfactory arrangement will be found whereby all can benefit, most of all the whales. Kalk Bay may become one of the terminals for such “whale watching excursions.”
The **Southern Right Whale** (Suidelike Noordkapper) was almost exterminated in the last century. Up to 18m in length, weighing up to 60 tons and ten times the size of an elephant; being slow moving, made it an easy target, along with the fact that it floated when dead. It was the “right” kind of whale to kill. It has distinctive white patches on its head and jaw which are useful for identification of individuals. Outgrowths of tough skin, sometimes referred to as “the bonnet” are callosities which, like the mouth area, are infested with barnacles.

Their dramatic courtship displays consist of head stands with the tail waving in the air or flapping their flukes on the surface (lobtailing) and leaping clear out of the water (breaching) or poking their heads out in a vertical position sometimes moving round 360 degrees (spy hopping). The young are born between 4 -6m in length, mainly in August, and grow nearly 30 mm per day on milk supplied by the mother. They have been protected since 1935 at which time it is estimated there were between 10 - 30 adult females left in the population visiting South African shores.
Some of the fish caught in False Bay

Snoek

Geelbek

Yellowtail

Red Roman

Panga

Hottentot

White Stumpnose

Rock Lobster
CHAPTER THREE
Period of Major Developments

1830 - 1905

Some of the most important developments in the area’s history took place during this period. With improved roads and regular transport services, Kalk Bay’s popularity grew. People came for day outings and holidays. Cottages, hotels and shops were built and eventually the railway line reached the village. The influx of nonfishing folk to the area and its popularity as a “healthy resort” was to develop into one of the pressures against the fishing activities. Housing for the fishermen became a problem and the loss of their “traditional landing beach” to the railway line brought untold hardship. In False Bay lighthouses were established at Simon’s Town and Cape Point. The Kalk Bay Regatta became an annual event attracting many visitors.

One highlight during this period that changed the future of fishing was the proclamation of the Fisheries Protection Act and the research by the Government’s first Fisheries’ research vessel. Trawlers with purse-seine nets appeared on the scene and entrepreneurs developed a fishing company with cold storage facilities at Kalk Bay. A movement started for a harbour to be built. There were many with different agendas calling for a harbour, ranging from those interested in tourism and recreation to those with hopes to renew the whaling and utilise a harbour for trawlers. The line fishermen were confused, disorganised and, in some quarters, unpopular.

The population of fishermen at Kalk Bay had been increasing during these years with the influx of many nationalities including Dutch, Portuguese, English, German, French, Danish, Spanish, Filipino, Javanese and Indonesian - something of an international microcosm. They were hard-pressed to find sufficient suitable accommodation and built huts and small cottages wherever they could. However their activities, in particular whaling, were always to be in direct opposition to the vision of a healthy clean “holiday village” which would attract tourists and visitors to Kalk Bay.

Boats

The ships’ boats at the time of the very early settlers, were used for fishing. In later years the Company sent out boats in kit form which were assembled at the Cape.

There was no indigenous timber available to build boats and timber was delivered by the passing ships. With gradual modifications to the designs a craft suitable for local conditions began to evolve. It needed to be easy to row and safe for sailing. At the same time it had to be sturdy enough for local waters but could not be too heavy, as it had to be carried up the beach each day.

In about 1850 the famous yacht builders White of Cows in England were approached. They designed a fishing boat that took into account all the requirements of the local conditions at the Cape.

The type of boat used from the beach has not changed much over the years. (Cape Archives)

Over the years the best features of this design were improved upon. By the time construction began on Kalk Bay harbour the boats used in False Bay were on average 7.6m in length. They were stout open boats with a 2m beam rigged with a large spritsail and jib, and capable of being pulled by five oars which

Kalk Bay as a holiday village

From the 1830s the hand line fishing industry developed at Kalk Bay. More and more effort was being concentrated on the catching of snoek and geelbek for drying and exporting.
were nearly 6.4 m long. They were considered good, safe and fast and not too heavy for carrying up the beaches.

**Tackle**

Hooks were imported, with some coming from England. Mostly they were from Norway, as they are today. Strops for the hooks were sometimes made up of thin sail cotton twisted together on a homemade L-shaped frame.

The lead sinkers were home-made, similar to those still used today. A diamond-shaped sinker was used for the reef fish with a strop put through the middle, and for the snoek a cigar-shaped lead with a wire trace, barbless hook and a skirt (made from shark skin).

They would then be dried again. This not only preserved the lines but allowed them to run freely without kinking. “Buffa” was the term used by the fishermen for this “blooding” of the lines.

The fishermens’ wives made the oilskin clothing from sailcloth which they soaked in linseed oil. Chokka jigs were made up by lashing small hooks on pieces of cane and melting candle wax over it. The children of the fishermen were often involved in these activities.

When nylon gut appeared it was first used for the strops on the blood line. Most skippers agree that the first man they know of to use gut for a complete line instead of the blood line was “Giffie” Gomez. On that day others watched him catch fish so much faster than everyone else that it was just a matter of time before they had all followed suit.

“Giffie” is also accredited with being the first to use a snoek lead painted a different colour. With this he caught more than those around him and they soon followed his example. Apparently there was another fisherman named “Tarzan” who spent his time fishing off the harbour wall and did not go out on the boats. He was very keen on experimenting and passed these ideas on to “Giffie” Gomez.

To prevent the fingers being cut when fishing with the nylon lines, the fishermen wear “finger lappies” made from bicycle inner tube, elastoplast or thick canvas, which they slip over their two forefingers.

**Seevarkie**

Fishermen would use a specimen of the boxfish, coffer fish or perdvis, as a barometer. It was usually dried and hung from a piece of string, or from the hair of a horse’s tail, in a draughtless room. In some cases it was believed that the fish’s tail had to be cut off before it would work. When a change was due in the weather the “seevarkie” would turn and face the direction of the expected wind. If rain was on the way the fish would become damp. These indications showed the fishermen what to expect many hours before the time and they planned their fishing accordingly.
The early line fishermen

They loaded heavy sacks filled with beach sand into the boat for use as ballast. The boats required this ballast as they were fairly light, open and with very little keel. Those fitted with a mast would set their sail. While they rowed or sailed, they used the mountains surrounding False Bay and “marks” such as hills to ascertain their position relative to their fishing “spots” in the Bay. Certain mountains surrounding False Bay bore names given to them by the fishermen, such as Batsambreel, which is Constantiaberg (said to resemble an upside down umbrella).

When they reached the fishing ground, they dropped anchor, baited and put their “blood lines” overboard. Bait was not a problem. There were plenty of mackerel and often shoals of pilchards which they could scoop out of the water as they sailed through the shoals. When they began to catch and fill up with fish, they emptied the beach sand out of their ballast sacks.
The fishermen off loaded their catch and placed it in heaps on the beach. The bank fish were already bunched and each man kept account of his personal tally. (SA Library)

The larger fish such as yellowtail, kob, and geelbek were laid out for the buyers to see. One member of the crew would take charge of the selling and do his best to get the highest price. He had to make sure the fish were counted correctly and that the money received was also correct. Occasionally a single fish was sold to a visitor or local resident but the majority were sold in bulk to the langganner (hawker). Accepting a price offered by the langganner for the total catch, or heap of fish was much quicker and easier for the fishermen. After a long hard day at sea the crew were not keen to spend hours trying to sell individual fish. (SA Library)

With poles through strops at each end of the boat, the fishermen lifted and carried them up the beach to a safe position, beyond the high water mark. (Cape Archives)
Special names

There were special names given to the various positions in the boat: the man in the bow was the bossman, and his duties were the anchor and the ballast bags. Next to the mast was the masdorf, who made the sail fast. In the middle was the middelriem who looked after the barrel of fresh water. In the deepest part of the boat sat the oosgat who took care of the bailing. Then there was the agterriem who bunched the skipper’s fish and stood in when another crew member was absent. The sides of the boat were not referred to as “port” or “starboard,” but rather onderarm for the left, because the snoek was swung under the arm when fishing on this side, and swaai Kant for the right side where the fish had to be swung across the body to get it under the arm.

Fishing beyond Cape Point

In the very early days, although much of the fish was close by, the boats did make trips as far as Cape Point where, on occasion, they would be caught by weather changes and have to spend several days camped ashore at Buffel’s Bay. Some fishermen did venture around Cape Point, as revealed in the following story published on 25 May 1874 in The Evening Standard and Mail:

“False Bay: During the day (Fri 24th) the westerly breeze increased to near gale force and the fleet of fishing boats in the bay headed for the creek at Kalk Bay. Fog came in and one boat with five aboard was lost. It was last seen sailing into the fog. The other boats took in canvas and rowed back to Kalk Bay. The missing boat was first presumed to have headed for Simon’s Town under the competent helm of well known fisherman Dantjie. Later it was presumed she had been hit by a squall and capsized.”

The fishing community at Fish Hoek was also greatly distressed as one of their boats had left for Millers Point with a crew of six and not returned. A few days later it was learned that the crew had beached the
boat at Cape Point when the gale started and spent the night ashore. The next morning they walked to Olifantsbos fishery to advise them of what had happened. On the Monday, when the wind had dropped, they returned to sail the boat round to Olifantsbos.

The fish horn
The fish horn is a distinctively unique part of the Cape heritage, yet it was not universally popular as revealed by the following letter which appeared in the Cape Town Daily News of 31 August 1875.

“Sir, You have properly opened your columns to the discussion of the various nuisances which in this town are shamefully prominent. Permit me to call your attention to certain of these which I have not seen noticed by your correspondents, but which are nevertheless crying evils of long standing. The nuisance I refer to attacks us by outrage to our most exquisite and least defensible sense - that of hearing. How do we allow them to blow horrible fish horns on fish carts?

I am an ardent fellow of the society for the suppression of noise. The ear-torturing nuisance is bad enough to anybody, but absolutely unenduring to those engaged in literary work or engrossing study demanding quiet and freedom from external distractions. This nuisance amongst others can be remedied with ease by municipal regulations, especially under a powerful tax-imposing body as the Town Council of Cape Town.

Sir, I know that what I have here put forward will gain your sympathy: and I exhort and entreat you to aid and follow up my discharge of small-arms by bringing the heavy editorial guns into position, and treating the public and the Council with a few double-shotted, or double-leaded rounds.”

It was in fact the independent Mowbray municipality rather than the Cape Town Council which later legislated against the blowing of fish horns.

In 1906 a fish hawker named John Hollam was riding his fish cart through the streets of Mowbray and blew his fish horn to let people know he had fish for sale. He was stopped by a policeman who said that in the Mowbray municipality it was prohibited by law to blow a fish horn. John rode on for another 60 yards, turned round and laughed at the policeman. He continued his journey, blowing on his fish horn.

He found himself appearing before the magistrate. Even though he pleaded “not guilty” he was convicted under a section of the local regulations for “wrongfully and unlawfully disturbing the public peace or quietude by making a loud or unseemly noise, by striking or blowing on a fish horn in the main road of Mowbray.” He was fined ten shillings.

His attorney appealed on the grounds that the matter was beyond the power of the local municipal regulations and that the conviction was therefore incorrect. Hollam’s case then went before the Supreme Court. The Chief Justice listened to the arguments and asked several questions such as “Is noisy the same as noisome?” and “How does one strike a fish horn?”

In his final judgement, Chief Justice Hopley said he found it difficult to believe that legislation meant to suppress nuisances such as houses of ill fame and gaming houses was intended to include blowing a fish horn! “Laughing at the policeman was the greatest provocation,” he added. The appeal was upheld and the conviction quashed.

(Below) Not everyone appreciated the sound of a fish horn. (SA Library)
The deadly “Blaasop”

The Danish ship Christianshaven arrived in Simon’s Town in August 1826. While lying at anchor in the Bay the fifteen-year-old son of the Second Officer decided to put a fishing line over the side. It was not long before he caught a fish which he took to the galley and boiled. Within a short time of having eaten his catch, the boy died. An enquiry was immediately held to investigate the cause of his death and surgeons from several vessels and from the Royal Naval Base conducted a postmortem. They found he had died from poisoning which they traced to the fish just eaten.

The following notice was subsequently issued:

"Masters and Commanders of all vessels arriving in Simon's Bay are hereby cautioned that a fish of poisonous quality is frequently caught alongside of vessels that are at anchor. The fish referred to is 8 - 10 inches in length, is broad just below the head and tapers off to its tail where it is quite small. The black belly has a strong resemblance to the colour of a toad; it also has a distinctive stripe of yellow round the body dividing the black from the white; the fish described is called by the natives of the Colony “Blaas-op” (which may be understood “Bladder Fish”) from the circumstance of it becoming inflated with air in the centre of the body, soon after it has been caught, which gives it the hardness of an inflated bladder.

A stuffed fish of the kind alluded to may be seen at the office of the Secretary of the Residency."

The Sailing Directions for the South and East coasts of Africa for several years thereafter carried the following notice:

"Simon’s Bay: Caution: There is a fish in Simon’s Bay called Toad Fish, about six inches long, back dark with deep black stripes, belly white, with faint yellow patches: it swims near the surface and is the constant attendant on lines employed in fishing.

When taken from the water it puffs out considerably. Should any portion of the fish be eaten, death ensues in a few minutes."

Lighthouses

Roman Rocks lie at the entrance to Simon’s Bay. At high tide these rocks become submerged and are a grave danger to shipping. A light ship was anchored there in 1845 to warn vessels of this danger but broke adrift in a strong south-easter. A metal tower was then built on the rocks but this proved to be unsafe. Finally in 1867 a small, manned lighthouse was built on the rock. The base was built using granite quarried at Seaforth, near Simon’s Town. For many years lighthouse-keepers kept four-hour shifts.

In 1901 a fishing boat capsized near the lighthouse and five lives were lost. An enquiry was held to establish why no alarm had been raised and why the incident was only seen from Kalk Bay. The findings revealed that the lighthouse-keeper had not witnessed the accident nor had any of the other boats. The police at Kalk Bay were the only ones to witness the capsizing and had raised the alarm. Subsequently a steam tug was dispatched from Simon’s Town to rescue the men.

Cape Point lighthouse was originally an iron tower. It was built on Vasco da Gama Peak 248m above high water in 1860.

On the night of 18 April 1911 the Portuguese liner Lusitania struck Bellows Rocks on her way to Cape Town from Lourenzo Marques. The lighthouse which was covered in mist could not be seen from the sea. The captain fired a signal gun which was fortunately heard by the lighthouse-keeper who immediately phoned Simon’s Town. Lifeboats containing some of the passengers and crew were lowered into the water. The lighthouse staff crawled along the cliffs, waving a lantern and warning the boats not to try to land. The Admiralty tug Scotsman was dispatched along with a
A TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE

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cutter from H.M.S. Hermes, H.M.S. Forte was busy raising steam before she, too was on her way to Cape Point. Despite the warning, two of the life boats made for the small beach below Cape Maclear but unfortunately one boat capsized and three people were drowned. The other lifeboat managed to reach the shore safely. The rescue tug and cutter arrived and in the fog managed to locate the Lusitania and round up the lifeboats. Passengers were transferred to the Scotsman and by the time H.M.S. Forte arrived, the tug had 500 survivors aboard, including some 300 Africans scantily clothed and wrapped in their blankets. She headed back to Simon’s Town, while the warship took off the remaining people and then headed for Cape Town. A special train was arranged to take everyone from Simon’s Town to Cape Town. This included the 37 people who had beached their lifeboats and had arrived in Simon’s Town on an ox wagon. The next morning the 5 557-ton Lusitania slipped off the rock and disappeared beneath the sea.

Red Roman

The rocks upon which the Simon’s Town lighthouse was built were named because of the large numbers of Red Roman fish in the area. The Dutch called this fish “Rooi man.” These are slow growing fish and when caught, fetch a good price on the market. Today they are listed under the restricted section with a 30cm minimum size limit. Recreational fishermen are only allowed to catch five per person per day. These fish undergo a sex change when they reach a certain size and age. They mature at approximately 27-33 cm, at which size they are mostly female. The large fish have all changed to males. They are found from False Bay to Port St Johns and can live for periods of 20 years and longer. The angling record is 4,1 kg (1981) but one of 7,6 kg was recorded by J. Moore, a noted piscatorial authority, when landed by a Kalk Bay boat some years ago.

“Aston Bay”

During 1854 a retired Colonel, Henry Aston, his wife Catherine and their son, came to Kalk Bay. He had served as a senior officer in the Bombay Infantry in India before retiring to Kalk Bay. He was a keen Anglican and was the first churchwarden of the small original Anglican Church. During his time at Kalk Bay he was a great benefactor to the fishermen.

Such was the impact that he had amongst the fishermen that when they heard, in 1866, that he was intending to leave Kalk Bay to go to England, his birthplace, more than 80 Kalk Bay fishermen signed the following petition addressed to the Governor of the Cape:
“Colonel Aston has, with little intermission, lived amongst us as our friend and benefactor, sympathising with us in our troubles, giving us and our families advice and medicine when we were sick. That it is with the deepest regret that we hear of his intended departure from among us; and that as we have him in our hearts we beg your Excellency to permit us to have his name continually on our lips, by causing this our fishing place (Kalk Bay) to be named “Aston Bay,” so that our children in after generations may be familiar with the name of their fathers’ benefactor.”

Colonel Aston finally left for England in approximately 1871.

**Brighton of the Cape**
The improved road, the growth of Simon’s Town and regular public transport from Cape Town helped facilitate and speed Kalk Bay’s increasing popularity as “a healthy seaside resort.” More shops, a post office and hotels were established and Kalk Bay was billed as the Brighton of the Cape. Kalk Bay is credited with being South Africa’s oldest seaside resort and Gilman’s Hotel which was opened in 1851, hosted bands from the Navy’s ships. As the number of visitors grew so too did the number of holiday cottages.

In 1845 the small original Anglican Church was built on a piece of land on the seaward side of the Main Road, not too distant from the principal group of fishermen’s cottages. A catechist was employed to hold services for the fishermen (visitors to Kalk Bay also increasingly attended). During the week the Anglican Church was used as a school for the fishermen’s children. This was the very first school established along the False Bay coastline.

Amongst those who had holiday homes in Kalk Bay were Sir John Molteno, Prime Minister of the Cape, and the first Anglican Bishop of Cape Town, Bishop Robert Gray.

Bishop Gray had been sent from England in 1848 to establish more fully the Anglican Church of the Province in Southern Africa. (Cape Archives)

Bishop Gray’s seaside “retreat” purchased in 1855 on the site of the present Holy Trinity Anglican Church Rectory. In Bishop Gray’s time the house was only single storey. (Cape Archives)

Two Sisters of the newly-founded St George’s Sisterhood in Cape Town came to “recover” health at the Bishop’s “retreat” house in Kalk Bay. Originally from England, the Misses Charlotte Humphreys and Alice Pocklington stayed on and worked in Kalk Bay for some years and were known as the Sisters of Mercy. Sister Alice became headmistress of the Anglican Mission School housed in the original Church. Most of its pupils were the fishermen’s children. When the new, larger Holy Trinity Church was completed, the small original Anglican Church continued to house the school.

During 1870 there was an unusually bad outbreak of fever at Kalk Bay. Sister Harriet appealed through the medium of the Cape Town newspapers, the Cape Argus and the, Standard & Mail, for donations for the building of a small cottage hospital at Kalk Bay “in which we may be enabled to nurse any cases of sickness that arise.” She appealed to those readers who “yearly

The first Anglican Church at Kalk Bay was situated next to the station.
enjoy the change from the heat of Cape Town to the refreshing sea breezes will doubtless be glad to avail themselves of the opportunity of assisting the poorer inhabitants, namely the fishermen, of a place to which they are indebted in many cases for returning health and enjoyment.” Donations were payable into the account of the Kalk Bay Cottage Hospital at the Cape of Good Hope Bank. Sister Harriet stated that she felt confident that “the amount required would be heartily given in the name of Him in whom it is asked.”

The necessary money was raised and Dalebrook House was built which served as the Kalk Bay Cottage Hospital. (Dalebrook House later became the property of Cape Town shipping magnate T.J. Anderson).

Reported in the Standard & Mail and the Argus of 8 January 1874 was the following great tragedy: “About seven o’clock in the morning” on 7th January 1874 the three daughters of John G. Nicholls “went bathing, as was their custom, with three other young ladies at that dangerous bathing place, Kalk Bay. There is nearly always a great drawback at the appropriately named Danger Beach, and the beach suddenly shelves down somewhat precipitously. One of the young ladies stepped from the shallow into the deep water, and lost her footing. She cried to her sister for help, and she went after her, and then another sister went after her, and all three poor girls were carried out to sea. Mr Arderne saw that it was useless plunging into the water with a view to rescuing the ladies and with great presence of mind, immediately went like the clappers in a horse-drawn cart round to the fishery to get a whale-boat, which was at once launched and rowed to the scene of the disaster as fast as the arms of the lusty boatmen could pull.”

“The sea was breaking over the reef very heavily” and the crew of the whale-boat had to be very careful that the boat did not capsize.

The girls were picked up and hauled into the boat by the crew and “every effort was tried to restore animation, and the Sisters of Mercy resident in the neighbourhood helped, with efforts and medical resources, to their utmost, though without effect. Dispatches were sent, alike to Simon’s Town and Wynberg for medical assistance.”

The whale-boat used in the rescue belonged to a Malay fisherman, Salie Gajaard and he was awarded a substantial lifelong pension by the father of the girls.

Ultimately “only one sister of the three carried out to sea was saved,” namely Edith. The two daughters drowned, Madeline Margaret and Emma, were buried from St Paul’s Church, Rondebosch at half-past four the following day; Holy Trinity Anglican Church was still in the process of being built.

During 1877, the Sisters of Mercy, who were in poor health, went back to England. A plaque of gratitude was later erected to them in Holy Trinity Church for their efforts.
During that same year Father James Baker came to Kalk Bay. Father Baker originally trained as a medical doctor in England and not long after completing his training, he came aboard the S.S. Gwalior to Cape Town in 1848. Shortly after his arrival he was ordained deacon in Swellendam, and the following year he was ordained priest in George. He later went to work amongst the lepers and convicts on Robben Island in 1869, in what were more than trying conditions. The “good old chaplain” as he was called, became the first resident priest and Rector of Holy Trinity Anglican Church. Sickness and fever, as on Robben Island, was very much a feature in Kalk Bay, although of quite a different nature to that on the Island. In addition to his normal priestly duties Father Baker made use of his acquired medical training and skills in treating the sick, who comprised mainly of fishermen.

For a great many years the means of transport of visitors and others wishing to get to Kalk Bay was by public, animal-drawn carts. The railway line had only been laid to Wynberg in 1864. When the line opened there was a price war between the operators of animal-drawn carts and the Railways. In the end carts ran only from Kalk Bay as far as Wynberg, becoming a feeder to the Railways. Certain of the hotels at Kalk Bay, such as Melville’s, ran carts to meet trains at the Wynberg terminus and bring the visitors to Kalk Bay.

Appearing in the *Standard & Mail*, 24 September 1872: “Travelling by passenger-cart is not always undesirable, although generally it is. Yet a great deal depends upon who your fellow passengers are, the weather, and your mood. Yet, last Friday, it suited my mood to travel on a road that I had travelled often in past years, but not often recently. There was so much conversation on this journey that I was not able to take much notice of the surroundings. It’s an awful bore to have to change the luxurious railway carriage at Wynberg for the weather-beaten cart with its team of skeleton animals. There is no better alternative as the beaches prevent any better means of transport. Nothing short of a gold mine will ever take a line of rail as far Simon’s Town. In stormy weather the sea dashes up against the animal-drawn cart, threatening it with destruction. In driving rain and wind travelling is almost impossible.”

It was stated in the *Cape Almanac* that “those who keep pace with the times, instead of taking physic [medicine] for their ailments, take themselves off to Kalk Bay, with a sure prospect of more speedy and pleasant recovery.”

Many articles appeared in the local papers about the enjoyable facilities and good healthy air of Kalk Bay “In such a salubrious [healthy] climate” it was stated that people apparently developed “enormous appetites,” and to the invalid it was stated that this “should be a temptation.”
Oyster Trips
Appearing in the Cape Town Daily News, July 1876: “Kalk Bay is favoured by oysters, a fact of which we were not aware until recently. It is well for invalids who frequent that bracing locality to be able to enjoy a trip to the seaside, if only to indulge in an oyster feast. We are informed by a valetudinarian [person of infirm health] who has just returned to town from a visit to Kalk Bay that oysters of good quality can be had there in abundance at a very moderate rate, less indeed than in England. If so, the fact is worth recording. How the folks of Kalk Bay are off for vinegar and pepper, we cannot say, but as the dainties can very well be eaten without any condiment or other addition, we would say that an “oyster-trip” to Kalk Bay must be reviving and ought to be relished.”

By 1883 the railway line reached Kalk Bay and its popularity continued to grow. Appearing in the Evening Phoenix. 2nd Oct 1883:

“Saturday at the seaside, enjoyment combined with economy. Auret’s two shilling fish dinner every Saturday.

First Dinner on Sat. 6 October: Mr Auret, the proprietor of the Albion Hotel at Muizenberg, has, in response to numerous invitations, decided upon giving a Fish Dinner every Saturday, on arrival of visitors at Muizenberg on the train leaving Cape Town at 1 o’clock. The dinner will consist of fish cooked in various ways, and every effort will be made to obtain the most delicate fish, including soles. (Pioneering attempts were made several years later by a Kalk Bay fish dealer, Carl Kleinschmidt, at trawling for soles at Kalk Bay between 1889 and 1891.) The charge of 2 shillings will enable most people to avail themselves of a day’s outing and a Saturday’s return ticket issued by the Railways management at Excursion Rates.”

The Catholic Filipino community used to sail to Simon’s Town on Sundays. They were often hampered by the weather conditions and on 5 October 1858 the foundation stone of the Church of St James was laid. The Church was built on the site of the present railway station and named after the apostle, fisherman and patron saint of Spain, St James.

Priests came from Wynberg to celebrate Mass until April 1874 when a Spanish-speaking priest, Father John Duignam, from Mullingar in Ireland was appointed resident parish priest. Initially a small mission school catered for the fishermen’s children. Later a private school, the Star of the Sea Convent was opened in 1908, run by Dominican Sisters from Springfield Convent. The school started with only ten pupils but over the next few years the numbers increased and included boarders. Father Duignam continued with a night school for the fishermen's children, many of whom left at an early age to go to sea.

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The Kalk Bay Regattas
The Kalk Bay regatta proved a very popular event and was repeated annually for many years, attracting large crowds to the area. It was sometimes referred to as the False Bay or Kalk Bay / Muizenberg Regatta and was later shifted from January to Easter Monday. Special railway excursion trains were laid on from Cape Town to enable people to watch the event.

The first regatta at Kalk Bay took place in 1883 and was umpired by Mr James G. Steytler. Entries were limited to the boats of Simon’s Town and Kalk Bay and prizes for first, second and third places were £5, £3, and £2 respectively.

The first sailing event was won by African Maid (skipper C. Fisk, owner Osmond); second place was Colorado (skipper and owner F. Flores) and third was Invincible (skipper and owner N. Grant.)

Other entrants were Primrose (skipper Pedro, owner Carter); Follow-Me (Skipper J. Brown, owner Placids); Guide (skipper and owner Thompson.)

The second race involved seven Kalk Bay boats and a few from Simon’s Town: Weltevrede (skipper / owner Carter); Golden Fleet (skipper Rajadien, owner N. October); Golden Eagle (skipper J. Roslin, owner W. Hill); Robert John (skipper A. Cordon, owner R. Fish); Grantully Castle (skipper Antonie, owner P. Williams); Lore (skipper E. Ward, owner Saalie); Sultan (skipper J. Rode, owner Geyer).

The first, second and third places were taken by Robert John, Sultan and Golden Fleet.

In the pulling race there were four entries and the event was won by Follow-Me with R. Fish as oarsman.

Crowds on the shore watch the first regatta. (Cape Archives)

The Fish Trade with Mauritius
From the mid to late 1800s the major market for Cape fish, particularly snoek, was Mauritius. This market was created by the large number of labourers on the sugar plantations of Mauritius, and Cape snoek was a relatively inexpensive way of feeding the workers.

Cape Town firms shipped the salted fish to Mauritius and this trade grew substantially. Initially the fish was supplied from elsewhere but more and more effort was concentrated on the catching and drying of snoek and geelbek at Kalk Bay for export to Mauritius. Before the railway line had been extended to Kalk Bay at least two fairly large vessels from Cape Town anchored off the shore at Kalk Bay each month. The smaller fishing boats conveyed the dried fish for export to these larger vessels anchored beyond the breakers from whence it was shipped to Mauritius.
Reported in the Cape Argus was an accident which occurred to one of these vessels, the brig Esther, on Monday 21 May 1871, after she had just completed loading her cargo of dried fish from Kalk Bay, bound for Mauritius. The captain attempted to get underway but a strong south-easter and an accompanying heavy swell set in, and he decided to let her remain at anchor. With four fathoms of water beneath her, “the Esther bumped several times on something hard, apparently rocks.” She started to take in a small amount of water, and her cargo of fish had to be discharged. She was surveyed and found to be taking in one inch of water per hour and it was recommended that she be placed on the slip at Simon’s Town.

This trade continued for many years but from approximately 1885 the trade of dried fish to Mauritius had all but disappeared. The price of Mauritius’ major export, namely sugar, had dropped considerably and this forced them to resort to their own cheaper supplies of fish for the workers on the sugar plantations. At Kalk Bay the fishermen now turned their attention to supplying the local market. Within a few years, by 1892, Kalk Bay became the principle supplier of fish in the Colony.

Racks on which fish were hung and sun-dried were called stellasies. Justice Victor Sampson in his reminiscences noted that "trellised along the hill there were many thousands of cured snoek drying in the sun." (Cape Archives)

The American Schooner Alice
An American schooner, Alice, arrived in the local waters in 1889 and started to work in Table Bay and False Bay. The large amount of fish that the Alice hauled in, using a purse-seine net, caused considerable alarm. It was the first time that the Cape fishermen had seen a purse-seine net in operation. The catches were mainly of maasb tanker, mackerel and haarders. The Cape fishermen protested and were able to prevent the Alice from landing her catches on the local market. Her Captain, Josiah Chase, was then forced to salt and barrel all the catches and export them back to America.

Apart from having previously flooded the local market with fish, the Cape fishermen complained that the Alice was catching all the small fish and driving the larger fish away. As a result of the outcry from the local fishermen, Parliament introduced the Fisheries Protection Act, No. 29, of 1890. This Act prohibited the use of the purse-seine net. The Alice was subsequently recalled by her owners and returned to America.

The Act also prohibited the use of dynamite in the Colony’s territorial waters. In False Bay the Navy had been testing explosives. This, according to the fishermen, was killing a lot of fish.

Viaduct
While the problems with the Alice were taking place, the railway line was extended to Simon’s Town. Cecil John Rhodes officially opened the line on 1 December 1890 and, in a speech by John X. Merriman, Kalk Bay was described as “one of the loveliest places in the world but full of shanties and jam tins.”

The railway authorities, without any consultation with the fishermen, constructed the stone viaduct which carried the single railway line round to Simon’s Town, right across the fishing beach. For generations the fishermen had landed their boats on the beach and dragged them beyond the high water mark for safety. In stormy conditions the boats were physically carried even further up the beach and sometimes across the road. With the construction of a viaduct across the beach for the railway line this was no longer possible.

The fishermen found the area of their landing beach reduced to a fraction of its original size, leaving too little space for their boats.

In fine conditions the boats were able to be hauled as far as the viaduct. This was still below the high water mark. The only way to reach this higher ground was
for the fishermen to physically haul the boats through the arches of the viaduct. This required more than a dozen men-more than the total number of crew per boat. Thus all the fishermen had to help each other with this task.

The railway line extension to Simons Town reduced the size of the beach and created hardships for the fishermen. To compound their hardships the fishermen were forbidden to remove any sand from the beach for the ballast bags. Specific sand dunes were allocated and this involved dragging the heavy bags under the railway line to the beach every morning. (Cape Archives)

Opposition to the fishermen
The Kalk Bay fishermen, already under pressure from the railway extension, were experiencing difficulties with the “non-fishing” population of the village and the visitors. People were offended by the smells, the cleaning of fish on the beaches and the general dilapidated state of the sheds and overcrowded huts and cottages “straggling between rocky beach and precipitous mountains.”

Action had already been taken against some fishermen for removing beach sand and the boiling of whale oil had been moved beyond Muizenberg. There was a strong movement to not just curb the activities of the fishermen, but to remove the industry from the area altogether.

At this time Kalk Bay moved from a “village management board” to full municipal status. The Kalk Bay and Muizenberg Council, was making efforts to introduce some control and order to the area.

Fresh water had previously been transported by cart from a spring at “Die Trappies” near Clovelly. It was soon supplied from a reservoir built at Silvermine. Refuse and sewage removals were introduced. Regulations were also introduced covering building plans to the keeping of livestock. Several cases of leprosy highlighted the municipality’s grave concern about the general crowded and unhygienic conditions under which the fishing community were living.

Complaints were received on the conditions in the area. The local police sergeant-in-charge, P. S. Taylor, was sent with the sanitary inspector to report on the cause. “The nuisance was caused,” the Sanitary Inspector told the municipality, “by fish scales, dirty water, etc. which runs from the cleaning sheds, but there being no pipe or other means of carrying off the refuse into the sea, it remains amongst the rocks, giving out a bad smell which is detrimental to public health.”
The “Blue Book”
In the meantime the government had appointed a select committee to investigate the position of the fishing industry at the Cape. Among their findings were that the 17 boats operating at Kalk Bay were the major suppliers of fresh fish to the local market, sending salted fish by rail each day to Paarl and Worcester.

The diamond and gold discoveries had opened up a market for the Kalk Bay fishermen and they were also sending large quantities of fresh fish each month to Kimberley and Bloemfontein. Despite this, the Committee found that a Kalk Bay fisherman was, in good seasons, no better off than a labourer, and it was the “middleman” who made all the profits.

The investigations into the fishing industry culminated in the Fisheries Protection Act of 1893 and the tabling before Parliament of the “Blue Book” with recommendations based on their research and expert opinions and advice from other countries. This formed the basis upon which the fishing industry at the Cape was set. The new Act lifted the restrictions on the purse-seine net, but made provisions for closed seasons and gave protection to the seals, sea birds and the guano islands. It also introduced the registration of all boats and nets. The Government appointed Dr J.D.F. Gilchrist as their Marine Biologist and had a research vessel built in England.

This vessel, the Pieter Faure began conducting systematic research in False Bay in 1896. She showed False Bay to be a “good trawling ground” for silver fish, stock fish, stumpnose, gurnard, sole and kabeljou. On one occasion she hauled in some 6 000 fish in five hours by the method of bottom trawling. A deputation of concerned fishermen met with the Secretary of Agriculture. They argued that the Pieter Faure was damaging the spawning banks and scaring off fish in False Bay. They also expressed their fear of increased exploitation of False Bay by private trawlers.

Dr John Dow Fisher Gilchrist was born in Scotland in 1866. He studied at universities in Scotland, Germany and Switzerland. The Department of Agriculture of the Cape of Good Hope appointed him to investigate the fishing potential of the sea around the Cape and gave him the vessel Pieter Faure with which he undertook research from Saldanha Bay to Durban, collecting biological specimens, recording sea temperatures, salinity and a large quantity of other valuable information.

The first Marine Biological Station in South Africa was opened at St James in 1903. A small aquarium, built for his work, started in a small room with one tank continuously supplied with water by a hand pump. The aquarium slowly expanded.

The research was interrupted by the depression in 1907 but had resumed by 1912 when new tanks, donated by Sir Abe Bailey and the Cape Town Municipality, were installed and electricity provided. The public flocked to see the tanks and many schools brought their pupils to visit the only aquarium of its kind in the country. In 1915 some 48 000 visitors visited the aquarium. The Marine Biological station’s work was later taken over by the Sea Point Aquarium.

Dr Gilchrist was frequently involved in the affairs of the Kalk Bay fishermen, either to give advice on seasons, size limits, the harbour construction, trawling in the Bay or assist with relief funds after boat disasters. His work was acclaimed both in South Africa and overseas and he was appointed head of the Zoology Department of the South African College (later University of Cape Town). When he died in 1926 his work was continued by Dr Cecil von Bonde, who later became the first Director of Fisheries. In 1986, the S A National Committee for Oceanographic Research (SANCOR) and the S A Marine Corporation Ltd (Safmarine) established the Gilchrist Memorial Medal which is awarded to distinguished marine scientists.
Private trawlers in False Bay

The large hauls of fish by the Pieter Faure soon prompted another trawler, the Mary to be sent out from Scotland to trawl in False Bay. She was owned by a syndicate and managed by Mr William Runciman at Kalk Bay.

The Mary was not the only private steam trawler operating in the Bay. The Wynberg News, September 1898, reported the 97 ton Falcon, owned by Mr Kemp, had anchored too close inshore at the cove in Kalk Bay and had spent 24 hours on the rocks, until the Mary could pull her off. She apparently suffered little damage.

The fishermen presented a petition, with the signatures of 217 fishermen, requesting protection from the threat imposed by the activities of the trawlers. It came to the local Council’s attention that the trawling being carried out in False Bay could lead to the collapse of the local line fishing industry. This would result in large-scale unemployment in the area and the Council therefore gave its support, to the fishermen.

The fishermen complained to the select committee that the small fish being caught up in the trawlers’ nets were simply being thrown away. They also complained that the trawlers were denuding the areas where they traditionally fished. They accused the trawler operators of “exterminating such line fish as the panga, silver fish, red and white stumpnose.” For these reasons the line fishermen argued that the trawlers should operate outside False Bay.

The trawler operators responded saying that there was insufficient evidence supporting the line fishermen’s claim that the fishing grounds were being disturbed by bottom trawling. They also claimed that bottom trawling had nothing to do with the decline in the line fishermen’s catches. The trawler Mary sold her fish to the highest bidder and received 13 shillings per hundred fish. The line fishermen on the other hand sold their fish to the “middlemen” and received only eight or nine shillings per hundred fish. The trawler operators put this forward as the “real” reason why the line fishermen were discontented.

The Pieter Faure, named after the Minister of Agriculture, was 35m in length, with a 6.4m beam and a mass of 179 tons. (SA Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review)
The debate about trawlers in the Bay was carried in the columns of the Cape Times. It was claimed by some people that the problem was that the line fishermen were inefficient, lazy and drank too much. “Using their primitive methods of hooks and lines and stopping work for the rest of the week if they make a good catch!” The local fishermen were accused of resenting any effort by Government or private enterprise to improve the industry. Another governmental committee was set up to look into the matter.

The line fishermen’s protests against the trawlers were not very successful. Apart from a “three mile from the shore limit,” very few restraints were imposed on the trawlers’ activities. The future for the industry was seen to be in trawling.

The South African War
In the midst of these “local” problems the South African War had started in October 1899. Simon’s Town had become an important landing port for British troops. Within a year it was also being used as a holding station for Boer prisoners of war. Some were incarcerated in tents and others on ships at anchor in the Bay.

Also, at this time, work was under way on a new graving dock and the East Dockyard. The Railways busily ferried troops and prisoners between Cape Town and Simon’s Town.

The Louise
On 20 November 1901 several boats were caught out at sea when the wind strengthened to a strong south-easter. One Kalk Bay boat, Palestine, capsized on returning to the shore but her crew were all strong swimmers and managed to stay afloat until another boat could rescue them. Tom Fernandez had just arrived ashore after a five hour struggle rowing against the rough seas from the fishing grounds near Muizenberg. He had managed to get his boat ashore through the surf and safely pulled her up on the beach. A call went out that another boat had been sighted in difficulties and the upturned hull was drifting off Fish Hoek with two men clinging to her. Skipper Andrew Francis quickly gathered a crew of volunteers to go to their aid. Together with Tom Fernandez, Charles Ward, Indilla Junior, Charles Flatwell, Abraham Diedricks and Arthur Mathiesen, he put to sea in the Louise and they rowed for all they were worth through the huge seas to the distressed men.

Only two remained of a crew of seven. They were the brothers Anthony and Louis Borez. The older brother, Anthony, had made four swims away from the upturned hull to get hold of his brother, but each time the seas had swept him away. Finally he had lashed him to the hull with some rope and when the rescue boat arrived they had to use knives to cut the lashings and pull Louis aboard. The rope that Anthony was clasping had to be cut on either side of his hands because he was frozen stiff and could not let go.

After a desperate effort the men managed to row back to the beach at Kalk Bay where the two survivors were treated by a doctor. For their very brave efforts the skipper and crew of the Louise were awarded Bronze Medals and certificates from the Royal Humane Society of London. Anthony Borez received similar awards for saving his brother. The certificates read: “In Admiration of their heroism on this sad but eventful occasion.”

A relief fund for the families of the five men lost was generously supported by the public and administered by Father Canon Brooke, Rev Father Duignam, Mr J. Harris, R. Wallis, Mr W.J. Steer and Dr Gilchrist.

Lifeboat station
The plight of the Kalk Bay fishermen was once again brought to the public’s attention in 1901. Following the disaster in which five fishermen lost their lives, there was a call for a lifeboat to be stationed at Kalk Bay. The Port Captain, Capt. W. Stephens, gave advice on the type of boat needed. He suggested that instead of a permanent crew, a small annual retaining fee of 2/6 each be paid to a sufficient number of local fishermen, residing in the area, who would engage in fortnightly practices. The coxswain would receive double the amount paid to ordinary crew members.
Specifications and costs of a boat plus landing rollers were investigated by Captain Fox who visited Leslie & Hamilton of Blackwall in London.

The idea was shelved two years later because of there being no suitable flat land below the railway line. It was concluded that aid could be rendered to the fishing boats by ordinary whale-boats, two of which were always at Kalk Bay. In the final analysis it was concluded that, what was needed to assist the line fishing industry at Kalk Bay, was the building of a breakwater.

The idea of a harbour mooted
A deputation representing the fishermen (among whom were Mr Runciman, MLA and Colonel Schermbucher) met the Secretary for Agriculture and the Commissioner of Public Works. The problem caused by the railway viaduct across the fishing beach was discussed. Another problem was the backwash resulting from waves washing up against the embankment of the railway viaduct which was, in turn, having the effect of washing the beach sand into the sea. The sand on the fishing beach was being depleted in this way and this left less and less space on the beach to store the boats.

The cove, the deputation stated, lent itself to the formation of a harbour at very little cost. A harbour they argued, would relieve the gravity of the situation of the constant loss of life and boats. It would afford safety for the fishing boats. A harbour would encourage the development of the line fishing industry at Kalk Bay and there would be corresponding benefits to the government from a commercial point of view. It was estimated that a breakwater would cost approximately £10 000 using natural material from Crown lands in the proximity. The Minister of Agriculture, Pieter Faure, asked why the fishing station could not be moved to Fish Hoek instead, to which Mr Runciman replied that the water was too shallow. Mr Runciman, when asked if the fishermen would be prepared to pay a reasonable fee, replied that they would be “only too pleased to!”

William Runciman was descended from a family of seafarers. His grandfather was a Master Mariner and ship owner. His son (William’s father) started his career on the deck of one of his father’s ships until he also qualified as a Master Mariner and became owner of his own ship.

William was born in South Shields, England, in 1858 and came out to South Africa on his father’s ship Hero. He joined the ships chandler firm of Wm Anderson & Co, and was promoted to manager of their Simon’s Town branch. Later, he became senior partner and eventually took over the firm, renaming it William Runciman & Co. He was very successful in ship chandlering, stevedoring and salvage, and as a family grocer, wine and spirits merchant and agent for the Union Castle, Clan and Hugh shipping lines. He was a leader in the commercial and civil life at Simon’s Town: he held the office of Mayor for a period of 26 years and was then elected to the Cape Legislative Assembly until Union in 1910, when he became a Member of the House of Assembly until 1927.

Mr Runciman played an important role in the development of the Kalk Bay fishing industry from managing the trawler, Mary, to being at the forefront of the struggle and difficulties encountered by the fishermen when the railway line took away their beach, and during the call for a harbour. He also chaired the government commission investigating the shipping losses on the coast around the peninsula, resulting in the establishment of Slangkop lighthouse. He was a founder member of the Cape School Board from its inception in 1905 to his resignation in 1936. (He performed the opening of Kalk Bay’s public school in 1900 when he was Mayor of Simon’s Town.) He died in 1936 and was buried at the Old Cemetery in Simon’s Town.

False Bay Fish & Gold Store Company
The False Bay Fish & Cold Store Company was formed in 1902. The Company’s provisional directors were Pieter G. Wege (chairman), F. Auret, I. Haban, W.H.F. Kleyn, J.J. Micbau, G.S. van Wyk and L. Zietman MLA, with Maynard Nash and Muirhead as secretaries.

They purchased the rocky promontory near the cove, where the fishing boats were launched, and a considerable area of land beyond for £7 000. A year later their plant, with cleansing, cutting, cooling and freezing rooms and smoking ovens, was opened.

They had high expectations that a breakwater would be built for the Company’s steam trawlers the Mary and the Rex to come alongside. Railway sidings, it was hoped, would be run from the main line down to the factory. They hoped soon to supply plentiful fish.
Movement for building a harbour
While the Cold Store Company was building its factory, meetings were held at the local school where Father Canon Brooke called on the fishermen to support “their MP Mr Runciman” in his efforts in getting Parliament to agree to building a pier and harbour.

The meeting was chaired by the Mayor, Mr Wood, while support came from fellow Councillors Ellis, Scowen and Powell and Revd. Father Duignam. Also present were many of the most prominent men in Kalk Bay, namely T. Anderson MLA, Argill, H. Auret, P. Auret, Black, Copenhagen and Harris.

At the meeting Mr Runciman explained how a harbour at Kalk Bay would assist the fishing industry and advance the community. The government had promised to do something, he told them; shelter in the form of a harbour had been offered by the Commissioner of Public Works and by the Secretary of Agriculture. A report had even been drawn up by a reputed engineer, Mr Methven, for a breakwater running 175m out from the rocks. The estimated cost of this would be £42 000. Building a harbour would lead to larger boats and other improvements which would make the industry an important and prosperous one. The Colony would benefit where foodstuffs were presently limited. It would also have the effect of creating more traffic for the Railways.

A committee was selected at this meeting to support Mr Runciman in his efforts of getting Parliament to build a harbour at Kalk Bay. The members of this committee were Father Canon Brooke, the Mayor, Mr Wood, Messrs H. and J. Auret, Clark, B. Fish, Menigo, Argill, Bisset, Black, Ellis, Harris, Powell, Roux, Sampson and Scowen. Mr Runciman laid a strong case before Parliament. A select committee was appointed to investigate the proposals which was what he had hoped for. This select committee consisted of himself, the Secretary for Agriculture, Dr Beck and Messrs T.J. Anderson and J.T. Molteno.

The predicament of the line fishermen was used to highlight the need for improvement by the building of a harbour. The call for a harbour to be built at Kalk Bay was being made by many people for very different reasons.

To the Auret brothers, a harbour would mean that steamers could operate from the harbour to tow the whale catchers and bring the whales in for processing. To the operators of the trawlers and those with investments in the Cold Storage Company the advantages were obvious, as they could base their trawlers safely in the harbour. To the Council, it could mean benefits to tourism, with pleasure boats and other recreational uses. Also the Council could have organised control over a capitalistic and profitable fishing industry.

The concerns of the line fishermen
The hand line fishermen as a group were caught in the middle. Many sat on the fence regarding the question of construction of a harbour. This was because they could see the danger of a large company taking over the small-scale hand line industry and creating a monopoly. Traditionally the line fishermen had worked for themselves in a small-scale industry. They realised that they could not compete with the trawling industry.

Also, the line fishermen claimed that trawling had impacted detrimentally upon their “traditional” fishing grounds. They consequently wished that False Bay be confined to handline fishing.

The line fishermen’s more immediate and unresolved concern was in fact the loss of their “traditional” fishing beach to the railway viaduct built right across it, and all the various problems that this had caused them, including the loss of numerous boats and lack of landing space for their boats.

In following up Mr Runciman’s request for a harbour, the chief inspector who was sent to Kalk Bay was furnished with the names of prominent fishermen to talk to. These fishermen included Clarke, Fernandez,
Francis, Menigo, Nielsen, Orgill, Quimpo, Poggenpoel as well as Dr Gilchrist. The chief inspector found that the fishermen were asking for a few rocks to be removed from the beach so that there would be more space for their boats.

The line fishermen also had problems with the fish buyers (langganners) working together to keep the fish prices low. They received good prices when fish was scarce, but when fish was plentiful or when the “trekkers” had good hauls on the beaches they had problems.

The fishermen did not believe that they were benefiting from contracts with the Company. The price of fish to local consumers had increased because most of the fish was being sent up country. The poor condition of the Cold Store Company’s tug, the *Gnu*, was also a matter of concern among the fishermen.

The Cold Store Company’s trawlers, the *Mary* and the *Rex*, anchored in the cove. Flat barges then transferred the catches from the trawlers to the factory on the shore.

The 244ton trawler, *Rex*, while loading ice on 3 October 1903, started to drag anchor. Within a few hours she had drifted onto the rocks in front of Kalk Bay railway station. Two Admiralty tugs, the *Scotsman* and the *Maori*, tried to pull the *Rex* off against the south-east wind. These efforts failed and she had to be abandoned. The ten-man crew managed to reach the shore safely.

The subsequent Court of Enquiry found that the *Rex* had been anchored in an unsafe position. Proper watches had not been kept. The *Rex*’s anchors, as well as her equipment, were defective. It was also found that prior to the stranding she had been carelessly managed in an “un-seaman-like manner.” The Master of the *Rex* consequently had his ticket suspended for three months. The *Rex* was valued at approximately £5 000.

It was later reported in the *Seaside News* that the Manager of the False Bay Fish & Cold Store Company had appeared before the Kalk Bay Police Court on a charge of assaulting the former Master of the *Rex* at the King’s Hotel two weeks after the grounding of the *Rex*. For this he received a £2 fine, or 14 days in prison.

**Failure of the Cold Store Company**

The following year fish catches were poor. The False Bay Fish & Cold Store Company went into liquidation and all the assets, including the remaining steam trawler *Mary*, were sold at a public auction.

The reasons given for the failure of the Company included the loss of the steam trawler *Rex*, the delay in building a harbour at Kalk Bay, the depression after the South African War and also, “dissatisfaction on the part of the fishermen.” (Hendrik Auret had also given this same reason, that of dissatisfaction by the fishermen, when he had unsuccessfully attempted to operate a large schooner in the Bay some ten years earlier.)

Another company bought and took over the premises of the False Bay Fish & Cold Store Company. The new company was called the Kalk Bay Fish & Land Company.

At this time there was an upswing in demand for fish with the introduction of Chinese labour to the goldfields on the Rand. Urgent applications were made to the Railways and they agreed in 1905 to couple, to the mail train, three trucks of 40 ton capacity each. This was a direct service from Cape Town to Johannesburg and fish arrived there after only 36 hours by rail.

Yet, within three years, the Kalk Bay Fish Land Company also went insolvent and was liquidated.

**Construction of the gantries**

The fishermen were not given any of the compensation that they requested from the Railways for their losses of boats on the beach, nor did the Railways provide the landing strip or winches that they had promised.
The Railways did, however, build a steel structure (made from railway lines) which could accommodate 20 boats. These gantries were built right up against the Railway viaduct on a cement foundation. The boats could now be hoisted clear of the sea by means of ropes and pulleys where they were safe from being damaged. It was no longer necessary to haul the boats through the arches to higher ground.

But the problem of beach sand for filling their ballast bags continued and the Railways supplied truck loads once every six months to “top up” the beach. According to the fishermen this was insufficient.

The harbour issue debated in Parliament
The issue of a harbour at Kalk Bay was again tabled before Parliament in 1907. A fiery debate ensued.

Mr Runciman, in Parliament, called for the government to proceed with the building of a harbour without delay, in accordance with the recommendations of the 1902 select committee. He informed the MPs that “before the Railways took away most of the beach there had been space for 40 to 50 boats. Now there was only space for six or seven boats.” He outlined that the trawler Rex had been lost at a cost of £5 000. The other trawler Mary had given up operations because there was no safe accommodation.

He told Parliament that the line fishermen were prepared to spend money on building better boats but they required adequate shelter. Despite there being an almost inexhaustible supply of fish at their doorstep, practically nothing was being done to develop the line fishing industry. “This would be of immense benefit to the food supply of the country. Fish was being imported and this was a scandal since we have an immense source of supply,” he concluded.

“There were 2 185 fishermen employed,” he went on to explain, “and an estimated investment for the year in order to encourage the industry, was £2 000. The Kalk Bay boats catch nearly one third of the Colony’s fish and to improve Kalk Bay would also help make the Simon’s Town railway line pay.”

Mr Runciman in contrast pointed out that “the Government spent £150 000 on agriculture and mining and thousands of pounds a year on what were once termed bastard industries.” In the manufacture of soap and candles 117 people were employed. The value of production was £58 000 and the cost of protecting this industry was £64 000. In the manufacture of matches 260 people were employed. This industry’s value of production was £45 316 and the cost of protection was £54 653. This form of “protected” employment was costing the taxpayer £118 000 in order to keep 377 employed. This was at the average rate of £315 per person employed in these industries.

A debate on the harbour issue followed in Parliament. T. Anderson and Molteno supported Runciman. Mr Steytler said that he felt that a great injury had been done to the Kalk Bay industry and he drew attention to the hard lot of the fishermen. Mr Searle suggested that convict labour be used to build the harbour.

Other members and Dr Viljoen disagreed. He said that the Cold Store Company had folded because of it being a “financial wreck,” not because Kalk Bay lacked a harbour. Dr Viljoen stated that he wanted a harbour to be built at Hermanus. Mr De Jager pointed out that without a railway Hermanus would not become a big fishing centre. Kalk Bay therefore had a “bigger claim,” he said.
Mr Malan asked why the fishing boats could not anchor behind the Simon’s Town breakwater. They would be utilising something the taxpayer had spent millions of pounds on and got nothing for!

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr Faure argued that for 46 boats to shelter in a harbour costing £46 000 was bad business. He instead suggested a series of landings for the fishing boats at Muizenberg.

The final vote on the harbour issue was 44 noes and 41 ayes. In the parliamentary motion Mr Sauer tried to have the words “landing place” inserted instead of “harbour,” and “False Bay” inserted instead of “Kalk Bay.” With a majority of three, the motion was thus amended to read: “Landing stages for fishers in False Bay, Hermanus and other fishing centres.”

For financial reasons the whole scheme was shelved again owing to the economic depression. A deputation was sent by the Council in December of that year to meet with the Prime Minister and Secretary for Agriculture. Nonetheless this deputation received the assurance from Dr L.S. Jameson that Kalk Bay would receive first priority and have its harbour before any other area, just as soon as “Colonial finances permitted.”

Unpopularity of the fishing industry
The major driving force behind the calls for a harbour was clearly revealed to be the majority of “nonfishermen” ratepayers with visions of pleasure boats and the harbour being used for recreational purposes and Councillors with certain vested interests in the trawling and whaling industry.

The fishermen were still divided over the question of a harbour at Kalk Bay because they feared that a harbour would attract more trawlers and larger decked boats. They could not compete with these trawlers and boats and were afraid of losing their independence as small-scale line fishermen, working for themselves. Opposing petitions to the government were drawn up both “for the harbour” and “against the harbour.” There was squabbling and boycotts against those who signed one petition by those who signed the other. The matter received much publicity in the press and many harsh words were spoken. The Mayor of Kalk Bay, Mr William Dickson Gourlay, regarded the fishermen as “impossible and not worth doing anything for, and a discontented grumbling race of men from beginning to end. When they had nothing to quarrel about, they quarrelled with each other,” he said.

He called on the non-fishing inhabitants of Kalk Bay to improve the position in spite of the fishermen and to see that the industry was carried out in a way that it would benefit the “resort and the public.” The Mayor as leader of a deputation told the Prime Minister that the fishing beach was in a filthy state and that visitors to Kalk Bay objected to the fishing operations, which were “a nuisance.” He stated that “if the fishermen persisted with their stance and no harbour was constructed at Kalk Bay, it would then be better to remove the industry altogether!”

The residents of Kalk Bay had organised a “Pier Recreational Syndicate” in 1905. On their behalf Mr A.G. Bidden wrote to the Commissioner of Public Works. They applied for the erection of a pier in conjunction with the existing seaside platform at the railway station. This pier was to be used for recreational purposes. The idea was favourably accepted and no objections were forthcoming from government.

*The box fish which the fishermen used as a barometer.*
Langganners (hawkers) load catches of bunched fish into their horse drawn cart. (SA Library)
1905 - 1922
At the turn of the century the fishermen faced many problems. Not only were they disgruntled but they had difficulty in coming to any agreement on their future.

• The Kalk Bay Fish and Land Company had failed in 1907.

• An attempt was made to unite the fishermen by forming a union. Instead of concentrating on the problems associated with marketing their catches, the union became involved in a lengthy dispute over the steam tug Gnu which towed the small line fishing boats to the fishing grounds.

• The poor condition of the gantries upon which the fishermen had to hoist their boats clear of the water was the subject of an ongoing dispute between the fishermen, the Railways and the Council.

• Construction of the harbour began in 1913 and several boat owners converted to motorised vessels as soon as safe moorings became available.

• Legislation was introduced for all the boats to be numbered, registered and properly equipped with lights and foghorns.

• The new pier became a major attraction to anglers, even while under construction, and the village attracted more visitors and “non-fishing” residents.

• In 1922 there were two major boat disasters resulting in the loss of many lives.

The Fishermen’s Union
Towards the end of 1908 an attempt was made to unite the fishermen. A meeting of all the fishermen from Simon’s Town to Muizenberg was called by the Resident Magistrate of Simon’s Town, Mr C.J. Boyes, with a view to forming a co-op. A committee was elected to consider various proposals regarding the transportation of fish, the use of tugs to get to distant fishing grounds, the cold storage facilities and the possibility of taking over the premises of the Kalk Bay Fish and Land Company.

The Union became side-tracked at their first General meeting in a lengthy dispute concerning the steam tug Gnu. The Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the Union, Mr Hall, had written a letter to the Registrar of Shipping in Cape Town in which he stated that, “it had been resolved that no Union fishing vessel shall be towed by the steam tug Gnu” and gave the reasons as follows:

1. The tug was over 40 years old and out of date. Her hull and machinery were in dilapidated condition.

2. She had insufficient power to tow. In strong winds she had found it necessary to cast boats adrift.

3. She carried only one engineer, which was insufficient; in addition the engineer was uncertified.

Letters then went back and forth between the Registrar of Shipping, the Controller of Customs, the Port Captain and other nautical advisers.

The Gnu had been built at Renfrew on the Clyde near Glasgow and was first registered in Cape Town on 21 May 1866 with the official number 52610. She was described as “a wooden, clinker-built schooner, rigged with two masts and round stern. Gross tonnage 67, overall length, excluding bowsprit 22m, main beam 5,5m. A steamer with a screw propeller and two engines, manned by a crew of five, including the Master.”

Her first owner was Cape Town merchant, Mr James Murison, who had her between 1866 and 1885. She was subsequently sold to Cape Copper Mining Co. and presumably made voyages to Hondeklip Bay and Port Nolloth. No mention was made of her sale by the official registrar to Kalk Bay Fisheries.
The treasurer of the Fishermen’s Union suggested that an inspector be appointed to ascertain the condition of the Gnu. Provision for this was made under a section in the Merchant Shipping Act of 1854 to 1876.

The Controller of Customs, when asked for his recommendations, could not make any since there was uncertainty concerning “covering authority” and the fact that the matter did not come within the scope of the Registrar of Shipping but rather the Board of Trade.

A certificate had been given to the underwriters by the Port Captain certifying that “as far as he could ascertain, without actual examination of the bottom, the Gnu’s hull was in sound condition.” Captain Stephen, the Nautical Adviser, pointed out that the towing capacity in a strong wind was outside the question. The most powerful tug, he pointed out, would be unable to tow fishing or other boats in heavy seas. They would be swamped or smashed to pieces. “Bad weather cannot always be guarded against; it is a risk that those who earn their living on the sea must take.” He did suggest that the owners be called upon to produce a letter within 14 days from an approved and competent marine engineer surveyor to certify that the machinery was in a good state. Likewise, the Gnu should be placed on the slip and a shipwright surveyor called upon to certify the condition of the hull.

It was found, from a Supreme Court Case, that Act 8 did not apply to the Colony but that sections 14 and 15 would apply to a British vessel in Colonial waters. Under these sections the government had ample power to order a survey if there was reason to believe that the defective condition of the hull and engine made her unfit to proceed to sea without endangering human life.

It was subsequently found that, because the vessel was engaged in what was termed “coastal trading,” the government was restricted from ordering a survey. As a last measure, the safety certificate for insurance purposes was requested, only to find out that the Gnu was not insured.

In the end the Fishermen’s Union was called upon to pay the costs involved. To this the Union replied that “the fishermen only earn five shillings per day and pay sixpence per week as union fees.” They stated that an inquiry was in the interest of the public and that they should not be liable for any costs incurred. The Controller of Customs recommended that no further action be taken and the matter was closed.

Some years later in a particularly strong gale in July 1914 the Kalk Bay Fisheries’ steam tug, Gnu, was driven ashore at Simon’s Town. She was salvaged towards the end of 1917 and underwent repairs at Kalk Bay which lasted several months. She was one of the first boats to be repaired on the then new slipway but is reported to have sunk when undergoing sea trial after the repairs.

Wynberg News, 28 November 1908

“The Fishermen’s Union at Kalk Bay is slowly gathering strength for the effort which is ultimately to be made by them for disposing of their catch direct to the public instead of through the middlemen, who it is alleged, take all the profit and leave the toiler of the sea with scarcely sufficient to keep his boat afloat. If ‘to go slowly is to go surely’ then the boatmen are certainly paving the way to success, for it takes them something like six months to accumulate the sum of 50 pounds by weekly instalments of threepence per member which, however, has recently been increased to sixpence per week. Their efforts should be supported as the profits of the middlemen will be divided between the producer and consumer. The fishermen number close to 250 being ably led by Mr Hall and Mr Clifford Jones in organising the scheme. Householders who wish to be supplied daily or at regular intervals will shortly be asked to send their names to the Union.

It was reported that the crews of non-union boats who still accepted assistance from the steam tug Gnu in towing them out to the deep-sea fishing grounds were refused assistance by Union crews when hauling their boats out of the water on to the stands. The writer warned the Union not to alienate public support by boycott action against the non-union boats and crews.

From time immemorial the custom has been to assist each other in this laborious task and no personal enmity has been so great as to prevent a truce being called at such times. We trust that the leaders of the movement will disavow and discourage any act intended to penalise such fishermen as chose to accept the service of the tug to carry them to the fishing grounds, which ordinarily cannot be reached by boats under sail.”
The dangerous state of the gantries

Within five years of having been constructed, the steel gantries used to suspend the boats safely from the high and spring tides had deteriorated and become dangerous to use. Their cement foundations had become unstable and undermined. This was partly as a result of the backwash when the waves went right up against the railway viaduct, and partly because beach sand was still being removed by the fishermen for filling their ballast bags.

The fishermen appealed to the Railways regarding the poor state of the gantries. The Railways pointed out that these gantries had been constructed in cooperation with the municipality on a pound for pound basis. The Council in turn responded by informing the Railways that they would no longer maintain or be responsible for the gantries. They advised the fishermen in writing to this effect, stating that they would not be liable for any damage to the boats. Nonetheless the fishermen could use the gantries at their own risk and still had to pay a ten shilling licence fee for a site. The fishermen in turn threatened to withhold their licence fees. They called on the government to force the Council to repair the gantries. The Council’s response was once again to suggest the removal of the industry from Kalk Bay.

From amongst themselves and sympathisers the fishermen collected a total of ten pounds and, on their behalf, Mr Pedro Fernandez approached an attorney to write to the Council. The fishermen had, claimed Fernandez in the letter, from time immemorial enjoyed certain rights on the foreshore at Kalk Bay. Diagrams and documents were attached which dated back to 1815. They showed the spot on the foreshore which Messrs Cloete, Reitz and Anderson had used for whaling in 1808 and which belonged to W.H. Jennings. The letter went on to describe the hardships caused by the railway viaduct being built across the beach and the accompanying loss of the beach and the poor state of the gantries. Mention was also made of the promise of a harbour. The fishermen had during this time suffered losses and incurred damage to their boats and had sought assistance in this regard.

The fishermen paid the owner of the *Gnu*, Kalk Bay Fisheries, 30 percent of their catch for the towing service. Tugs were also sent round from Cape Town to tow the boats out beyond Cape Point.

One of the Union’s hopes was to purchase its own tug for towing the boats. They could save on the fees currently being paid for the towing service and with the money saved pay off the purchase costs as well as cover maintenance costs. Once the tug was paid off it was envisaged that the only costs to be covered would be those of the tug’s working expenses and maintenance.

Their scheme to cut out the middleman and market direct to the public would have involved the fish being packed in special crates and sent each day to consumers and dealers by rail. However none of these schemes ever materialised and the co-op idea failed.

‘The Policeman’

At the turn of the century the fishermen at Kalk Bay renamed a particular type of sea bird, calling it “the policeman.” This sea bird, a skua, is a powerful and swift little bird. It chases the gulls until they eventually disgorge fish they have caught. The skuas then quickly swoop up the gull’s disgorged fish themselves. These particular birds reminded the fishermen of the local policeman at Kalk Bay who gave them a hard time.

“Desecration of the Sabbath”

The line fishermen and cart drivers were accused in 1908 by the Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Rev D.S. Botha of "desecrating the Sabbath.”

Investigations revealed that the fishermen seldom fished on the Sabbath, only doing so when they knew there were shoals of fish. Besides which there was no law against fishing or selling fish on Sundays.
On the fishermen’s behalf Mr Runciman also became involved in writing letters. He wrote to the Hon. J.W. Sauer and questioned whether the fishermen “have a legal right against the Government for damages suffered and whether they have a right to ask the Government to improve their now damaged gantries or provide other facilities as will enable them to prosecute their trade and earn their livelihood.”

Pressure was put on the local municipality to make temporary repairs to the gantries. They reluctantly carried out the repairs once they had confirmation that a harbour would soon be constructed.

The visions for the proposed harbour
The matter of a harbour was taken up once more by the Council in 1912 with the Kalk Bay Council’s main concern being that of boosting tourism. In his annual report the mayor, Mr John Delbridge, in connection with the proposed harbour, presented visions of pleasure boats taking parties on charter trips and landlords hiring out boats with their properties.

The following year in 1913, the year in which the harbour construction started, the local Kalk Bay Council was merged, chiefly for financial reasons, with the Cape Town City Council. The City Council immediately went about undertaking improvements to the area to try to boost the tourist industry. The Kalk Bay pavilion was enlarged and improved, public recreation ground was set aside, and bathing boxes and pool maintenance programmes were introduced. The City Council stated that, “the Kalk Bay area is one which should particularly be regarded as a health resort.”

The City Council, like the Kalk Bay and Muizenberg Council, also lent their support to the proposed harbour because it had visions of “additional facilities for yachting in False Bay” which would help “promote the development of yachting as a sport in Cape waters.” Mention was made at one stage of the harbour being useful for off-loading cargo but this idea was not acceptable to the Council.

The condition of the gantries deteriorated. (Cape Archives)

The registration of boats
Before the construction of the harbour breakwater had begun, new legislation was introduced for the licensing of all fishing and other boats used for the purposes of profit. Boats from Simon’s Town, Miller’s Point, Fish Hoek, Muizenberg and Slangkop were registered along with those at Kalk Bay. The Simon's Town Magistrate’s office issued numbers to be displayed on the vessels’ bows. Before such a licence was issued, the owner of each boat had to produce a certificate from the Port Office certifying that the vessel met with all the requirements of the Port Authority of the District.
List of boats registered in 1912

Owner

James Bugdall  
Excellence  ST46  
Henry Petersen  Lord Nelson  ST68

Jutien Buhr  
Eutry  ST103  
Henry Petersen  Elizabeth  ST69

Harold Clarke  
Champion  ST55  
Jacob Poggenpoel  Dolphin  ST42

Harold Clarke  
Hero  ST56  
John Scholtz  Little Jane  ST4

Mahomet Cossain  
Victory  ST40  
John Scholtz  Frolic  ST5

J. Fernandez  
Angeline  ST77  
Ridalum Salie  Sea Flower  ST28

Peter Fernandez  
Beudora  ST122  
Sauraat Salie  Grace Darling  ST27

Peter Fernandez  
Sea Bird  ST123  
Hadyc Saliem  Shamrock  ST44

Thomas Fernandez  
Septre  ST4 T41  
Saliem  Suider Ster  ST59

Charles Fish  
Maida  ST1  
Saliem  Lord de Villiers  ST60

Charles Fish  
Invincible  ST3  
Charlie Sasman  Hamilton  ST39

Billy Fortune  
Dar-es-Salaam  ST141  
John Sasman  ST137

M. Fortune  
Beatrice  ST134  
B. Saueaupary  Glona  ST124

Piet Fortune  
Good Hope  ST61  
Valie Sulliman  Sea Cander  ST48

Abdol Gamiet  
Providence  ST125  
Valie Sulliman  Sir William Charles  ST54

Bios Iramia  
Maria Georgina  ST53  
Kalk Bay Fisheries  Lady Somerset  ST112

Holjo Joseph  
Springbok  ST52

Isaac Juminer  
Da Silabbon  ST45

Frank Lucas  
White Rose  ST47

Abraham Mathews  
Two Sisters  ST51

George Millar  
Admiral  ST43

G. Muller  
Maid of Erica.  ST110

Robert Orgill  
St. Patric  ST49

Robert Orgill  
Henguetae  ST50

The **Lady Somerset** was a 45 ft steam vessel of 15 tons with a crew of four.

The average vessel was 24 ft in length with a crew of six and carried sail and oars.
The construction of the harbour
With the advent of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the government finally called for their engineer, Mr G.T. Nicholson to submit further plans for a harbour. The final plans accepted were a compromise of the previous submissions by Westhofen and Methven, designed by Mr G.T. Nicholson.

The scheme consisted of:

* a main breakwater 238m long by 9m wide and approximately 9m high (giving an average depth of 5.9m at low water during an ordinary spring tide); the breakwater would enclose an area of approximately 32 522 sq m of water.

* a fish landing quay 79m long with 3037 sq m of reclamation behind it for the harbour working area.

* a slipway for small craft.

The scheme was estimated to cost £55 766 at the time. The contract for the work was carried out by South African Railways and Harbours under the supervision of Engineer-in-Chief, Mr A. Tippett, Member Inst.C.E, with Mr G.T. Nicholson, the Resident Engineer of Table Bay harbour, being directly responsible.

Preparation for construction began on 24 February 1913 with the railway engineer Mr G. Le S. Furlong as the engineer-in-charge at the site. His first task was to establish a reliable benchmark for all the soundings and levels. The mark for low water during an ordinary spring tide was accurately ascertained, from observations of a carefully-erected tide gauge over several full moons.

Land for some of the work was leased from the Kalk Bay Fish and Land Company (in liquidation) and a small bungalow of theirs was purchased to accommodate the engineer-in-charge, Mr C. Le S. Furlong.

A steam locomotive crane was then assembled. The crane was built by Messrs Thomas Smith & Son, Leeds and it had the capacity to lift 12 tons at a radius of 6m, or 8 tons at 9m, and weighed 60 tons itself.

Two sheds were erected, one for cement and general storage and workshop and a smaller one for the toolsmith. A mixing floor with an area of 186 sq m was also prepared. Work on a “construction yard” and railway siding needed to convey all the materials was started on 6 March.

While preparing the work yard and building a service road, an old building was discovered under the sand. It was 12m x 6m and 2.7m high with 0.9m thick walls and it was thought to be one of the original lime works buildings from which Kalk Bay derived its name.

The first portion of the “square work” was set on 28 May 1913. An official ceremony took place on 7 June when the Minister of Railways and Harbours, Mr Henry Burton, using a silver trowel, laid the foundation stone. A special train from Cape Town brought 300 selected guests, including government officials, to Kalk Bay. Many local residents and fishermen also attended the festivities. (The train then took Mr Burton and the guests to Muizenberg where he opened the new railway station).
The concrete blocks used were cast in Table Bay harbour by teams of five men who worked in shifts. They cleaned and prepared the moulds and hand-mixed the concrete. Each block required 4 cubic m of crushed stone, 2 cu. m of sand and 0.6 cu. m of cement. The stone came from the Table Bay quarry, the sand from the north beach at Table Bay and the cement, which had at first been imported from overseas until the supply was stopped, was local South African cement supplied in 0.005 cu. m bags at 5s Id per bag. They made three blocks per day and were paid 15 shillings per block. Afterwards they had to clean the yard. The day after the blocks were made they were stripped from their moulds. The blocks were left to cure for nine days before being moved to the stacking yard. After two to three months they were transported by rail to Kalk Bay, some 30.5 km away at a freight charge of 4s 6d per block.

Each block was 3m long x 1.2m wide and 1.2m high and weighed 10 tons. The 12-ton crane off-loaded the blocks one by one in the stacking yard. On top of each block a “key” was moulded which fitted into a space left in the block below. This was to prevent the blocks from being moved by the seas before they were secured by concrete and tie rods.

Three divers were employed, with two working together each shift. One diver worked two four-hour shifts every third day and the other two divers worked one shift daily. The divers were initially paid 16 shillings per shift (32 shillings for a double shift) but later it was changed to “the daily rate according to their occupation above the water” plus a divers’ allowance of 2/6 per hour. Because of the loss of divers’ time due to the weather and swell and because they were continually being called away to other work, the system was changed to allow two divers to work four-hour shifts each day.

The divers prepared the sea-bed and moved small areas of sand with shovels. They placed this sand in a box which was lifted out by the crane when full. Most of this sand was found to be clean and “sharp” and was used for the “mass concrete.” The sea-bed was for the most part rock interspersed with small pockets of sand. The exception was one part 97m out from the start of the breakwater where there was about an 18m stretch of mud and a clay substance 1.3m deep. This was cleaned out by the crane using a bucket grab while a diver below made sure that not too much was removed. During the preparations under the water several old anchors from various periods were recovered.

Divers worked with shovels to move the sand.

Each diver had two attendants, one specially trained to attend to the lifeline, and pass signals to and from the diver, while the other attended to the air-pipe. (The Argus)
Because of the suddenness with which the weather changed, a divers’ boat could not be used. Instead a special portable stage on which the pumps were lashed, was constructed and placed in the required position by the crane. This also made it possible for it to be removed to safety at a moment’s notice.

Once the sea-bed had been sufficiently prepared, the blocks were moved from the “stacking area” on a special trolley which had been designed for moving the 40-ton blocks of the Table Bay breakwater. Three blocks, with a collective weight of 30 tons, were loaded on the trolley and the trolley was hauled along the breakwater track by the 12-ton crane to the special 15-ton block-setting crane. This block-setting steam locomotive crane was supplied by Messrs Joseph Booth Bros, in Leeds, and could handle 10.5 tons at a 12m radius. It weighed 95 tons and cost £2 427. At night and in bad weather the crane was moved, on its tracks, to the shore end of the breakwater for safety.

A total of 6 600 tons of cargo had passed through the harbour, while it was under construction. This earned some £5 000 in wharfage and dock dues, before the harbour was handed over from the Construction Department to the Maintenance Branch. On 21 June 1917 Kalk Bay harbour was declared a “Minor Port of the Union of South Africa” under the jurisdiction of South African Railways and Harbours. From Simon’s Town station to the Naval dockyard there was no direct rail linkage. During the First World War years large amounts of heavy war materials such as guns, gun mountings and torpedoes were brought to Kalk Bay by rail. The railway siding went down to the new breakwater. The cranes being used in Kalk Bay’s breakwater construction were also used to load these materials into barges which were towed from Kalk Bay across to Simon’s Town.
The motorisation of boats
Several boat owners moored behind the breakwater took the opportunity while the breakwater was under construction of having their sailing boats fitted with engines. Mohammed Cosyn was the first to have his sailing fishing boat, the *Saafie*, converted by installing a small 3 horsepower Kelvin power paraffin engine.

The installation of engines in the boats enabled them to venture further than had been possible by rowing or sailing. Many of the powered boats continued to carry their sails for use in windy conditions and save on fuel costs. More powerful engines were gradually developed. From a 3 hp Kelvin power paraffin engine it doubled to 6 hp, then to 7 hp and doubled again to 14 hp. These more powerful engines became necessary as the need to venture further from port increased and because the new boats being built were larger and heavier. The Kelvin 14 hp engine was very popular and boats fitted with decks started making an appearance. With the larger engine it now took approximately two hours from Kalk Bay to the fishing grounds at Cape Point.
A TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE

mechanic went through the motions of doing a delicate and complicated adjustment, after which the engine would start immediately! His talent was held in great awe by the skippers until they learned the tricks. From then on, most managed to look after their own engines, occasionally having to call for the mechanic for more serious problems.

The Fish Quay
While work on the breakwater continued, the area for the fish landing quay was prepared. This was built using precast block column structures with concrete panels forming the walls between the columns. The area behind the wall was filled in to provide the working area for buildings for the harbour operations. Slabs for the cleaning of the fish were also provided and placed in convenient positions. Drainage and a fresh water supply was laid on. A suitable bath was also provided for washing larger fish and was filled with salt water daily. A bait house with shelves was built with tanks for pickling bait. Cubicles were also built. These were rented out to the fishermen for storage of gear. (They ranged from 2.7m by 1.8m, to 2.7m by 6m and worked out to cost £1 per 0.09 square metre).

The slipway
A slipway for small craft of up to 17 tons was constructed. The slipway’s cradle had originally been used during the German South West Africa Campaign in 1915. It had been designed by Table Bay engineers for that purpose. The cradle had previously been used on the Orange River where it hauled locomotives and loaded railway carriages from the main line to a pontoon. The slipway’s handwinch came from Slangkop where it had been used to haul up the cast sections in construction of the lighthouse.
Before the harbour had been completed a railways official had seen three men putting a net outside the entrance to the harbour. At that time there were no laws prohibiting such activities but it was pointed out that “this was detrimental to the fish feeding off the pier wall.” On 3 September 1917 proclamation no. 196 was introduced which forbade the use of nets within a radius of half a nautical mile of the outer extremity of the pier.

Even before the breakwater was completed, the pier became a popular place for fishing. A small charge was introduced for the privilege. Between 1917 and 1919 takings amounted to £3 000.

From the time that work on the harbour started, records were kept each day of the weather conditions and this information including the barometric reading, was posted up for the fishermen. The Kalk Bay pier was soon attracting large crowds. Leervis averaging between 9kg and 20kg were landed.

One angler, Mr Terence C. Ferguson, established a record when he managed to land a 25kg leervis. It took 45 minutes of struggling up and down the pier to land the fish.

Ferguson also held the rod record for the pier, of a 60kg kob, which took one hour to land.

During the time of the harbour construction it was recorded that Kalk Bay had 48 boats with a combined value of £2 288. Upon completion of the harbour breakwater there were 16 motor-powered fishing boats in the harbour. By 1923, this figure had increased to a total of 23 motor-powered fishing boats. Also, during this time, it was recorded that there were 65 white and 234 coloured fishermen, using 888 hand lines, an average of nearly four hand lines per fisherman.

In 1916 Captain H. Strong of the Galway Castle wrote to his company about the difficulties encountered off Cape waters with regard to fishing boats which had no fog signals and did not show lights. The Secretary for the Department of the Interior, who had authority over the fishing boats took up the matter. He introduced further regulations concerning safety equipment for fishing boats and, as a result, boats had to be properly equipped with lights and foghorns.

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During those early years of construction, excellent catches of white stumpnose were made in the harbour area every year. Without even going to sea, the boats in some seasons caught sufficient fish at their moorings to sell to the hawkers in the morning. Some of the catches made by the line fishermen off the pier can only be described as phenomenal.

On 11 January 1920 when the boats had returned from sea and most of the crew had made their way home a large shoal of yellowtail was sighted just off the pier. The men went back to the wall, caught mackerel for bait and then proceeded to catch yellowtail by the score. When the shoal moved away

**Bumper catches from the harbour**

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after a couple of hours, the harbour was covered in a carpet of fish. The yellowtail averaged between 2.2kg and 4.5kg each. The total catch was estimated to be over 6 000 and sold for twopence each.

At daybreak on another day the fishermen had a good catch of geelbek off the pier. The geelbek was then followed by a shoal of mackerel so large and so dense that the top fish were forced out of the water. These mackerel were then followed by a shoal of yellowtail. At one stage there were 30 rod anglers playing the fish up and down the wall but soon all their gaffs were broken. They had to give up because the line fishermen with their hand lines were too busy to offer up their gaffs.

On this occasion fish were being caught with mere scraps of bait. When their lines broke, the line fishermen hurriedly knotted them together again. By midday the excitement was over. In this time more than 500 fish, averaging 11kg each, had been landed. Between February and April of that same year very large steenbras were also caught off the wall.
Fishing frenzy in the 1920s. Shoals of mackerel were caught for bait to catch the yellowtail that followed. (SA Library)

Excellent catches continued to be made on the pier for several years. (SA Library)
Visions for the new harbour

With the new harbour facilities the hope was expressed by some that the trawlers to the Agulhas Bank be based in Kalk Bay harbour. This would save them 50 miles steaming to the Agulhas Bank and would possibly allow an extra trip to the grounds each week. They would at the same time also avoid the “dangerous coast” between Cape Town and Cape Point. The trawlers would also arrive earlier in port to off-load and dispatch their catch.

Others envisaged steam pleasure boats in the new harbour to take visitors out into the bay. There were even visions of South African coal being handled through Kalk Bay harbour to supply the dockyard and H.M. ships.

Residents object to a “noxious trade”

When Mr H. Schechter applied in 1921 for a licence to “cure fish” there was considerable objection from Kalk Bay property-owners. Two previous applications had been turned down. The residents objected to having a “noxious trade” established in their midst; even the Medical Health Inspector objected. Mr Lewis, of the Fisheries Advisory Board appointed by the government, supported the idea of “salting only.” Despite the opposition from the ratepayers, led by Mr F. Rhodes, a final supporting letter from Mr Warington Smyth, secretary of the Department of Mines and Industry, ensured the issuing of a licence. In his support Mr Smyth said that “a factory will assist with the present unemployment.” He pointed out that there was no other factory in the Peninsula.

The Hamilton

One of Kalk Bay’s worst fishing tragedies occurred in February 1922 when 14 people lost their lives with the sinking of the Hamilton. The skipper, George Clarence, had borrowed the Hamilton from her owner, Stokkie Williams, because his own boat, Mary Jane, had been taken to Cape Point by skipper Tom Fish to catch snoek and was still at sea. Several other boats accompanied the Hamilton and her crew of “trippers” to the fishing grounds between Muizenberg and Seal Island. After a few hours at sea the southeast wind started to pick up and the other boats headed back to Kalk Bay. The trippers on the Hamilton were having a great time catching kob and the skipper decided to stay a while longer. Mr Tromp van Diggelen was diving under the boat Chrissie to clear line off her propeller. He had intended to join the Hamilton for the afternoon but had missed her when she left the harbour. He had then gone fishing on the Chrissie in the same area as the Hamilton.

He later returned to his house on the hillside where he looked back through a telescope to see how things were going with George Clarence and saw that the boat appeared to be in difficulty beyond the surf at Muizenberg. He rushed back to the harbour and raised the alarm but before any assistance could be rendered, the boat had capsized. One man did manage to swim to the shore at Muizenberg but died shortly afterwards. The boat wreckage and bodies were eventually washed up on the beach.

A disaster fund was established with the Mayor and Mrs Steytler as Trustees. The public were generous in their assistance and money was paid by the Adderley Street branch of the Standard Bank to the widows of those who had lost their lives. Mrs Violet Clarence, the skipper’s wife, was left with eight children, the eldest 13 years old and the youngest born one month after the accident.
The Columbia

In May 1922 another tragedy struck the Kalk Bay fishing community when one of Pedro Fernandez’s boats the Columbia was lost.

Fishing from Cape Town for snoek, the Columbia was caught in a terrific storm near Robben Island and capsized. Only Gabriel Fernandez and Charlie Petersen survived. Pedro lost three of his sons, Frederique, Joseph and Simon. Among the others lost were George Poggenpoel, John Bandmaster and Nicholas Menigo. Gabriel Fernandez had swum for ages with his youngest brother Simon hanging around his neck but sadly, before the rescue boat arrived, Simon slipped below the water.

The Menigo family gathered together on Saturday 10 May 1997 for a service of commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Columbia tragedy. A special service was conducted by Father Robin Burnett at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Kalk Bay.

From left to right: Bessie O’Shea (Nicholas’s grand-daughter), Shaun Fortune, Tracy Fortune, Bronwen and Cindy Menigo (Nicholas’s great-grand-daughters), Neil Menigo (grandson), Father Robin Burnett (priest), Elizabeth Menigo, Victorine Rosslind (grand-daughter), Lilian Fortune (grand-daughter), Milly Adonis (daughter).

Seated are Blanche and Nicholas Menigo who, a week before this service, had celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. Nicholas was named after his father and was only eleven year's old at the time of the Columbia sinking. When Canon Oswald Hogarth conducted their marriage ceremony at Holy Trinity Church in 1927, special permission had to be obtained because Nicholas was only 20 years of age.
Busy scene at Kalk Bay. Although many of the boat owners had installed engines they continued to carry sails. Only in the early 1960s did the last sail disappear from the boats. Today many continue to carry a mast, lowered down onto the cabin top. (SA Library)
The fishermen’s housing problems

During 1919 the Fishermen’s Union began its battle with the Council for better housing for the fishermen. Writing on behalf of the Union, the secretary, Mr Nicholas Menigo, described how the fishermen had been forced to move away to areas like Retreat and Wynberg because of the lack of housing and the recent demolition of cottages which had been condemned as unfit for human habitation. “A fisherman’s calling is a very precarious one and to make a decent living it is essential that he should live in the place of his calling.” These men were now put to great expense by having to travel to Kalk Bay and the Union requested the Council to assist with the building of houses. “The Union had already procured two plots of ground on which eight to ten cottages could be built.”

1920 - 1950

During the post World War I years to the post World War II years, many interesting events occurred:

• Bottom trawling was prohibited in False Bay.

• The debates about the use of the harbour continued.

• Boyes Drive was constructed.

• The Fishermen’s Union became involved in a long battle with the Council over the problem of limited and inadequate housing. This continued until the fishermen’s flats were built.

• Prior to World War II, the Fernandez family collected guano from Seal Island.

• During the war years a shark industry was based in the harbour.

• Some of the Kalk Bay fishermen towed targets around and recovered torpedoes for the Navy.

• The new eastern Mole and wooden jetty were built.

• After the war the Fisheries Development Corporation (FISCOR) was established.

Councillor Dr Abdurahman, who was involved in the housing issue, was born in 1872 studied medicine in Glasgow and lived at St James. He was a pioneer medical practitioner and politician. He died in 1940. A plaque was erected by the Cape Western Branch of the Medical Association of South Africa at 119 Loop Street where he had his practice.

A committee consisting of Councillors Dr A. Abdurahman and J.H. Orpen and the City Engineer was appointed. A meeting with the Union representatives took place before the end of that year to inspect the plots with the committee from City Hall. Land suitable for housing in Muizenberg was considered.

The housing problem continued. In 1925 the housing problem received a great deal of publicity when a deputation of some hundreds of the Coloured fishing community of Kalk Bay presented a signed petition to the Housing Committee of the City Council. The plight of the fishermen was desperate, because many of them had been evicted when inspectors had condemned several houses.

Mrs Lizzie Gomez addressed the Council with these words: “We are poor and needy and appeal to the Council for help. We do not want it for nothing, we will pay. If we were not here to do the fishing the public would suffer. The reports that we are a dirty and drunken lot are nothing but excuses! The high folk living in Kalk Bay want to make it a White town. The place belongs to the fishermen as much as anybody else, and will remain a fishing industry until doomsday!”

She went on to point out that the fishermen paid heavy licence fees every year and that the Government made a great deal of money out of them.

Mr Dick Fernandez, in support of Mrs Gomez, added that the fishermen from Retreat had to sleep on the boats at night because there were no trains early enough to get them to the harbour in time for the early morning departure of the fishing fleet.

A local resident of Kalk Bay, Mr Ladan, had become very involved in the housing issue. He had been writing to the landlords appealing to their humanity
in an effort to get them to improve the conditions of
the cottages which they rented to the fishermen. He
wrote also to the Council, and the Town Clerk
responded with letters saying that “the matter is
receiving attention.” He had been writing to the
Council and the landlords for eleven years and in
desperation wrote to the Mayor of Cape Town,
requesting that inspectors be sent to check on the
appalling conditions of the landlords’ houses
occupied by the fishermen.

In his letters he pointed out the case of the Gomez
family who rented a 20ft square (7m square) wood
and iron cottage at the enormously high rental of £4-
10 per month. The landlord absolutely refused to
effect any repairs to the cottage and stated that if the
tenants were not satisfied, they could “Clear out!
There are many other fishermen to rent my houses.”
They had been tenants for more than twenty years and
there was never any error in paying the rent!

In another cottage rented by the fisherman Mr Adam
Davis, the floors were rotting away, there were no
gutters, rainwater pipes or stormwater drainage and
the water ran into rat-holes beneath the building.
Ladan wrote about a Portuguese fisherman who
rented another of these 20ft square cottages. It had no
locks on the doors and rotting floors, and he and his
eleven children lived there. “A most respectful house.
The father, if he is not on the sea, works on his boat in
the harbour. That poor fisherman, all his money goes
to that owner, and if he asks for repairs to be done he is
told to clear out of the house.”

Ladan posed the question, “Who was going to protect
the fishermen from this exploitation by the
landlords?” The inspectors, he believed, were being
“bought off” by the landlords and were issuing false
reports. The reply was always the same: “The matter
is receiving attention.”

**Cottages condemned**

Finally, in 1936, many of the fishermen’s cottages
came under inspection from the Health Department.
The Council’s Slums Clearance Committee inspected
19 cottages and 6 were condemned as slums. These
were demolished and the Kalk Bay Ratepayers’
became concerned. Some of these families had lived
in these cottages for many years and now had no
alternative accommodation. They expressed their
wish that, instead of the proposed flats, the Council
build decent cottages.

At this time there was serious talk “about the
fishermen being shifted from Kalk Bay.”

Sophia Fernandez when questioned as to the
proposals to remove the fishermen from Kalk Bay.
stated that: “All we fishing folk felt very sad, ... the
sea, as you know, is a hard taskmaster. With that talk,
we felt, all of us, as if we were living on the edge of a
volcano. Today we were here in our beloved Kalk
Bay, but tomorrow ... well, I hope the nightmare is
over forever.”

The editor of *The Pictorial* in April 1939, stated:
“With all my heart I join in her hope, and this is my
sincere wish for the Kalk Bay fisherfolk; that they will
soon have pleasant houses to replace those that have
degenerated, and that all their days they will be
allowed to live here in Kalk Bay in peace, close to the
sea that has been their way of life for so many
generations.”

**Flats built for the fishermen**

The housing problem of the fishermen came to a head
during the Second World War years. The dilapidated
and unhygienic cottages were eventually bulldozed.
The Council began preparation work in 1940 with the
builders having to go down through rock. The old
Malay cemetery located there was moved to
Muizenberg.

Mr Carl Norbe, a Norwegian, was one of the
appointed builders. The Council built 55 flats which
were described as well-built, comfortable homes.
All the flats had a living room, bathroom and kitchen. There were 8 single bedroom flats at a monthly rental of £2-7-6, 39 two-bedroom flats at a rental of £2-15 per month, and 8 three-bedroom flats with a rental of £3-10 per month. The Menigo family were the first to move into a new flat.

Mr George Menigo, treasurer of the Kalk Bay Fishermen’s Union during the 1940s. His father, Nicholas Menigo, was secretary of the Union and was instrumental in getting housing for the fishermen of Kalk Bay. Behind him is one of the two poles that were used to “string out” the hemp lines. The fishing lines were then “blooded” using ox or sheep’s blood obtained in a bucket from the slaughter-house at Glencairn. (Menigo)

Construction of Boyes Drive
During the period when the Fishermen’s Union took on the housing issue, the Council embarked on the large project of the construction of the magnificent scenic mountain drive, Boyes Drive. Work began simultaneously from both the Kalk Bay and Muizenberg ends. The Kalk Bay side used convict labour. The work at the other end was done mainly by the “unemployed.” The road hence became known locally as “bandiet’s pad.”

The Drive was named after Judge Boyes of Simon’s Town who was instrumental in the Drive’s inception. He had also envisaged electric lifts for residents along the mountainside. Judge Boyes was also the person who had been responsible for organising the meeting in 1908 of the fishermen to form a co-op in an attempt to cut out the middlemen and market the fish direct to the public. Boyes Drive was completed in 1927.

Mr Dick Fernandez, representing the fishing community, wrote to Councillor F. Rhodes in 1925:

Dear Sir,

“I am writing on behalf of our poor Coloured folk here at Kalk Bay to ask if it is possible during the summer season to arrange for a band to perform here on the pier at Kalk Bay on some Sunday afternoons and some Saturday evenings. There are two bands in Town, one Spes Bona Orchestra and the other is the Cape Corps Military Band whom, I believe, perform in Trafalgar Park sometimes. You can believe me, Sir, we poor here at Kalk Bay never hear a band, in the old days we used to, but now we don’t.”
Yes Sir, I trust this letter of mine shall be dealt with in your next meeting, and only hope that the gentlemen councillors present shall one and all give it their earnest and warm support.

Trusting Sir, we are not asking you too much, also thanking you in anticipation."

The Council responded by arranging a programme for a band to play at Kalk Bay. A verandah was placed on the old tea room and no charge was made.

Fernandez wrote again on behalf of the community asking for seats to be provided for the performances, “even at a fee,” expressing the fear that the event may lose the patronage of the public if seats were not provided. At the same time he submitted an account for five shillings which he had personally paid for the seats, borrowed from Muizenberg for the previous performance. The Council refunded his five shillings and arranged for chairs from the Muizenberg pavilion to be used for the Spes Bona Orchestra performances at Kalk Bay at a cost of no more than five shillings per concert. Between the Council and the Railways many concerts were arranged at the harbour which were well attended and greatly appreciated. The bands used to play all the popular and well-known tunes. These bands continued to play at Kalk Bay until the 1950s.

The fishermen noted that whenever the Cape Corps band played at Kalk Bay, the south-easter would begin to blow. They would consequently be unable to get to sea for a few days. Soon the band was being greeted on its arrival by the fishermen with cries of “Daar kom die Suidoos Band!” often pronounced by the fishermen as “Daar kom die Sui-Doos Band!”

Disagreement over the use of the harbour
The Railway Board in 1926 placed an advertisement in the local newspapers. This invited tenders for the “hire of sites at Kalk Bay harbour for the erection of buildings for salting, packing and storage of fish.” The City Council responded with a telegram to the Railway Board in Pretoria. Their telegram began with “Astounded by Adverts for the hire of sites for this purpose” and went on to object to the proposed sites. The Union Castle Company had, they said, also purchased property on which they wished to build a large hotel. This property was adjacent to the proposed sites for lease for the erection of buildings for salting, packing and storage of fish. The local Ratepayers of Kalk Bay also objected to the Railway Board’s proposals.

The Majestic Hotel built by the Union Castle Line Company. (The Argus)

The Council reminded the Railways that, under the provision of Regulations 552 and 557, “no person shall carry on fish-curing establishments without a permit from the Council. To erect a building would also require a Council permit!” The Council also made it clear that apart from being “detrimental to the Kalk Bay resort,” they reckoned that there were insufficient fish caught in False Bay of the right class, such as stockfish, snoek, mackerel and elf, to warrant the undertaking. They pointed out that sometimes when snoek was plentiful in Table Bay, there was hardly any market for the fish at Kalk Bay.

The Railways disagreed with the Council’s threat that lessees of the sites would be denied the right to land or salt fish without a Council permit.

The Railways responded reminding the Council of the expenditure already incurred at Kalk Bay in connection with the fishing industry and kept to its decision to invite tenders.

The matter was further aggravated when a deputation of Councillor’s returned from an interview with the Minister of Railways. They announced to the press that the Railways had decided not to proceed with the letting of fish-curing sites. The Railways were not impressed by the Councillors press statement and advised them that they had, at considerable expense, built a harbour to assist the fishing industry and therefore “found it difficult to understand why there should be any objections.” The premises had been “built for the purpose and provisions were made in the draft agreements for lessees to conform to all municipal or other regulations relating to building or health.”

Adverse publicity for Kalk Bay
Kalk Bay then suffered from a series of complaints. These complaints addressed to the newspapers dealt
with the apparent “neglect” of the place and the many “blots” appearing on what should have been one of the most attractive places on the coast.

The Main Road through Kalk Bay to Fish Hoek having no pavements was described as a “veritable death trap” for pedestrians. The public “Outspan” came under fire and was described as a cesspool, shameful and a health hazard. The beach, it was suggested, could also be cleaned occasionally. Some seats could also be provided for visitors.

The City Council, it appears, took note of some of these complaints. Unsightly structures in people’s backyards were inspected and instructions given for their removal. Roads were paved and pavements were provided.

The Council also received a letter from a lady who had seriously injured her leg by falling into a hole on the pavilion. She intended claiming compensation and an inspection revealed a loose board which was blamed on the spring tides.

**A particularly tough year**

For the fishermen at Kalk Bay 1927 was a tough year. Snoek was in such poor condition that they were just skin and bone. The dealers would only pay five shillings for a hundred.

To compound this, the seals also gave the fishermen a hard time, taking the fish off their lines and by following the boats from one fishing bank to another. The seals even came into the harbour and chased the annual white stumpnose shoals away. The local seals were of little commercial value because of their small amount of fur (apart from the pups) and their poor quality. Only the seal skins to the north of Walvis Bay received between ten and twenty shillings each on the overseas market.

During lean periods such as these and particularly during the scarce winter months when the boats could not go out to sea, the fishermen lived on what was known as “salted mootjies” made by using snoek.

When snoek was plentiful the fishermen stocked up on the mootjies. The snoek was gutted and all the blood removed. The snoek was then salted with coarse salt and placed in a sealed tin. It was essential that the tin or drum was well sealed in order to keep the moisture out. A “pap” snoek could spoil the whole batch of mootjies.

When fish is scarce and during the lean months, the fishermen’s wives take the “mootjies” out of the container. They are thoroughly washed and left to soak in water overnight. The following morning the mootjies are rinsed and left in water again. When finally boiled they come out a pinkish colour. From this various dishes such as smoorfish and fish salad are made.

(Right) Also a problem to the fishermen were sharks. Tromp van Diggelen, at one time the world’s strongest man, holds up the 10kg head of a kabeljou, all that was left after a shark took a bite. (Dr H. van Diggelen)
The closure of False Bay to trawling

The Kalk Bay Fisheries’ steam trawler was described by Rene Juta in her writings *The Cape Peninsula* as “coming into Kalk Bay like a big brown hen to roost, surrounded by the line-fishing boats like straggling chickens, with some still on the horizon.”

The line fishermen at Kalk Bay had been in continued opposition to bottom trawling in False Bay since its introduction. For three decades, since the appearance in 1897 of the first trawler, bottom trawling was being freely and systematically practised in False Bay by the trawlers of the various syndicates and emergent fishing companies.

The line fishermen maintained that these bottom trawling activities were destroying the sea bed as well as impacting on and destroying False Bay’s fish resources. The line fishermen stated that they were feeling the ill effects of this in the form of severely reduced catches.

The trawling industry responded and accused the line fishermen of being against “progress.” They stated that the line fishermen were also jealous of prices received by the trawlers for their catches. They claimed that hand line fishing was an “out dated method of fishing.”

The trawling industry’s main concern (unlike the hand line fishing industry) was the catching and landing of the maximum tonnage of fish in exchange for maximum profit and return to shareholders. It was a case of two entirely different methods of fishing and completely opposite philosophies as regards the exploitation of False Bay’s available fish resources.

The Fishing Harbour’s Committee investigated the line fishermen’s claims that bottom trawling was responsible for the destruction of both immature and even mature fish of various species. They looked into the claim that catches were declining in False Bay as a result of this.

Their findings were reported to the Fisheries’ Advisory Board with the statement that “in view of the very useful service rendered by trawlers in making the supply of fish available to the community, it was very difficult to actively oppose the operation, even if some injury to the inshore fishing grounds were occasioned.”

They went on to recommend the prohibition of bottom trawling in False Bay so that the effects could be carefully observed for a period. This would then serve to disprove or prove the belief that the bottom trawling was harming the fishing grounds. The recommendations to prohibit trawling in the Bay and monitor the effects, were then passed on to the Administrator. He issued the following proclamation in the Government Gazette of 10 February 1928:

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PROCLAMATION
'The Honourable Adrian Paulus Johannes Fourie, Administrator of The Cape of Good Hope.
Under and by virtue of the powers vested in me by section six of Ordinance No.30 of 1920, I do hereby, with the advice of the Executive Committee, proclaim, declare and make it known that from and after the date of this Proclamation, it shall not be lawful for any person to operate with any kind of steam trawling vessel for the purpose of capture, pursuit or disturbance of any kind of fish within the confines of False Bay, that is, within the area bounded by a line drawn from Cape Hangklip to Cape Point, and by the shores of the said Bay. God Save the King.

Dated Cape Town, 3rd Day of February 1928.
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The closing of False Bay to bottom trawling was a case of too little too late. The Bay by this time was no longer used to any significant extent by the trawlers. They had moved to other new fishing grounds that had been discovered since the resources of False Bay had diminished.

With the advent and development of the trawling companies, the Kalk Bay fishermen had been displaced as a primary supplier of table fish in the Cape Colony to merely supplying a shrinking local market. The monopoly of supplying fish to the inland markets was by this time already in the hands of the big companies.

Every morning at 05:00 Mr Sawyer collected the keys from the railway station and opened the harbour gates. At 17:00 he locked them again and returned the key to the station. The rest of the day he was in his ticket office where people paid to fish off the pier. His phone was always busy with people wanting to know what fish were running. He turned a “blind eye” to most of the local youngsters so they could slip past to catch maasbankers and mackerel off the wall. Many of the older fishermen have fond memories of him and the harbour master, Mr Carter, both of whom they regarded as “fine gentlemen.”

Boats off-loading their catches. Many of the boats now had engines and decks and were starting to take on something of the size and proportions of the boats still in use today. (C. Leo Biden)

(Right) Lewis Williams clubbing a snoek. In later years fishermen perfected the technique of swinging the snoek under the arm and breaking its neck. While some can manage 50 snoek with ease, there are others who can double that tally in the same time. Williams was later to own and skipper his own boat Ang Jerry and became well-known among the fishing fraternity. (Dr H. van Diggelen)
The problem of marketing the fish
By 1930 large amounts of salted snoek were, once again being exported to Mauritius, yet the fishermen were still faced with the problem of selling to the local market. According to them, the hawkers were agreeing on the prices they would pay to the boats when they returned from the fishing grounds. They then re-sold the fish to the public at exorbitant prices.

The Railway gates to the harbour were only open from 08:30 to 17:30 each day. As this was the only access for vehicles any boats returning late in the day encountered problems getting their catches out of the harbour. This problem was only solved in 1994.

Owing to the severe shortage of housing in Kalk Bay, ninety percent of the men engaged in fishing out of Kalk Bay harbour were not able to live in the area and had to “commute” by train to Kalk Bay each day. Added to this the train service stopped shortly after midnight and the first early morning train was far too late for the boats. Many of the fishermen had to sleep on the boats or in the harbour until the boats left for sea.

The boatshare in the 1930s was six shillings in the pound and on many occasions when the fishing was poor, the boat owner would advance the crew their train fare. The average earnings of a skipper was £60 per annum and the crew received considerably less. At times the snoek landed in Kalk Bay had to be practically given away because catches in Table Bay and elsewhere were so good.

One of the early tunny caught on a handline. The first authenticated yellowfin tunny was landed in 1931 by Carel Lindholm. He caught it on a snoek line with a 0.5 m wire trace, barbless hook and snoek lead. The fish took his line while he was trying for snoek close to Penguin Rock at Cape Point. It was 1.5m long and weighed 48kg. (Dr H. van Diggelen)

Sir Abe Bailey (1864-1940) K.C.M.G., the mining magnate and legislator who owned a very large property in Muizenberg. He had a boat in Kalk Bay harbour called the Clewer.

He donated tanks to the aquarium at St James. He was buried on the hillside overlooking his home in Muizenberg. He bequeathed large sums for a Trust for the bettering of race-relations in South Africa.
Antonio Ferreira, who had the oil store at the harbour and supplied the fuel for the boats. His wife ran the small cafe at the harbour for many years. Antonio was from Lisbon, Portugal. The surname is in fact Ferreira-Dos-Santos, but Ferreira is used for short. When he first came to Kalk Bay he opened a shoe store next to Kalk Bay station. His son, Gustaf, had several boats at Kalk Bay. He was a very affable fisherman and was known to all as “Gussie.” He was one day asked by “Madala,” who was the harbour assistant, if he could show him how to catch fish with a rod off the jetty. One night Gussie showed Madala how to hold the rod, bait the line and cast out. Gussie then went a bit further along the jetty with his rod to catch fish. A bit later Madala checked his line by taking it out of the water to see if any fish had bitten. None had, and so he cast his line back into the water, or so he thought. In the process of casting, which he had not quite mastered, the line and hook somehow ended up going sideways, landing close to where Gussie was fishing. Quickly Gussie placed the single white stumpnose that he had caught - the only one caught by anybody all night - onto Madala’s hook and dropped the line back in the water. He then went over to Madala and told him that he could see there was something on his line. Sure enough Madala had a stumpnose on his line! Madala was delighted with “his catch” and Gussie took it off the hook for him and bashed the already-clubbed fish on the jetty several times just to make sure it was indeed dead! After this Madala became very interested in fishing and Gussie gave him many more lessons.

Projects for the boosting of tourism

Clean beach sand was transported from Fish Hoek by the railways for the “topping up” of the beaches at Kalk Bay and St James every six months. Many of the unsightly corrugated iron bathing boxes were condemned and removed in the early 1930s; those remaining were given a fresh spray painting.
Aid given to the fishermen
Two Kalk Bay fishermen lost their lives in May 1936 when their boat capsized off Victoria Bay. The widow of one of the men received £2 per month as a result of representations to the Table Bay Relief Fund.

The southeaster blew continuously for 17 days during November 1937. This kept the Kalk Bay fleet in the harbour and had the effect of cutting off all income to the fishing community. Considerable distress was caused for some 24 families and so a Trust Fund was formed to supply them with groceries and other forms of relief. The Relief Fund committee consisted of its President, Mr Morris Alexander K.C, M.P; Mr S.F. Waterson M.P. his wife, Mrs Waterson, Mr H. Turpin and Mr J.H. Williams.

“Tickey-Round-the Bay”
For many years on Boxing Day, New Year’s Day and Second New Year the fishermen offered boat trips. For the cost of a tickey (two-and-a-half pence) the public could go on a trip around False Bay and Seal Island. This hence became known locally as “Tickey-Round-the-Bay.” Large crowds would come from far afield to Kalk Bay on these days and would camp on the harbour beach.

Harbour “a wasted asset”
Kalk Bay harbour was again in the news in the late 1930s. Recreational and sports fishermen voiced their discontent that the harbour was used by so few commercial fishermen. “A wasted asset,” they called it.

They claimed that False Bay could attract foreign visitors if the harbour were improved to make it safe, in all weathers, for pleasure boats of up to 20m in length to be moored there. Also thousands
of sports fishermen from all over the world would be attracted to False Bay. The harbour in its then present state, being exposed to heavy gales and seas, was no encouragement to yacht owners.

**New moorings**
New moorings for the boats had been laid in the harbour by divers from Table Bay in 1932. Seventeen moorings had been placed five 5m apart. They were secured to stout anchors by a 6,35cm steel chain. For smaller craft a row of buoys were laid nearer the beach, 3m apart. For access to the boats a dinghy was provided on an endless whip.

**The “new” eastern mole**
Several years later proposals for a new eastern mole and three jetties in Kalk Bay harbour were made known. Ultimately only one wooden jetty was constructed. The scheme was estimated to cost £13,000. The final cost was £560 more than the original estimate.
The guano industry
The word “guano” comes from the Peruvian Indians and means “sea bird manure.” They were the first to use it as fertiliser for their farm plots. It is made up of bird droppings, feathers, carcasses and eggshells mixed with sand. In the course of thousands of years, in the dry conditions of the desert coast, it covered the islands off western South America completely. The Agricultural Revolution in Europe created a great demand for fertiliser. These islands were soon exploited and scraped bare.

Captain Benjamin Morrel had worked off the coast of Peru and was familiar with the guano islands. When hunting seals off the Namibian coast in 1824 he came across Ichaboe Island north of Luderitz. He saw the island covered by nearly 12m of guano and he recorded this fact in his account of his travels. This account was published nearly 20 years later and upon reading it, a trader from Liverpool immediately dispatched three ships to Ichaboe Island. Only one ship made the voyage safely. The cargo of guano that it brought back made a large profit and soon Ichaboe was swarming with excavators. At one stage there were 4 000 men and more than 600 ships busy at work even though it was a small island less than 0.5 km². The island was scraped bare in a mere 18 months.

A few years later the State took control over all the islands and tried to regulate the industry properly. Many problems arose. The numbers of gannets, cormorants and penguins decreased, while the seal population increased even in the face of severe depletion due to seal hunting.

There was a rush for the guano at Malgas Island at Saldanha Bay in 1845. The Island was soon scraped bare and the jackass penguin population nearly destroyed by the removal of their eggs.

Over the next hundred years the guano was collected from the islands by government ships under the “Guano Islands Department” and also by private individuals who were given concessions to undertake the collection.

The Fernandez guano operation
The well-known fisherman Pedro Fernandez of Kalk Bay was granted such a concession. He worked islands off the South West African (Namibian) coast and Seal Island in False Bay. His family assisted with the work of collecting the guano on Seal Island and with transferring the full bags to their fishing boat by means of a raft. The fishing boat then took the bags to Kalk Bay. They were paid by the government per ton of guano collected. It was a tough business, full of difficulties and often dangerous. Since there was no water on Seal Island, large drums of fresh water were brought once a week to the island by a fishing boat from Kalk Bay. Owing to the difficult nature of landing on the island, these drums were floated ashore from the boat.

When Pedro died in 1933, his daughter Sophia had the contract transferred to her name, and became the first woman to hold a guano contract. She continued with operations until the Second World War. During the war the island was out of bounds to the fishing boats as a “mystery” tower was built on Seal Island by the Navy at this time. By the time the war was over there were cheaper and higher quality fertilisers available.
During the war years the Navy’s minesweepers frequently checked False Bay for mines. The Navy had a shed at Kalk Bay harbour, and several Kalk Bay boats and their skippers were involved in towing targets to sea for the Navy to practise firing at from the shore batteries. Target practice took place regularly on Saturday afternoons. Among those who towed the targets were Messrs Abdula, Edwards, Ferreira, Klein, Sasman and Trimmel. The boats also recovered the “dummy” torpedoes fired in practice at sea outside Kalk Bay.
Mr Klein sold a few of his boats to the Navy, while others such as Mr Tromp van Diggelen had his boat, Felicity, commandeered and taken to Surabaya, Indonesia, where it was used as a captain’s barge.

**The shark fishing industry at Kalk Bay**

During the Second World War, the Ministry of Food in Great Britain desperately needed vitamin A to improve the night vision of fighter pilots. In the local waters off the Cape there was an ample resource of suitable sharks.

An industry was developed by Marine Products, working out of Gordon’s Bay. The liver oil (*vaalhaai*) shark was targeted in particular. The sharks’ livers were transported to a processing plant on a farm at Stellenbosch. There industrial chemists extracted the vitamin A from its oil.

There was little market for the flesh with the restrictions on trade to the East during the war years. Apart from the relatively few sharks dried for biltong, the majority of shark carcasses were dumped at sea once the livers had been extracted.

Gordon’s Bay became too small for the shark fishing fleet and the headquarters were moved to Kalk Bay. Initially the Kalk Bay fishermen were not keen to work for “wages” with the result that men had to be brought to Kalk Bay to work the shark boats. The shark boats made seven day trips, working from False Bay to Cape Infanta and the Breede River. After a while the local fishermen did become involved and the larger boats, Steenbok, Waterbok, Bloubok and Bosbok were assisted in the catching of sharks by smaller, independent boats in False Bay and along the coast. One of the larger boats had a record catch of over 1 500 sharks in a single trip. Marine Products erected a new shark liver processing factory at Dido Valley near Simon’s Town.
F.C. Jameson was in charge of Marine Products at Kalk Bay. His wife christened the vessel on her launching. (SA Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review)

The Blesbok, one of the shark boats built by Mr Blain in Kalk Bay harbour. (SA Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review)

The Blesbok being launched in Kalk Bay harbour. She was 20m long, with a beam of 5.7m and a draft of 2.5m. She was one of the first vessels designed according to the American concept with her wheelhouse forward. She was also one of the first steel fishing boats built in South Africa. She had detachable bulkheads aft for fitting a turntable when used as a purse seiner. (SA Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review)

Toasting the launching were (left to right) Mr F.C. Jameson, Mr Blain who built the Blesbok and Dr S.H. Skaife, Chairman of the Fisheries Development Council. (SA Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review)

F.C. Jameson was in charge of Marine Products at Kalk Bay. His wife christened the vessel on her launching. (SA Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review)
A government inquiry was undertaken into the fishing industry. It resulted in the **Fisheries Industry Bill** being placed before Parliament in 1944. In terms of this Bill control of the industry was moved from provincial to central government.

The inquiry had concluded that the industry consisted of two distinct sectors, namely the “inshore fishery” and “deep-sea trawling.”

The inshore sector included the handline and shellfish industries. They found that 90% of the labour force was engaged in the inshore fishery, which they found to be “inefficient” in exploiting the resources, resulting in low incomes and depressed social conditions. The production of this inshore sector was less than half that of the deep-sea trawling sector.

The deep-sea trawling sector was efficient and prosperous and the commission of inquiry believed that the larger financial yields of the industry should be used to address the inequalities and subsidise the inshore fishery.

The Bill presented to Parliament was to empower the newly-established Fisheries Development Corporation (**Fiscor**) to “milk excessive profit” from the deep sea trawling sector to finance “aid.”
Many Kalk Bay boat-owners did, however, benefit. Several new boats were built and new engines were purchased with finance from Fiscor.

Money from Fiscor was made available to the Kalk Bay fishermen in 1947 to establish a cooperative. This would have solved the fishermen’s long-standing problem of getting a fair price for their catches. With their own cold store the fish could have been passed directly from boat to cold store at a fair price to the fishermen. “Buyers” would then have had to buy fish from the cold store. The middlemen would no longer have been able to dictate and control prices. Excess fish could then have been salted, cured or smoked or kept refrigerated for another day.

The fishermen’s enthusiasm for this venture was crushed when South African Railways & Harbours, which controlled the harbour site, refused permission for a cold store to be built. The scheme was never implemented and the available funds were spent a few years later to provide Gansbaai with these facilities.

The South Sea built in 1948 for Mr F. Louw by Table Bay Shipwrights & Boat Builders Co. (Pty) Ltd. They had made a careful study of conditions in each fishing area on the coast and built their boats accordingly. The South Sea KB8 was 12m in length overall with a 4m beam and a moulded depth of 1.4m. Her carrying capacity was about 7.5 tons. An 85 hp GM diesel engine gave her a speed of nine knots. (SA Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review)
After the war the fishermen had problems in getting a fair price for their catches. The langganners worked together and decided on prices they would offer the boats when they returned.

For many years the Kelvin engine was the most popular choice of boat owners. It was a slow revving engine with a large heavy flywheel and found to be very reliable. Due to their length and shape most of the boats were restricted to speeds between 6 and 10 knots. The costs of spares for the Kelvin and Bukh engines were mainly responsible for owners changing to Ford and G.M. engines. Fuel whether power paraffin or diesel had to be ordered in drums and pumped by hand into the boats’ tanks. Many years later proper underground storage tanks were provided and fuel could be supplied directly to boats.
The Department of Sea Fisheries take over the administration of the harbour

The “official” handing-over of Kalk Bay harbour from South African Railways & Harbours to the Department of Sea Fisheries was announced in a series of proclamations and notices appearing in the Government Gazette in 1955. It had finally been agreed that Kalk Bay was never likely to operate as a trading harbour as had been envisaged when proclaimed in 1917 under the Railways and Harbours Regulation Control and Management Act. The Railways administration received £92 000 for the harbour works from the Department of Commerce and Industry.

Also printed in the Government Gazette was the schedule of charges which included 6d admission for fishing off the pier. The charge of 1s 6d for anglers at all harbours who used more than two lines was scrapped.

The Kalk Bay fish market

In 1959, an enterprise started by a few local ratepayers with Mr John Wiley as chairman resulted in a building being erected in the harbour for a fish market. Messrs Vincent and Desmond Hare constructed this doublestorey building with a 20 year lease on Crown land and it housed the fish market from which the public could get daily supplies. This alleviated the waiting and haggling with the “middleman” on the quayside.

For many years the fish market was run by Mrs Enid Fish, wife of one of the most popular skippers “Uncle” Jerry Fish. Her customers were not only local residents but also visitors from the Transvaal. They would telephone and let her know what date they were due in Cape Town for their holiday and would place their orders for fresh fish or rock lobster accordingly.

One occasion well-remembered was when a wealthy Transvaal lady collected her phoned order of crayfish in the morning only to reappear at midday. She clutched a frothy crayfish in one hand, with the maid trailing behind carrying a bag containing the others that she had bought. “Mrs Fish,” she called out at the top of her voice, “you sold me some rotten crayfish!” All the other customers in the shop stood back while the lady went on about how the crayfish went all frothy when she boiled them. Just then Mrs Fish’s husband walked in. “Jerry,” she called out, “this lady says I sold her rotten crayfish.” Uncle Jerry took the “frothy” crayfish out of the lady’s hand, looked at it and started to lick the froth off the tail.

“What do you think you’re doing with my crayfish?” she cried out. “But you said they were bad,” responded Jerry. The lady suddenly realised what a mistake she had made and fled, taking the rest of the crayfish with her!

CHAPTER SIX
A Dark Period

1950-1970
Early in this period the harbour administration was changed from South African Railways & Harbours to the Department of Sea Fisheries. There were two particularly serious threats to the hand line fishermen during this period. These were:

• an invasion into False Bay by the large purse-seine-net trawlers seeking the large shoals of pilchards that moved down the West Coast and into False Bay.

• the threat of “forced removal” when Kalk Bay under the Group Areas Act was declared a “White area.”

In both cases many people gave their support to and worked very hard for the rights of the fishermen. These threats only passed in 1982 and 1983.

The Kalk Bay fish market

The fish market.
(SA Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review)
False Bay invaded by purse-seine trawlers

In the 1950s there were some 220 boats engaged in netting pilchard and maasbanker for the 16 processing factories established on the West Coast between Saldanha Bay and St Helena Bay. The industry had an annual quota of 250 000 tons, which did not include the catches of mackerel.

The factories were situated in the areas close to where the shoals of fish could be caught. Vessels of up to 15.8 m in length made short trips, sometimes catching the fish within sight of the factories. The tendency of these shoals to move further southwards resulted in the factories investing in even bigger vessels of up to 20.7 m in length for longer trips to Dassen Island and further south.

Catches began to decline drastically in 1954. This was causing great concern to the industry and when the season started in 1956 the situation was looking gloomy. Spotter aircraft sent out in search of the shoals came back with negative reports and the newspapers soon reported on the “idle factories” and “destitute fishermen.” The first six months, which were usually the best for maasbanker, were spent searching in vain for the shoals.

But then in False Bay large shoals of pilchard and maasbanker were found. First a few trawlers arrived in False Bay, then even more and soon the Bay was a hive of activity. The large shoal-netting trawlers hauled out the shoals of fish and travelled the 160 km trip back to their West Coast factories where the catches were reduced to fishmeal and oil.

False Bay temporarily closed

This unexpected “invasion” of the large West Coast trawlers into False Bay caused serious alarm among the local conservationists, residents and particularly, the line fishermen. Urgent appeals to the local member of parliament brought a quick response. By February the following year the bay was closed to these large trawlers. The government amended the old regulation which stated that no person in False Bay shall use “a trawl net of any kind, or a Danish seine net of any kind, or any other kind of net operated in such a manner as to drag over the sea-floor,” to include that “no person within False Bay ... shall use any net for the catching of pilchards, maasbanker or mackerel for canning, or the production of fishmeal, fish oil or fish fertiliser or for sale to any person for these purposes.” This new amendment, like the old regulation, excluded the “trek fishermen.”

The West Coast pilchard industry was not happy about this restriction imposed on their activities. They felt that the government had responded too quickly without any investigation into the matter. They did not accept the fact that the removal of the pilchard and maasbanker shoals in False Bay had any effect on the line fish stocks. They pointed out that the line fishermen frequently came up to their areas to catch snoek and that this matter was possibly going to set a precedent for other communities to claim exclusive rights to their areas.

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<th>1955</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pilchards</td>
<td>96 520</td>
<td>58 188</td>
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<td>Maasbankers</td>
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The table above shows the decline in catches. For the first six months of 1956 the totals are nearly half that of 1955.

In seining the fish are surrounded by a wall of nets with floats on top and weighted at the bottom. By drawing in a line through rings at the bottom the net is closed. The fish are then pumped, or scooped onto the fishing vessel.

(SA Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review)
The industry lobbied for the lifting of the ban in False Bay. A compromise was reached whereby the boats were allowed into the Bay but restricted to operating in an area two miles offshore of the coast between Cape Hangklip and Cape Point and not within two miles of Seal Island. Buoys were later laid to demarcate the “open fishing area” within the Bay.

There was an outcry against the pilchard trawlers fishing within the restricted area. Boats were observed 800m off the beaches. The matter was brought up by the MP for South Peninsula, Mr L.C. Gay, in the House of Assembly. Dr A.J.R. Van Rhijn, Minister of Economic Affairs supported Mr Gay and warned the pilchard industry that if they did not “stick to the regulations,” he would “clear them out of False Bay.”

This brought forth a response from the editor of the South African Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review, who referred to this as being “the old game of restricting the pilchard industry. The line fishermen of False Bay,” he wrote, “tend to regard the Bay as their own little reserve.” With such a large amount of money invested in the pilchard boats and the factories, he suggested that the Minister even “review the two-mile restriction, which is extremely difficult to enforce. The pilchard fishermen also have a right to a living from the sea and should not be kept from their fish because they enter the preserve of a particular group of fishermen who can do very little with the huge shoals.”

On one occasion in 1957 there were 37 large pilchard boats anchored behind the Bullnose at Simon’s Town waiting to purse-seine in False Bay.

The West Coast industry over the next few years had good catches, mainly from the False Bay area. Much of the catch in 1958 and 1959 consisted of smaller pilchards. These pilchards after the 12-hour trip back to the West Coast factories were fit only for reduction to fishmeal and oil. The larger boats were the most useful for these “long trips,” and vessels like the 20.7m Nautilus returned having netted catches of 140 tons in a single trip.

Southern Seas Fishing Enterprises (Pty) Ltd of Saldanha Bay had 18 motor fishing vessels serving their factory. Ten of the larger boats were engaged in making the 12 hour trip to False Bay and the 12 hour return trip with their hauls of pilchards. In 1957 the company bought the 370 ton d.w. coaster, Paraat. Built in 1940 with a speed of nine knots, her two hatches were divided into compartments and a special Kimmerle pump fitted. Using two winches and perforated metal baskets of about three-quarter ton capacity over each side of the vessel, she could transfer the fish from two boats, one each side; and twice a week travel from False Bay to Saldanha Bay and discharge using the pump. The factory jetty in Saldanha was lengthened by 6m to accommodate the 36m Paraat. The experiment with this “mother” ship’ was not successful.

In 1946 plans were announced that £2 million was to be spent on developing a fishing industry at Dido Valley and town planning experts were commissioned to survey the area. The scheme included factories, a harbour, boatbuilding company, an engineering concern and housing for 400 families. One factor given for the origination of this proposed development was that Kalk Bay offered no further opportunity for development. Firms involved in the scheme were African Inshore Fisheries Development Corporation Ltd, Concentra (Pty) Ltd, Laaiplek Fisheries, Lamberts Bay Canning Company, Marine Products, Union Smokeries, Ocean Products, and Vitamin Sales Corporation.
Processing plant planned for False Bay

In the 1950s, when the pilchards moved southwards, Marine Products processing factory at Laaiplek was having problems with the Berg River mouth silting up preventing access to the larger trawlers.

At Hout Bay a new processing factory was built by da Gama Visbedryf (Pty) Ltd in 1959 at a cost of £230 000. (This new factory was in addition to the established processing factory of South African Sea Products Ltd already established at Hout Bay.)

In the same year Marine Products of Africa Ltd decided to “follow the southward movement” of the fish. They put forward their plans to build a fishmeal factory in False Bay. This was planned for Dido Valley near Simon’s Town where Marine Products had previously established Marine Oil Refiners in 1943. The proposed new factory near Simon’s Town would save the long trip back to the Laaiplek processing factory. This new factory was designed to process upwards of 30 000 tons of fish per season. A concrete jetty was to be built out to sea at Dido Valley. The trawlers were to come alongside it and the fish were to be discharged by means of vacuum pumps. Flumes or pipelines were to be laid underneath the railway line and Main Road to convey the fish to the proposed processing factory on the opposite side of the road.

Marine Products stated that employment would be provided for the people of the Simon’s Town area, and the Simon’s Town and Kalk Bay fishermen would increase their earnings substantially by joining the boats operating for the factory.

There was a great deal of objection from residents in the immediate area who voiced concern about the odours and pollution to the beaches. Marine Products pointed out that all the modern systems they were proposing to use would eliminate all these concerns. They emphasised the large amount of foreign currency that the venture would earn for the country.

Despite all the organised protests and petitions, the Simon’s Town Council gave their approval to the application and the matter went to the Administrator of the Cape for his final approval. The newly-built da Gama processing factory in Hout Bay was at this time receiving a great deal of negative publicity resulting from an outcry by local Hout Bay residents against the dreadful smell emanating from the factory. As a result of this, and the opposition received from the residents adjacent to Dido Valley, the Administrator did not give his approval. The new factory was subsequently located in Gansbaai instead.

Concern over what was happening in False Bay continued to receive news coverage. The local fishermen, residents, conservationists and anglers and those concerned with the tourist industry were not happy and continued to voice their dissatisfaction. There were continuous reports of the purse-seiners working inside the two-mile limit. There were reports that other types of fish were being targeted and reduced to fishmeal and that trawlers were being so overloaded with fish that it was being washed off their decks by the waves, back into the sea, and left to float on the surface.

Findings of the Sea Fisheries’ report on False Bay

In 1964 a report by the Division of Sea Fisheries was published in which the Director, Mr B. van de Jager explained that False Bay was an open bay influenced by both the Agulhas and Benguela currents, and that it was subject to ever-changing conditions. The rich variety of fish species, he said, had their own characteristic mode of life. What should be considered was the different methods of fishing applicable to the various species and the interests of the groups of people concerned with “observance of the wider national interest.”

The report then went on to show how seasonal changes and water temperature can influence the behaviour of fish and how the bottom fish and shoal fish were two different kinds with different habits. Tables showing the distribution, feeding habits, spawning seasons and areas were given for the different species of each group. The bottom fish were the main target of the line fishermen and anglers while the surface shoals were mainly caught by the purse-seine nets. There were many regulations to protect the interests of each group involved in the catching of the various types of fish. For example, there were closed seasons each year for pilchards, maasbanker and mackerel. There were limitations on where purse-seiners may fish (such as a two-mile limit offshore in False Bay.) A prescribed mesh size of net and limitations on the size of the fleet, the productive capacity of the factories were also regulated. Line fishing was protected by several regulations and favoured by the regulations prohibiting the use of bottom drag nets in False Bay.

The importance and value of the purse-seine net industry was described as “about 130 boats with a total crew of 1 200 men and a replacement value of R5 million and a capital investment of R25 million in
the 23 fishmeal and canning factories between Doringbaai and Gansbaai.” This industry, it was pointed out, earned the country nearly R13 million in foreign currency.

Line fishing was described as having 143 registered boats in False Bay worth a total investment of about R300 000 and manned by about 900 fishermen. The estimated saleable value of the catch was given as about R750 000 (not including snoek, which the report claimed the False Bay fishermen mainly caught and landed on the West coast).

The claims that the net fishermen also caught the bottom fish and drove the other shoal fish away, and that catching pilchards diminishes food for the bottom fish, were countered by the arguments that bottom fish only get caught in the nets by accident. The trawlers avoid the sea-bed which could damage the nets costing about R5 000. Other shoal fish may be driven away but only for a short while because it is the inborn impulse of all shoal fish to crowd in dense shoals in specific areas. There will always be more pilchards in the sea than the fishermen can take out. The report also said that there are numerous other small fish, such as anchovies, which are available as food for bottom-feeders.

The rock anglers, it was suggested, could also do an honest self-examination. How often did they keep undersize fish? What about all the indestructible synthetic fishing lines they left entangled underwater?

The report stated the Red Tide of 1962 killed some 120 tons of fish in False Bay, most of which were the kind the anglers claimed to be scarce as a result of the pilchard fishermen. Pollution from factory activities on the shores of False Bay was a serious problem to the marine life in the Bay and was being overlooked, the report pointed out. In its concluding paragraphs it stated that the commercials in False Bay would hardly be able to make a living in the future as long as they used “obsolete fishing methods and small boats with a limited striking range.”

The False Bay Conservation Society
This society was formed in 1968 by representatives from tourist and hotel associations, yacht clubs, sporting unions, fishing clubs, commercial fishermen and concerned residents of False Bay.

Their concerns over what was happening in the Bay with regard to the purse-seine trawlers received a great deal of press coverage. A very critical editorial of this new organisation appeared in July 1968 in the South African Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review. It posed the question: “Crusade ... or witch hunt?” It pointed out that in the past the fishermen in False Bay had complained that the noise from the trains and naval guns was the cause of poor fishing. It was suggested that the real reasons for the decline in fish stocks was pollution and the increased number of anglers, including spear fishermen. “We suggest that instead of a conservation society with precious little to conserve, what is needed is a False Bay Development Society to promote the provision of modern hotels, restaurants and tourist amenities which the area so sorely needs.”

The False Bay Conservation Society continued campaigning against the purse-seine netting in False Bay. At a cost of R100 000, seven buoys were positioned to clearly demarcate the area in which the purse-seiners were allowed to operate. Pressure was kept on the authorities to enforce the purse-seining limits and regulations. A patrol boat was built and stationed at Kalk Bay for a period of time. Unfortunately it was usually “out of action” when complaints were lodged about the purse-seine trawlers and it was never of particular use.
A TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE

Record breaking blue-fin tuna

Louis Williams with his boat the Ang Jerry threw his net around a shoal of blue-fin tuna. The shoal was estimated to be about 100 in total. The net tore and only 15 blue-fin were landed. One tuna weighed over 270kg. The Sharon Dawn was not so lucky. Her net tipped when being pulled in and all the fish were lost. Less than one mile off Glencairn the angling record of 192,5kg for a blue-fin was caught by Mike Stott. By the end of the year a large 276kg blue-fin tuna had been landed in Fish Hoek.

Kalk Bay gets a larger slipway

The new double slipway under construction in 1965. It was designed to be large enough to accommodate the pelagic purse-seine trawlers. (The Argus)

TheMadeira catches a Blue Marlin

On 7 June 1958, while fishing for snoek off Slangkop lighthouse, Kommetjie, the skipper of the Madeira, Christian Davis, and his crew of 14 were astonished to suddenly see a very large fish surface close by and swim around on the top of the water very slowly and feebly. Quickly, a number of the crew threw their snoek lines over the fish and, with several lines hooked, pulled it alongside and gaffed it on board. On their reaching the harbour, the fish was sold to the owner of a fish and chip shop in Salt River.

Unfortunately by the time the news of this catch reached Dr. Frank Talbot of the South African Museum and he had traced the fish to the shop in Salt River, it had already been cut up and vital parts thrown away. From the tail and head he was able to establish that the fish was approximately 3,1m long and weighed nearly 270 kg. The head was given to the museum and the fish was thought to have been a blue marlin, very rare in local waters and one of the very early indications that these giant fighting fish do indeed frequent these waters. The strange behaviour of the fish near the Madeira is thought to have been as a result of it having suddenly swum into very cold water while chasing food and being partly paralysed as a result.

TheMadeira KB36 built in 1954, 11.9m long and weighing 12ton gross. (I.Moss)

Blue Marlin

80
Boat-builder, de Villiers
Mr Frans de Villiers (below) at work on one of the many dinghies he built on the harbour working area at Kalk Bay. His rock lobster dinghies were well-known among fishermen for their “high standard and reliability.”

His uncle, Frikkie de Villiers, had been the skipper of the Grand Banks’ schooner, Kernwood in 1938 catching snoek on the West coast. In one season he caught 105 000 snoek at 2d per snoek.

There are several boats built by him still working out of Kalk Bay harbour, namely Kareema-D, Sea Queen, Tiddims, Tracy and Zorba.

Another of Frans’ uncles, Henry, was a boat-builder who felled trees in Tokai forest and dragged them to Witsands beach where he cut them into planks with a trek-saw. There he built the Star of Africa, an 18m ketch which was at that time the biggest locally-built boat. He skippered her with the big Newfoundland schooners on snoeking voyages up the West coast.

The boats were put on a trailer and towed to the harbour. Most were light enough to be placed in the water by the harbour crane. (G.Stibbe)
**Naval cutter disaster**

On 17 December 1965 a naval cutter with eleven on board was becalmed near the reef outside Kalk Bay harbour when without any warning a train of steep waves began to break in quick succession. It was high tide and the boat was very quickly swamped and capsized. Seven men lost their lives.

Research has revealed that the swells, or wave trains, that enter False Bay after their long journey from the Southern Ocean fan out and dissipate in the shallow waters along the shores in the bay. At Rocky Bank these wave trains are refracted and two parts combine again to form a larger train which is focused on the shore to the north-east. Similar conditions occur when the waves come into the bay from a 160 degree direction and end up directed at Kalk Bay.

*(Left)* The Speranza was the first monohedran hull boat in South Africa. She was designed by Renato Levi. In later years she was re-engined, giving her a top speed of 27 knots. Moored for many years in the centre of Kalk Bay harbour, the Speranza went to the aid of other boats in difficulties on many occasions. *(SA Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review)*

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**Pauline**

One evening during January 1965 the 9.7m *Pauline* left Kalk Bay for Hout Bay so as to be in the area for catching snoek at daybreak. There was a heavy sea running and it is believed she was overwhelmed and met her end very quickly. When the half-submerged hull was found and towed into the harbour several bodies were found in the fish-hold. Other crew members’ bodies were later washed up at Kommetjie and some were never recovered. The wife of the owner, Mr E. Klein, with support from other charities and the Kalk Bay fishermen, organised a relief fund for the widows and dependants.

*The wrecked naval cutter washed up on the rocks near Kalk Bay Station. *(The Argus)*

*Sketch illustrating the concentrated wave train directed at Kalk Bay.*
Small cracks had started to appear when more and more of those who made their living from the sea were forced to move away from the area in search of housing. There were those who chose other occupations and commuted out of the area each day to their work. An ever-increasing population was settling in the area who had nothing to do with the fishing industry. There developed three different groups; one calling itself the “local fishing community,” another referred to as “up the line fishermen,” and there were the “non-fishing residents.” The race classifications added further to the cracks by dividing families into “White” and “Coloured” groups.

In 1964 there were approximately 120 “non-white” families living in Kalk Bay, 15 of whom owned their own homes, others rented properties or lived in the 54 Council flats. There were some 340 fishermen and another 500 persons in the area dependent on the sea for their livelihood. Of the 31 boats in the harbour, 19 were owned by Coloured fishermen. There were 417 “white-owned” homes in the village.

The community was shocked by the announcement on 20 November 1964 that the area between Lakeside and Clovelly was to be investigated with a view to proclaiming it for “White” occupation only under the Group Areas Act. Objections were to be lodged by not later than 18 December the following month.

One of the residents and ratepayers in the area was Mrs Monica Ritchken. She also happened to be a member of the Regional Council of the Black Sash and immediately went into action. The Black Sash lodged an objection with the Board, wrote to the fishermen offering their sympathy and support and made a press statement.

A meeting was held by the Kalk Bay Residents’ Association to discuss ways of presenting objections and was attended by more than 250 White and Coloured residents. Mr Vincent Cloete as chairman was accompanied on the stage by Mr L.C. Gay MP for Simon’s Town, Mr John Wiley MPC, Mr Richard Friedlander MPD, Dr Oscar Wollheim, Mr J. Heeger a Cape Town City Councillor and other members of the Association. The meeting voted unanimously on a motion proposed by Mr John Wiley in support of the Kalk Bay Residents’ Association and asking it to take further steps “to protect the rights and interests of all the people of Kalk Bay, especially the Coloured fishing community.”

Mr Cloete and Councillor Heeger then approached Mrs Ritchken and asked for her assistance which she

The “Group Areas” bombshell
Kalk Bay’s fishing community is unique. It has developed over the years from fine stock of many nationalities ranging from English, Irish, Portuguese, Philippine, Javanese, Italian, Dutch, Cape Coloured, Spanish and German. The old marriage and baptismal records of St James Roman Catholic and Holy Trinity Anglican Churches and the records of the St James Mission and Holy Trinity Mission Schools reveal the wonderful variety of names from Burns, Cronje, De la Cruz, Geldenhuys, Erispe, Jurgens, Pepino to Quimpo, Redlinghuis, Searle and Wessels. It is one of the oldest established and closely-knit communities in the Cape where people of mixed descent and different religious faiths have lived, side by side, in harmony for many years.
willingly gave both as a ratepayer and ten-year member of the Black Sash. Advice was sought from Mrs Barbara Lewis in Simon’s Town who had had experience with the Group Areas Board and knew the procedure to follow. With help from Miss Peggy Grant of the False Bay Branch of the Black Sash, draft objections were drawn up, all in quintuplicate as required, and distributed to 700 householders, 28 traders and 120 fishmongers. Forty-six people responded with their own written objections addressed to the Board.

A detailed memorandum was submitted by the Residents’ Association with expert advice from Mr Philip Herbstein. Another came from the Moslem community who, under the guidance of Iman Fisher, had formed the “Trustees of the Masjidul-Islam, Kalk Bay.”

Many letters of support for the local Coloured community and opposition to the proposed removals were published in the newspapers.

At the Board of Enquiry held on 11 January 1965 at the Muizenberg pavilion, the Chairman, Mr H.S.J. Van Wyk, and his colleague, Mr PH. Torlage, gave all those who had submitted written objections a chance to speak. Many just stood by what they had written and had nothing further to add but the Board was addressed by several people. Advocate Robin Marais appeared on behalf of the Kalk Bay Resident’s Association. Mrs Peggy Roberts spoke on behalf of the Black Sash. The City Council, which had built the flats for the fishermen, was represented by Mr R.M. Friedlander MPC, Mrs Lucy Hall and the Town Clerk Mr Jan Luyt. Dr Oscar Wollheim, Chairman of SA Race Relations and former Warden of CAFDA and Mr Lewis Gay MP for Simon’s Town also appeared.

At the end of the hearing the next day Father Doran arranged for the Board to be shown the film Fisherfolk of Kalk Bay. Advocate Marais pointed out to the members of the Board that this film, made by Mr Tommy Carse in 1955 for the State Information Department, had had its premiere in Cape Town in 1956 before an audience including the Governor-General the late Dr Jansen, Cabinet Members and MPs. It had been translated into seven languages, won international awards at Cannes and Edinburgh, and had been seen by an estimated 80 million people.

The Board members were then taken on a tour of Kalk Bay and asked by Mr Gay: “can we simply move an entire community which the government itself has been at great pains to publicise as a proud self-contained community?”

Despite all the efforts of many prominent people and the fact that no one had come forward in favour of changing the pattern of residence in the area, a press announcement on 7 July 1967, accompanied by the Government Gazette publication, declared the area from Lakeside to Clovelly a “White Area.” Bona fide fishermen and their families were allowed to continue living in the Council flats for 15 years but those “Coloured people” who owned or rented property were warned that “evacuation notices would be served” and that they would have to move within a year of such notice. Coloured people were still allowed to use the harbour but all the beaches were reserved for Whites and Local Authorities were advised to erect the necessary notice boards in terms of the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953.

Letters poured into the newspapers. There were prayer meetings and deputations. The Black Sash and its supporters organised silent protests.

The newspapers published the comments of many of the fisherfolk after this announcement was made:

Mr Cecil Sasman: “I can’t believe it. I was born here and have lived here all my life. I won’t believe it until they move me out!” Mrs Granny Pepino, a member of one of the oldest fishing families in Kalk Bay: “Now where are we going? My grandfather was a fisherman here, my father was a fisherman, my husband was a fisherman, my children and their children are fishermen.” Mrs Connie Gomez, known as Auntie Connie: “To me it is a wicked thing!” Mr George Menigo: “They will have to come and carry me out of Kalk Bay!”

Many families were affected and irreparable harm was done. Many were forced to sell and move away, while others held fast even though the Group Areas Board reappeared several times over the next 20 years with ludicrous plans of how to divide Kalk Bay into racial areas. Each time the resistance from the local community was too strong. In 1982 Kalk Bay was eventually re-instated as a residential area for the “traditional fishing community” by the Minister of Community Development, Mr Kotze, in 1982. Kalk Bay was the last area to be classified by the Group Areas Act yet it was the first to have it withdrawn.

Monica Ritchken recalls how the fishermen put “money tins” on their boats. Within eight months they
had collected enough money to repay in full the costs she and her husband had incurred for legal fees during the early battle. They donated this money for the founding of the Toddlers Club in Kalk Bay in the fishermen’s flats.

These were truly brave women from the Black Sash who, in those frightening times, stood alone in “silent protest” against the unjust actions of the government.

The Kalk Bay artist Peggy North was one of the Black Sash ladies during this ordeal. Many years later she was involved in assisting the squatters at KTC, Nyanga and Crossroads whose shacks and possessions were burnt in 1984. She was one of those who helped to smuggle groups of women and children from the camps and bring them to the Toddlers’ Club for the weekends. There the local fishing folk clothed, fed and cared for them while two doctors attended to their needs. This was a wonderful spontaneous response from the fishing community to assist others in need.

Placards displayed by the silent protesters read: “Kalk Bay Group Areas—why? We mourn the loss of livelihood and homes; We mourn the loss of churches, mosque and schools; We mourn the loss of this old established community;” and one read “Group Areas shifts skilled citizens from Kalk Bay to Canada.”

More than 100 people stand in “silent protest” at the intersection of Clairvaux and Main Road in Kalk Bay. (The Argus)
Mr John Wiley was born in St James in 1927. He was educated at the Diocesan College, Rondebosch and obtained Law degrees from the University of Cape Town and from Oxford. He was a keen sportsman and played cricket for the University of Cape Town, the South African Universities’ side, Oxford and Western Province. He also played rugby and squash and took part in athletics. He was a keen angler and had a real understanding of the problems faced by the fishermen both professional and recreational.

From 1954 to 1956 he practised as an attorney in Cape Town. He then joined Syfret’s Estates for ten years until 1966. In this year he was elected, unopposed, to the Cape Provincial Council and represented the United Party for Simon’s Town. He was later elected as the Member of Parliament for Simon’s Town.

In the early 1970s he became the deputy leader of the United Party but resigned from this post in 1974. He was one of the six MPs expelled from the United Party’s parliamentary caucus for refusing to abide by the UP’s decision to back the Marais Committee proposal on the basis for the formation of a new party. For several months he remained as an Independent MP until the South African Party was formed in 1977 with him as leader of the party.

When the South African Party disbanded in 1980 he joined the National Party. He resigned his seat and fought a by-election in Simon’s Town which he won and returned as MP. He was appointed Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Fisheries. In 1984 he became the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. The 1984 Cabinet reshuffle left him as Minister of Environmental Affairs and Water.

Mr Wiley was well-known to all the fishermen of Kalk Bay and always had time to sit down and listen to people. He was always available to answer the many telephone calls made to him and, most important to the fishermen, was the fact that he knew their names and who they were. Like the earlier MP for Simon’s Town Mr Runciman, John Wiley was very involved in the fishing industry at Kalk Bay. He devoted much time and effort to the conservation of the resources in False Bay. He was responsible for the introduction of marine reserves and artificial reefs. He put a stop to the purse-seine netting and granted the fishermen of Kalk Bay a rock lobster quota.

He took a very strong and active stand against the declaration of Kalk Bay as a “White” area. He also championed for the continuation of the traditional line fishing industry at Kalk Bay. Many a fisherman and boat owner received personal advice and assistance from Mr Wiley when they encountered difficulties. His death in 1987 was a great loss to the Kalk Bay fishermen.

Mr Tommy Carse was born at Robertson in the Cape in 1913. He joined the Police Force in 1934 and was initially stationed at Wynberg. He married in 1938. In 1940 he came to man Kalk Bay's Police Station and lived in a very old stone house on the slopes of Kalk Bay mountain. He became a friend and confidante to many of the fisherfolk and helped coach their rugby team, the "Marines". He wrote many articles and gave radio talks about the Kalk Bay fishing community.

In 1951 the Kalk Bay Police Station was closed (due to lack of crime in the area) and was moved to Muizenberg. Tommy Carse became Chief Liaison Officer for the Department of Coloured Affairs and wrote the script and produced a documentary film called Fisherfolk of Kalk Bay which won awards.

A highlight in 1960 was the publication of his book, written about the fishing community, Die Bloudam is hul Oesland (The Blue Dam is their Harvest Land). As part of the celebrations for the release of this book, Kalk Bay's newest fishing vessel, Sharon Dawn, led a fleet of 12 other boats to take fishermen and their families to Seal Island. The £400 received in royalties for the book paid for the celebration.

He wrote a Memorandum on Kalk Bay for the government which influenced P.W. Botha's decision to allow Coloured fishermen to stay in Kalk Bay under the Group Areas Act. In 1973 his old stone house, "Kleinbegin was pulled down to make room for a tunnel road through the mountain to Fish Hoek. Tommy Carse moved to Hermanus and became the Deputy Mayor. In 1980 he moved back to Wynberg and in 1990, after his 77th birthday, he was guest speaker at the Ratepayers' meeting for Kalk Bay at the Holy Trinity Church Hall where more than 300 people gave him a standing ovation.

Large waves batter Kalk Bay harbour. Boats on centre moorings (from left to right) Sarabea, Speranza, Snow Goose, Blue Fin, Sea Queen. (G.Stibbe)
“Uncle” Jerry Fish, (G. Stibbe)
The property manager of Anglo American Corporation, Mr Douglas Hoffe, when describing the project to the press, stated that “The Cape Peninsula, and False Bay in particular, is potentially one of the world’s greatest recreation areas. Much of this potential is as yet unrealised. Natural attractions include rock and deep-sea fishing and excellent sailing on one of the world’s most beautiful bays.”

The project was welcomed by yachtsmen and sports fishermen. The commercial fishermen at Kalk Bay hoped that this would finally put an end to the regular threats of turning their small harbour into a tourist and recreational area.

At this time a Transvaal development company also announced its intention to acquire land along the False Bay coast between St James and Fish Hoek. This was for hotels to cater for the then expected rush of tourists coming to South Africa on jumbo jets. Announcements had been recently made about increased flights from Europe to Cape Town.

1970 - 1993

The Kalk Bay line fishermen came under considerable pressure from various groups who put forward several proposals for providing facilities for recreational fishermen and yachtsmen. These groups claimed that line fishing was non-viable.

- Financing was made available in the latter part of this period for “upgrading” Kalk Bay.
- The fishermen united and, for the first time became actively involved in decision-making regarding the harbour. A perfect example of such co-operation occurred after the violent storm in 1993 when the new concrete jetty was designed and built. This was after consultation with the boat owners.

The Marina da Gama project

Proposals for a R15 million scheme in the Muizenberg / Sandvlei area were made known in 1970 by the Anglo American Corporation and Creative Homes, a Cape Town property company, controlled by Ovenstones South West Investments Limited. This scheme was for a marina, with upmarket housing for 20 000 people and a harbour which was to be linked to the sea by a 180m wide breakwater channel. Initially the harbour was to have berthed 500 boats of up to 22m in length at floating moorings. This was later to have been expanded to accommodate 1 700 boats. There were to have been service points for fuel as well as boat service stations. A nine-hole golf course was also envisaged. There would be linkage to three railway stations and two freeways.

In the residential part of the marina, channels were dredged out in the vlei to give plots a waterfront. The vlei was envisaged to be connected to the ocean harbour by a lock. Islands as well as parklands with rolling lawns down to the water’s edge were to be created. The entire complex was designed so as to be sheltered from the south-easter.

A drawing of the Muizenberg marina in which the main features of the scheme have been highlighted.
Much of the pre-planning for the harbour had been done. The Council for Industrial Research (CSIR) at Stellenbosch came up with designs for the harbour based on overseas marinas. A detailed ecological study was also undertaken. The hydraulics unit of the CSIR had studied the shallow beach profile and littoral drift problems. They concluded that a breakwater at an estimated cost of R7,5 million was needed. Without government funds this part of the scheme was not viable and it was never constructed. The Marina da Gama project was very successful as far as the residential aspect was concerned.

**Request for closure of False Bay**

A deputation representing the various interest groups in False Bay went to see the then Minister of Economic Affairs and Environmental Planning and Energy, Mr Chris Heunis, during June 1978. This deputation requested that False Bay be closed to purse-seine trawling.

The Minister, in a press release on 14 February 1979 stated that the pelagic industry as a whole obtained approximately 7% of its total catches from False Bay. He went on to say that although this percentage seemed small, it was, in fact, “significant” to the industry. The industry was already suffering from a host of restrictive measures, he pointed out. He went on to state that if the industry should lose this small percentage provided by False Bay, “the effects could be disastrous” and have a tremendous impact upon the pelagic fishing industry as a whole.

A few days later, on 16 February it was announced in *Die Burger* by Mr Heunis (who was also an honorary president of the False Bay Conservation Society) that research was to be undertaken to investigate the impact that purse-seine trawling was having on the resources of False Bay.

During this same year it was proposed by the False Bay Conservation Society that the whole of False Bay be declared a “Marine Park, with the boundary being a straight line from Cape Point to Hangklip.” The case for Marine Parks, they said, was now “widely recognised, both nationally and internationally. This was based on reasoned scientific, recreational, aesthetic and economic arguments.”

**Bay closed**

The problems with the purse-seine trawlers continued throughout the 1970s to the early 1980s until Mr John Wiley took over as the Minister of Environmental Affairs. He finally closed False Bay to the purse-seine trawlers in 1983.

Artificial reefs were created by dumping old tyres on the sea-bed. Several old ships, including the South African Nautical Training vessel General Botha, the diamond research vessel Rockeater, some Naval ships and fishing trawlers were also sunk in the Bay to create artificial reefs for the fish. (The Argus)

The pilchard industry criticised Minister Wiley for the closure. They said that he had closed False Bay and Walker Bay without scientific reasons to back up his decision, to which Mr Wiley replied, “The reason why I closed False Bay and most of Walker Bay to purse-seiners was to prevent their nets breaking up the shoals of the larger predator fish which follow them and for which the bays, in previous years, had been world famous. If scientists cannot find reasons to justify the closing of these bays to purse-seine netters, then I am perfectly prepared to be judged by results. During the last three summers fish have returned to False Bay and Walker Bay in quantities reminiscent of the "good old days." This was my objective and so far as I am concerned, that objective has clearly been achieved.”

He went on to say that “ordinary South Africans are also entitled to enjoy our marine resources for recreation. That is why portions of our coastline have been closed (and more will follow) to those who line their pockets. Irreparable damage is done to those resources which should be available to all for recreational and commercial purposes.”
The Fish Market

Some 34 boat owners formed what was known as the Boat-Owners' Association in 1979. They leased the fish market with its refrigeration and storage facilities with the intention of operating it themselves.

Once again it was hoped that this arrangement would offer tangible benefits to the fishermen. By changing the market relationship with the fish hawkers it was hoped to end their control of prices paid to the boats for fish.

The upstairs section of the building was sub-let for use as a smokery. In 1981 there was an explosion in the smokery apparently due to a gas leak. In this tragic accident the proprietor was killed. The Kalk Bay Boat Owners Assoc. obtained a loan from the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) and purchased the building intending to operate both the fish market section and smokery themselves.

After a short unsuccessful attempt they leased the fish market to Axpar Investment Company (Pty) Ltd for a period of ten years. Before this lease was up, the Boat-Owners “bought out” the tenant and made another attempt to operate it themselves. The share-holding was increased and additional shareholders were invited from the fishermen and the local fishing community. The attempts to operate the fish market were once again unsuccessful. A joint venture with “experienced” businessmen with the necessary capital backing was entered into in 1993 and the Kalk Bay Waterfront Development Company was formed.

The fish market building is now a commercial business venture. It is a far cry from the original intention of providing a market for the fishermen’s catches and overcoming the control on prices dictated by the hawkers. The venture consists of shops, a fish shop and restaurant. The original Boat Owners group hold a 20% share in the company. (I.Moss)

Proposals for expanding Boyes Drive

For many years the ever increasing traffic in the South Peninsula had been receiving attention. It was impossible to expand the existing Main Road running parallel to the railway line and other options were being considered. Detailed work, by engineers, had been going on for many years on a design to expand Boyes Drive. The proposals were made public in 1985 and the three different schemes that had been considered were outlined:

1. “the Saddle scheme” involved taking the road over the saddle of Trappieskop;
2. “the Trappies scheme” would take the road around Trappieskop, and
3. “the tunnel scheme,” would involve a tunnel through the mountain above Kalk Bay and into the Fish Hoek Valley.

The first scheme, going over the saddle was ruled out because it is often covered in low south-east clouds making it potentially dangerous; cuttings in the mountain would leave unsightly scars; the route would go through the residential area of Clovelly and the golf course; and finally, it would not meet the minimum acceptable geometric standards specified by the Cape Provincial Road Department.

The second scheme was ruled out for several reasons among which were the unacceptable scarring of the mountainside by cuttings in the existing cliff face; problems with access for construction; working space; hazardous rockfalls and the steep gradient which would give heavy vehicles a crawling speed of less than 13 km/h.
The only viable solution was a tunnel through the mountain. This route offered superior geometries and would give a higher design speed and flatter gradient. There was an obvious amount of confidence on the part of the Council that this tunnel would go ahead as sample cores were taken from the mountainside. Even a few houses in the direct path of the proposed extension were demolished. These included the home of Tommy Carse, author of *Die Bloudam is hul Oesland*, who after many happy years in Kalk Bay was forced to move away and settle in Hermanus.

When the proposed extension of Boyes Drive was announced in 1985 it met with considerable opposition from residents and ratepayers. One aspect that did receive a fair amount of support was the suggestion that the spoil from the tunnel could be used to expand Kalk Bay harbour. Several different plans were drawn up in 1984 by Fiscor and these were met with enthusiasm by the yachting and pleasure boat fraternity. At last it seemed as if a plan was being put together which would enable the present facilities to be upgraded sufficiently to accommodate those who for many years had been putting pressure on the small line fishing industry based in the harbour.

Kalk Bay harbour’s development was dependent on the Boyes Drive expansion and this, unfortunately, ran into difficulties. At the end of the day costs had escalated so much during the public debates that, as it was “not a priority issue,” the scheme was “frozen for the time being” and the funds used elsewhere.

Glencairn lagoon was considered for a brief period; ideas to dredge and build a harbour there were discussed but, like all the other ideas before it, proved too complicated and expensive and never got beyond the drawing board.
Their representative, Mr Barrie Gasson, said, “We feel that there is room for a small yacht club, catering for about a dozen boats, and I have included provision for one in my own report. But the character of a working harbour must be preserved ... this is non-negotiable.”

The fishermen also pointed out that whenever a big storm hit the harbour they were hard-pressed to save their own boats from damage in the limited space in the harbour. They also pointed out that they could not afford to be covered by insurance and were concerned about having expensive luxury craft moored so close to their working boats.

Western Cape Conservation Society
This society was formed in 1988 to continue along the lines of the False Bay Conservation Society, which had fought against the purse-seining in the Bay. The promotion of “tourism and recreational angling” was one of their main objectives. Their argument was that these two were capable of generating a greater financial advantage to any area when compared to the commercial fishing activities and “do not make heavy demands on the resources.”

Mr John Wiley, as Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, had supported the conservationists and declared several areas around the shore of False Bay marine sanctuaries. He supported the sinking of several old trawlers to create artificial reefs.

The concept of creating a “Marine Park” in False Bay was revived by the Society and much of their effort was directed towards this idea.

The False Bay Forum
In 1991 the Western Cape Marine Conservation Society arranged a “False Bay Forum” and invited speakers from all the interest groups. The aim of the forum was to “serve the people who use the Bay by representing their interests and lobbying for management of the Bay as a sustainable resource and natural asset,” under one single management authority.

The Forum committed itself to:

- Contributing to the preparation and implementation of a False Bay Policy and Management Plan
- Conserving False Bay’s vitality and diversity
- Promoting the integration of conservation and development to mutual benefit
- Promoting an ethic of environmental care.
- Ensuring that all decisions affecting the Bay are based on public mandate.

The Minister of Environmental Affairs at the time, Mr Louis Pienaar, with whom the Society had previously had meetings and who “supported their ideas enthusiastically,” delivered the key note address at the Forum. The Minister stated that “the jewel called False Bay was one of the country’s priceless natural assets” and indicated his support for the preservation of the Bay.

National Sea Rescue
There have been many occasions when the NSRI have assisted the Kalk Bay fishermen, such as on the evening of 4 March 1984, when the 14 metre fishing boat, Ivy Doreen, with 12 crew on board, started dragging anchor in Fish Hoek Bay in a strong onshore wind. She was first noticed about a kilometre off Fish Hoek beach but started drifting closer to the shore. When she was about 50 metres off the beach, her crew fired several red flares.

Two Fish Hoek lifesavers, Clive Wakeford and Brian Sterman, launched their inflatable boat from the beach. She had only a small 25h.p. engine but “by keeping her head to the wind,” they prevented the Ivy Doreen from running aground on Fish Hoek beach.

The NSRI at Simon’s Town had by this stage been contacted by several Fish Hoek residents and their rescue boat Rescue 10 also arrived on the scene. A line was attached and she towed the Ivy Doreen back into Kalk Bay harbour.
Among the various user groups represented at the Forum were the South African Navy, the Kalk Bay line fishermen, the trek fishermen, underwater divers, yachtsmen, anglers and officials from the various municipal authorities.

In his address, the representative of the Cruising Association of South Africa pointed out that “Kalk Bay was the most under-utilised harbour in the country. The yachtsmen had ‘no desire to take over the harbour,’” they said. They had “empathy for the fishermen, but were looking for a marina to berth 40 yachts.” They stated that “there were five yacht clubs in False Bay which accounted for 160 yachts and a great deal of capital.”

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) was at that time undertaking a survey of the contribution recreational anglers make to the South African economy. The Western Cape Conservation Society was certain that this survey “will echo surveys in America, Australia and Europe where it has been highlighted that recreational angling generates more jobs and more money across a wide spectrum of the economy than the sum of all the commercial activities.”

The Forum was continued over the next year with smaller meetings but it came under the influence of specific interest groups and has, to date, made little impact on False Bay.

**Rock lobster quota for Kalk Bay**

Mr John Wiley, as Minister of Environmental Affairs and a close friend of the line fishermen of Kalk Bay, announced a “rock lobster quota for Kalk Bay fishermen” in 1986.

He told those attending the Christmas party of the Kalk Bay and District Ratepayers’ Association that “the Kalk Bay line fishermen are among the best in the world.” The reef fish resources were dwindling because of overfishing and he wanted “to help the fishermen supplement their declining income by catching rock lobster.”

The rock lobsters, it was announced, would be caught by the Kalk Bay fishermen in False Bay using ring nets. They would be landed at Kalk Bay to be sold on the local market.

The size of the quota was not given and the fishermen waited anxiously for the official figure. The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the industry for the 1986/1987 season was announced as 3 950 tons. Kalk Bay (Area 9) was given a separate 30 ton quota.

By April [of the following year] two of Kalk Bay’s larger boats, *Ang Jerry* and *Marion Dawn*, commenced catching the quota with assistance from a large Hout Bay boat. The rock lobsters were caught with traps. They were then trans-shipped at sea to a Lusitania boat which took the crayfish to their factory in Hout Bay for processing.

The catching was stopped for a while due to technical difficulties during which there was a real possibility that the quota could be “lost” through default and it was not clear as to who actually owned this quota.

After lengthy discussions to resolve this the boats were allowed to continue catching. By this stage only two months of the season remained. Yet before the season closed the full 30 tons had been caught with surprising ease.
A TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE

unfortunate set of circumstances, had not been notified of the meeting that had taken place. At this meeting a committee was elected. They made the decisions regarding the catching and processing of the quota in such a short time because the season was nearly over and time was limited. The new Minister of Environmental Affairs, Mr G.J. Kotze issued a press release to try to rectify the matter. He outlined the next two phases. Phase one was to have another meeting and select an “identification” committee to identify those fishermen who would benefit monetarily from the quota. For phase two a management committee would be elected to draw up a constitution as well as guidelines in managing and dealing with the quota.

Phase one took place during May. The “identification committee” consisted of ten members, with seven of those members elected by the crew and owners of the “A”-licensed boats, along with three members appointed by the Minister. The identification committee consisted of Mr Vincent Cloete as chairman (boat owner), Stephen Almacin (skipper), Dennis Fish (boat owner), Jerry Fish (boat owner), William Orgill (boat owner), Jacobus Poggenpoel (boat owner) and Richard Poggenpoel (boat owner.) The three appointed members were Desmond Ball (Fisheries Control Officer), Kenneth Kingma (boat owner) and Tommie Traut (Chief Directorate, Sea Fisheries).

They set up guidelines for identifying those who would share in the proceeds of the quota. Only Kalk Bay fishermen were eligible who fished on “A”-licensed boats and had been fishing actively for five continuous years. In addition these fishermen had to work for nine months each year in Kalk Bay. Retired fishermen up to the age of 65 and those who had retired for health or disability reasons would be considered eligible if they had fished for at least 15 years. It was decided that those who already held quotas for lobster would not be considered.

A notice was displayed in the harbour and the identification committee then proceeded to go through the 450 applications they received. Finally a list of some 300 names was sent to the Department for approval. Those who were not accepted as being eligible were given the opportunity to meet with the committee and appeal against the decision.

Once everyone had been identified and the names approved another meeting took place at which a management committee was elected. This was phase two. The management committee, chaired by the fishermen’s elected leader, Mr Vincent Cloete, set about preparing a constitution and guidelines for managing and dealing with the quota. Once approved by the Department, the fishermen received their first “payout.” The catch had realised R515,000, of which R150,000 was allocated to the catching and processing expenses.

For the second season several Kalk Bay boats tendered and took part in the catching of the quota. It was soon found that the larger vessels with winches and deck space for the traps were more suitable for the work and the small boats did not volunteer the following season.

For the first two years the financial side of the quota was handled by the Department of Sea Fisheries. The next year the Kalk Bay Rock Lobster Association took over the entire management themselves. They arranged insurance and disability cover for their members. Pensions were also provided for retired fishermen. The “A”-license boats also received a payout, similar to the individual beneficiaries. This was most welcome assistance towards the ever increasing maintenance costs of the boats.

The Association later applied to become part of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) as opposed to being restricted to catch the lobsters in False Bay only. Their request was turned down because their quota was considered a “special concession” given to them by Minister Wiley. This was to their advantage when the TAC was cut because the Kalk Bay crayfish quota remained at 30 tons.

Several years later when the TAC was cut, the separate Kalk Bay quota was reduced along with it. Kalk Bay then became part of the TAC. Although having become part of the TAC, they were still not entitled to catch their quota outside of False Bay.

Two Kalk Bay boats Ivy Doreen and Ang Jerry loaded with crayfish traps. (G.Stibbe)
The “Upgrading” of Kalk Bay
The Kaplan Kushlick Trust made a donation of R1 million in 1990 towards the “upgrading” of Kalk Bay. This donation was on the condition that:

1. the amount was matched separately by the Cape Town City Council and the private sector, and

2. the funds were to be used to the benefit of the wider community as well as the local community.

There was shocked reaction when the initial upgrading development framework was announced. Proposals were made for “upmarket” housing on the Point area above the harbour and for yachting facilities within the harbour.

An open letter from the Commodore of the Kalk Bay Yacht club was sent to residents in which the harbour and line fishing were described as “dying.” It claimed that “the fish resources of the Bay are already below the level of economic viability” and stated that “a cycle of decline has already set in with juvenile delinquency, drugs and alcoholism all on the increase.” The letter claimed that “no one had built a new line fishing boat of the kind Kalk Bay is famous for, for more than a decade” and that “line fishing no longer pays.”

They proposed that in addition to a yacht club the following be established in the harbour: “a boat charter business, a sail-maker, a mast and rigging maker, a marine engine repair and maintenance yard, a marine electronics and navigation centre, a submarine and diving centre, a ships’ chandler and a sail training school.” They stated that the “fishermen could be ‘re-trained’ for all these jobs.”

The fishermen immediately united and formed the “Kalk Bay Line Fishermen’s Association” with a membership of over 400. They voiced their objections to these proposals.

After much mud-slinging, in which the fishermen were accused of being “unreasonable,” the City Council arranged for “facilitators.” They conducted a series of workshops at which all the aspects were discussed. This was a lengthy process, skilfully guided by John and Sandra Fowkes. All those with an interest in Kalk Bay, its harbour and surrounds, participated and all the different ideas were heard and discussed.

At the end of the day many of the original ideas were amended or dropped and the most acceptable ones were adopted. From all these meetings and “steering committee” meetings, Kalk Bay began to benefit from genuine “upgrading” as originally intended.

Upmarket housing on the Point was a concern and was just not acceptable, owing to the fact that housing was limited in Kalk Bay and many had to live up the line, away from their boats and place of work and livelihood.

The danger of upmarket housing was that it would result in these wealthier non-fishing residents, living at the water’s edge, wanting their own craft. The only way that this could be accomplished would be by removing one of the line fishing boats to make a mooring available for these craft. “We see houses on the Point as yet another threat,” said spokesman for the fishermen, Mr Vincent Cloete, and his remarks were received with applause from the majority of the audience. “Yachts would threaten the continuing livelihood of the fishing boats.”

The proposals for yacht facilities in the harbour were again dropped because of the lack of space and strong opposition. It was resolved further that “a working
traditional commercial line-fishing harbour with associated facilities would be retained and protected.” The whole issue raised its head again in 1991 when the Minister of Environmental Affairs, Mr Pienaar, announced that the government was to give public recreation preference over commercial exploitation along the South African coast. This was enthusiastically welcomed by the Western Cape Conservation Society and members of the Kalk Bay Yacht Club. After five years of having been “forced to spend their money elsewhere,” the Yacht Club hoped to get their moorings in Kalk Bay harbour and be able to support local business and offer jobs to local families.

Responding to the repeated claims that the harbour was running at a loss, Mr Vincent Cloete said that “people claim that Kalk Bay harbour is not viable. Like any other government department it was never intended to be viable. Over 300 men are employed in the harbour and for the past 200 years the fishermen of Kalk Bay have provided cheap food for the poorer sections of the community, the people of the Cape Flats. Therein lie our credentials.”

Positive aspects stemming from the upgrading were that 24-hour access to the harbour was provided using booms and traffic lights at the railway crossing. This had been a problem for many years and always rejected as being impossible or too expensive to solve. A pleasant walkway was built on the periphery of the harbour area. The community living in the fishermen’s flats was successful in getting the right to purchase their flats. The residents were also provided with a community centre. The harbour square was given the go-ahead for improvement.

Some very important statements came from all the negotiations. Among these were: “Any re-development proposals must heighten, and not change, the existing character of Kalk Bay as a fishing village with a working harbour. Radical restructuring is not acceptable,” and “yachting facilities are not a priority.”

The steering committee for development proposals for Kalk Bay said at a meeting of the Ratepayers’ Association that it would “ensure that the fishing community would remain entrenched into the next century and hopefully in perpetuity.”

City planner, Mr Neville Riley, said that, “in Kalk Bay we find a way of life which exists nowhere else in Cape Town and is created largely by the fishing community.” Yet at the same time he spoke of the “need for urgency” in deciding development proposals because “escalating costs and inflation will progressively erode the value of donations.” He added that there had been “interest from big business, including the mining houses, in the development of Kalk Bay” and stated that “we must be sure that whatever happens we safeguard the character of the area.”

Mr Solomon of the City Council stressed “the importance of the upliftment of the community, and particularly the poorer sections,” saying “direct spin-offs for the locals was sought” and described the “protection of the fishing community as a critical factor for success.” At the same time he made it clear that “the City Council represents the wider community and any development has to meet the needs of the tourist to Kalk Bay.”

The Great Easter Storm
The very bad state of repair of the wooden jetty in the harbour was one of the concerns that the fishermen had strongly voiced during the upgrading workshops. The entire jetty swayed when the boats pulled on the bollards in heavy swells. The responsible authorities sent inspectors to examine the jetty. They decided that it could be repaired by adding some new timbers and supports. The wooden jetty was in the process of being repaired when, in April 1993, the Cape was hit by a violent storm.

At the time a number of large crayfish trawlers, belonging to Lusitania Fishing Company, were sheltering in the harbour. These trawlers had been left in the care of a nightwatchman.
When the big swells started to sweep over the breakwater, the Kalk Bay boat owners took the immediate action that they had learned over the years - to move their craft away from the outer wall towards the centre of the harbour.

The seas continued to get larger and throughout the night the rollers swept into the harbour but there was little room for the Kalk Bay boats to manoeuvre because of these large trawlers. The wooden jetty, despite the half-completed repairs, was no match for the trawler Harry. The trawler was lifted by the heavy seas and bashed down on to the wooden jetty. She took out a large section of the jetty, and crushed and sank another boat at the same time.

*The wreckage of the trawler, Harry. (The Argus)*

*The Gay Jane riding out the storm. (The Argus)*
For several days and nights the fishermen and boat-owners battled to save their boats from the elements and debris. From the broken-up trawler, *Harry*, and the wooden jetty, there was a mass of ropes, timbers, crayfish traps and debris floating in the water, all swirling around and around like the inside of a washing machine.

For fear of damage by all the flotsam, skippers could not use their boats’ engines. The huge wooded sections of the wooden jetty sped along like torpedoes, spinning round and round, and headed straight for the boats. They had to be pushed clear with boat hooks as the pieces came near the boats.

Moorings parted and boats went up against the concrete wall. Ropes were sent out to any and all secure places that could be found.

Divers from the South African Navy were sent to assist. They worked continuously in their rubber inflatable boat, taking ropes from one place to another, pulling out whatever pieces of wreckage and debris that they could and delivering hot coffee, food and dry clothes to those isolated on the boats. The harbour cafe stayed open each night to provide the hot coffee.

At the end of the three days three boats had been sunk and many were seriously damaged. Huge concrete blocks had been swept out of their positions on the breakwater. At the bottom of the harbour lay the container which stored all the equipment being used to repair the wooden jetty.

Many months after the storm the Lusitania Fishing Company paid out compensation to those who had suffered damage to their boats. For some it was a very serious hardship, being unable to go to sea to earn a living as well as having to find the money to do major structural repairs to their boats. They also had to wait for a turn on the slipway.

After the storm the Kalk Bay fishermen were criticised by the editor of the *South African Commercial Marine Magazine* for voicing their disapproval that these large trawlers had been left to shelter in the small harbour with only a single nightwatchman to look after them. Such boats would normally take shelter in Simon’s Bay when there were signs of bad weather and ensure that the Kalk Bay boats had room to take evasive action when huge seas started to pound the harbour.

The editor repeated the warnings that the fishermen are subjected to at regular intervals. He wrote about the high costs of maintaining the harbour, how little the boat owners paid towards these costs and how they were “heavily subsidised by the taxpayer” and he suggested that when the repairs were undertaken the “public funds be spent judiciously to rebuild the harbour to accommodate a whole range of new users and not merely once again accommodate the outmoded and oversubsidised users of the past.”

(Above) The Fetlar which sank in the harbour when the trawler, *Harry*, smashed through the wooden jetty. She had been built in 1935 in the Shetland Islands where she was used as a ferry boat. In the Second World War she took part in the evacuation of troops from the beaches at Dunkirk. The Fetlar is pictured here in the English Channel. (A. Thompson)

(Right) The owner of the Fetlar Mr Arthur Thompson, holds a section of the boat which is now on display in the popular tavern, the “Fireman’s Arms” in Cape Town: “In the relief of Dunkirk. Sunk by the Harry in Kalk Bay. RIP.” (I. Moss)
The new concrete jetty being built during 1994. This was one great benefit of the storm. The jetty was designed in consultation with the boat owners and replaced the original wooden one. When completed it was linked to the main harbour, giving better access and greater security to the boats. It also put an end to the years of struggling through the station subway with equipment. (The Argus)
CHAPTER EIGHT
Personalities

The Gomez Family

The first Gomez to arrive at Kalk Bay and join the fishing community was of Spanish origin. He, like many of the early settlers of Kalk Bay, jumped ship. He had two sons and a daughter. One of the sons, Victorino, married Elizabeth Sasman and they had 13 children.

These were Charlie, Basil, Manuel (Giffie), Vickey, David, Joseph, Alfred, Cecil, Louis and four sisters, Kathleen, Doreen, Georgina and Violet. They also adopted one son, Michael. All the men were involved in the fishing at Kalk Bay and today there are fourth generation Gomez’s still fishing.

Victorino told many of the early tales to Winnie, the wife of his son Basil, who came to nurse him when Elizabeth died. As a youngster he remembered Father Duignam and how they collected rocks in the mountains for building the church. He recalls that “when one of the children did not attend church Father Duignam would arrive in his horse cart with a whip and whip them.” He also told them that the people in those early days had no banks and gave money and personal papers to the priest for safekeeping.

Elizabeth was very active in the fight for better housing. She led delegations to the Council and wrote letters on behalf of the fishermen. She brought most of her children into the world on her own and became well-known as a midwife. People travelled from all around the Cape to fetch “Nurse Lizzie” when a baby was due and she is said to have helped in the delivery of at least 800 babies. For most of the time she received a “thank you” but on occasion people were able to give her five or ten shillings for her help. At times she had to wrap the newborn babies in her own petticoat because the mothers had nothing at all.

Victorino and Mr Peters sitting at the railway crossing.
(W. Gomez)

One of Victorino’s good friends was Mr Peters, the railwayman who looked after the gates at the crossing into the harbour. They would sit for hours at the crossing chatting and sometimes cleaning cane. Other great friends were Jimmy Edwards and Buhr, the big German boat-builder from Retreat.

Victorino’s small boat was called Lizzie. They lived in a small tin house belonging to Wolfson. When Wolfson first arrived in Kalk Bay, he had absolutely nothing. He collected old bones and bottles and tins and slept on old sacks. Elizabeth used to feed him. He eventually had a grocery shop where he also sold fishing tackle, groceries and oil. You could go there any time with a bottle to buy oil. When the flats were finally built, the Gomez’s moved into No. 2 Gordon Road and since that time there has always been a Gomez at that address. Mr Ladan was a great friend of the old man and built the pipe fencing around the front garden that still stands there today.

Nurse Lizzie with Thomas Sasman. The Sasmans are a family which can be traced through the history of Kalk Bay’s fishing community. Today, Thomas' grandsons Paul and Owen operate their boat Alma Lucie.
(W. Gomez)

The crew on the Lizzie hold up some large kob. Giffie (centre) lost most of his fish in the jaws of a shark
(Dr H. van Diggelen)
A TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE

Mr Vickey Gomez and his wife Hannah with some of the many trophies, certificates and medals won, against stiff competition from all over the Peninsula, in the various categories of the Horticultural Society’s annual competitions. He was known as the “Dahlia King” and said to have “green fingers.” The small patch of garden in front of the flats in Harbour Road was brimful of colour.

Basil remembers the cows on the mountainside where the flats are now. They belonged to Kallis. “He had about 20 cows, which we called the dairy. He employed a servant to look after the cows and sold milk for one penny, if you brought your own bottle; the servant’s nickname was “Buttons” and he was very fond of his dagga. When the local kids were sent up the mountain to get wood they would get some dagga for the servant who then sat and smoked himself silly while they drank as much milk as they could direct from the cows’ teats.”

Basil, Michael and Alfred all joined the Navy at the same time in 1941/42 and served on the large trawlers which were used as minesweepers. They patrolled up to Walvis Bay. Alfred was in the Boom defence where he did a lot of splicing work. Basil spent four years and 77 days in the Royal Navy and did not get a pension until recently when he joined the Ex-Servicemen. Now he gets a “Veterans pension” and one from the Royal Navy.

As young men they played rugby and their team was called Excelsior. They practised on the beach and the Point. Basil’s nickname was Antjie Bus (pronounced as in the Afrikaans) because he “just ran the other guys down.”

Charles, known to all as “Uncle Charlie,” had a small dinghy built for him by Frans de Villiers, it was powered by a 6hp outboard. There are numerous stories about his exploits with that dinghy. Some skippers will tell of their amazement when they arrived at Cape Point in the early hours to find Uncle Charlie already there at anchor off Rooikrans. One year when the snoek appeared off Hout Bay and the local boats were preparing to go around from Kalk Bay, Charlie’s wife went to talk to Louis Williams (known to all as “Duiwel”) and asked him not to tow Uncle Charlie to Hout Bay. When the time came for the boats to leave, a fair south-easter had started to blow and Duiwel said, “Sorry, Uncle Charlie, but I can’t take you round with me!” Uncle Charlie decided he would go on his own. The next day when all the Kalk Bay boats were off Hout Bay catching snoek they couldn’t believe their eyes when they saw Uncle Charlie in his little boat among them catching snoek too. There was apparently another man with him who had spent the whole time bailing buckets of water out of the boat and when they finally went alongside in the harbour he took his gear and fled, never to be seen at sea again!

Excelsior Rugby team. (W. Gomez)

Uncle Charlie and Connie. (W. Gomez)
When Uncle Charlie became ill, his son Peter helped with running the little boat Carol, always bearing in mind his father’s advice: “when the stars glitter at night, watch out for bad weather.” He recalls one day coming alongside when a man on the quay asked him “What’s that?” pointing to the anchor. “That’s my anchor,” replied Peter. “No, my lad,” said the man. “That's not an anchor. That is a wheel drum! Now just pull your boat over there and let me see what else you have on board.” He was the Surveyor from the Department of "Transport and made a thorough inspection of the lifejackets and other safety gear. Even though Peter explained that “when they fished on the reefs the anchors got stuck. This way we would only lose a wheel drum.” which, he added “we could easily replace with a stone in a bag.” The surveyor insisted that he get a proper anchor.

Giffie was skipper of the Triton, which had a petrol engine. One day, when the crew boarded the boat on the station side of the harbour where she was moored, they opened the cabin door and some one struck a match. The boat just burst into flames. Giffie and a couple of other men suffered serious burns and smoke inhalation and were rushed to hospital. The fire brigade arrived and ran their hoses down from the station over the railway lines to the boat. When someone pointed out that the next train would cut all the hoses they had to run them back again and this time tuck them under the railway lines. The Triton was eventually repaired and re-engined with a Kelvin power paraffin engine.

One year Peter Gomez was fishing with Bunny Pendlebury who was skipping one of Clarie Owen’s boats. They were at Cape Point catching snoek. Earlier they had a problem with the power paraffin engine and so they had rowed the last part to reach the other boats catching snoek. The boat Bobs-up had capsized recently and while Peter and Bunny were fishing a rudder drifted past them “Must be Bobs-up's rudder,” said Bunny. “Take a look at ours,” suggested Peter. They found theirs missing; it had just drifted past! To get home they had to make use of a steering oar, which all the boats in those days carried. The southeaster had started by the time they reached the harbour and they had to make a very wide turn that took them past Dalebrook pool in order to get into the harbour. “But we made it okay” says Peter.

During the bad storm in 1978 several boats were lost in the harbour. Bunny lost his boat Tunny.

Like his brother Charlie, Giffie spent the bad weather days cutting and cleaning the cane used for bunching the fish. Once measured out and cut, the cane is split into strips and then cleaned with a potscraper or sharp knife. Cane, or rottang, as it is called, if not properly prepared can cause a nasty cut to the fingers when bunching the fish. The strips are packed into bundles of 50 and sold to the fishermen directly or to the shops. Giffie was the first man to use nylon gut line and to use coloured snoek leads. He is known for going to sea barefoot and tying several lines to his toes. Even though his lines always appeared to be in a tangle, he caught more fish than anyone else.
committee. He was later the Secretary of the then newly-established Kalk Bay Fishermen’s Union.

He fulfilled a leadership role amongst the Kalk Bay fishermen and was very active in the fight for better housing for the fishermen. He wrote letters to the Cape Town City Council and the Lord Mayor of Cape Town on the fishermen’s behalf, and received delegations from the City Council to inspect the land in Kalk Bay on which it was proposed to build houses. He was also the verger of Holy Trinity Church for many years. When he was 52 years old, while fishing for snoek in Table Bay on board one of Pedro Fernandez’s boats, the *Columbia*, a tremendous storm suddenly came up and the boat capsized near Robben Island and he and eight others were tragically drowned.

George, one of John Nicholas’s sons, also took up fishing and worked aboard the *Dorothy Mary* and the *Gwendoline KB24* and was the driver of both boats. Like his father, he also fulfilled a leadership role amongst the Kalk Bay fishermen and was a very community-minded person. He was the treasurer of the Kalk Bay Fishermen’s Union during the 1940s.

George and his family were the first to move into the council flats when they were completed and they lived at number 4 Gordon Road. Many fishermen used to come to the Menigo home where there would be sing-alongs with some fishermen playing various instruments; Philip Delcarme played the guitar, Mattie Sirmonpong the flute, Willie Peters the violin and John Sasman the mandolin.

**The Menigo Family**

The first Menigo to arrive at Kalk Bay and join the fishing community was Nicholas Menigo. He married Antonietta, who was a nurse by occupation, and he had a daughter Sybles and two sons, John Nicholas and Andrew.

His eldest son, John Nicholas, was born in Kalk Bay in 1870 and followed in his father’s footsteps to take up fishing. He married and had eleven children, Annette, Ethel Victorine, John Nicholas (named after himself), Sarah, Daniel, Annie, George, Nicholas (who was named after his grandfather Nicholas), Elizabeth, Grace and Mildred.

John Nicholas was amongst the fishermen consulted in 1902 in connection with the building of a harbour at Kalk Bay and was elected to the harbour advisory

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*Hull of the Daphne being lifted out of the water after the 1978 storm. (The Argus)*

*Minnie Eckles (wife of the Derby skipper Francis Eckles), Mrs Keatings, Victor Gomez (back left), Tom Fredericks, Tilly Boltman, Neil Menigo, George Menigo (centre front) at a birthday party. (Menigo)*
George’s daughter remembers when he used to sit on the balcony and cut cane for bunching the fish. “He put the bamboo in water to make it soft and more pliable, then, with a penknife cut and peeled thin lengths. These strips were placed in bundles of fifty selling for 1/6 and used to bunch the fish. The art of bunching the various types of fish was handed down from generation to generation: smaller fish in the middle with the larger sizes on the outside. Some species were six on a bunch, others anything from three to two, depending on the size and type.” Today this practice continues and can still be observed as the fish are landed on the quay at Kalk Bay.

He used to make lures for catching snoek, known as “dollies,” from shark skin. The skin was stretched out over a board and left to dry in the sun. When dried it was cut into pieces of equal size and strips were cut to a specific length (almost like tassles). This was then rolled up and secured with thin wire. Dollies made from sharkskin have now been replaced by different colour rubber and other artificial lures.

George’s daughter used to make finger “lappies” for her father. These were to protect the fishermen’s fingers from being cut by the fishing lines. She would buy felt, roll it up several times and then stitch it, and if her father had a good catch the next day, she would get half a crown pocket money.

On one particular occasion George stood with the langganner, as is the custom, watching the fish being counted and loaded onto the van. When this was finished he turned round, slipped and with a loud splash fell into the harbour. This would have been quite funny had he not had the crew’s earnings for the day in his hand. However, much to the relief of the crew, a hand emerged above the surface of the water clutching their hard-earned cash!

The Fernandez Family
This was one of the founding families of Kalk Bay’s fishing community. Staggie Fernandez is said to have come from Manila in the Phillipines and jumped ship at Simon’s Town. He settled in Kalk Bay and his son Pedro owned several boats. His children were all involved in the fishing industry. As a family, they made many fishing trips to Luderitz and Walvis Bay to catch crayfish and snoek. Three of the sons were lost when the Columbia sank in 1922 and Pedro named another boat The Three Brothers in their memory. Later this boat was also lost off Seal Island. The daughters were kept busy making the oilskin clothes and fixing crayfish traps and in 1933, when Pedro died at the age of 73, Sophia continued to manage the guano business.

Cyril Fernandez started hand line fishing in Kalk Bay. He then went on to catch snoek in St Helena Bay and in Walvis Bay. There he became involved in the pilchard industry where, by 1951, he was considered one of the most successful, progressive and skilful skippers on the West coast.
Cyril had three boats built by Misplon & Co. One was the 20m *Orahanjaand* powered by a 135hp Caterpillar engine. With this boat he caught 1330 tons of pilchards in one month, for Walvis Bay Canning Company. In one day on December 4th, 1950 he landed 117 tons. His other boats *Fernand 1* and *Fernand 11* had 80 hp Caterpillar engines.

Local boat builder Bill Fraser who built the Checkers. His room was also his workshop and filled with engine parts, wood and tools. His glasses became so dirty while he worked that people asked how he could see anything. (Cape Archives)

The Fernandez’ were one of the most successful fishing families and lived in a large house overlooking the harbour named “Fernand Ville.” (I. Moss)

De la Cruz
One of the very early Filipino people to settle in Kalk Bay were the De la Cruz family.

Devosheo, born 1917, still keeps busy by making lead sinkers for the fishermen. Using a cast iron mould and melting lead on a primus, the leads are cast and cooled down in water. Holes are then punched through them and a cord strop threaded through.

Devosheo de la Cruz. (I. Moss)
In 1931 two of Kalk Bay’s boats, the Diamond Checkers and the Derby were fishing at Cape Hangklip when the weather turned bad and visibility was reduced by fog. The Checkers being a bigger and decked boat went to anchor near the old whaling station and the Derby was seen to sail for Hermanus. She was a small open boat with both sail and engine and was considered to be quite fast. That was the last seen of her and her crew. The crew consisted of the skipper Frans Eckles, two of his brothers, Leonard Sasman and Richard Devosheo de la Cruz (Devosheo’s father).

During the Second World War Devosheo served in the Royal Navy as an able seaman on minesweepers patrolling the coast from Cape Point to Saldanha Bay. He was awarded six medals for distinguished service.

In 1983 he was aboard the Gwendoline when it went to the aid of a Cape Town boat Lochinvar. The Lochinvar was on her way to Kalk Bay and had sprung a serious leak off Cape Point. The Gwendoline took off all the crew and another Kalk Bay boat Taj Mahal took the Lochinvar in tow but she sank when they reached the vicinity of Paulsberg near Smitswinkel Bay.

The Erispe Family
Another Filipino family to come to Kalk Bay were the Erispes. Archie Erispe, born 1916, started fishing at the age of 14 on one of Frans Eckles’ boats, the Crescent. His father, Andrew Erispe, also worked on this boat. Other boats which Archie worked on were the Mary Jane, the Gwendoline, and one of the Fernandez’s boats, the Sophia. His mother used to make oilskins for the fishermen from coarse cotton material using a hand-operated Singer sewing machine. When the clothing was completed and stitched together it was soaked in linseed oil to make it waterproof. The linseed oil was first boiled to remove its stickiness. The clothes were then put on a machine to press it flat and then stitched together. The finished clothing was then lined with waterproof material using a hand-operated Singer sewing machine. When completed the boat was taken by trailer to Cape Town where it was boiled and washed before being delivered to Bebbies and his friends.

Archie’s wife, Dorothy, was a champion swimmer, holding the Kalk Bay Swimming Club record for the 100 yards. She trained herself and practised in the sea. She was a Western Province boxing champion and in between fishing, Archie accompanied her to the boxing tournaments. Archie’s cousin, Bevil, played for the Excelsior Rugby Club. He was also a champion swimmer and boxer, winning many cups, medals and certificates.

A club was formed many years ago known as the Filipino Descendants Club which was established by the descendants of those who came to Kalk Bay from the Phillipine Islands. Archie’s uncle, Johnny Erispe, was its President.

The Cosyn Family
One of the very early Malay families from Java were the Cosyns. Mohammed Cosyn owned and skippered several open sailing boats. The Saafie, his first boat, was named after his eldest daughter. Then came True Blue and White Rose. His last boat, Primrose, was built by the well known boatbuilder Mr Misplon in a shed on Woodstock beach before the present docks were built. On completion the Primrose was sailed round from Cape Town to Kalk Bay. When construction of the breakwater began in 1913, he was the first boat-owner to convert his sail boat Saafie to motor-power by fitting a three horsepower Kelvin engine. On calm days he would tow a couple of the other boats from Cape Point back to Kalk Bay.

Mohammed had many children: Ishmael, Ishaak, Saafie, Gamien, Ideries, Gamiet, Zayna, Toya, Achmat, Janodien (Bebbies), Baya, Abdia, Latiefia, Hunain, Deeja, Moain and Malik.

Mohammed, together with his friends built the Cosyn family house in Quarterdeck Road from stone gathered on the mountainside. They had a large old-fashioned wood and coal stove. The children were sent up the mountain to collect and chop wood. Occasionally they picked up coal next to the railway line which had fallen from the steam trains.

When Bebbies (Janodien Cosyn) started his fishing career on the Primrose, landmarks were still much-used to pin-point the various fishing banks. These landmarks were hills and mountains, known by various names such as Bangrop (Constantiaberg), Klein Batsambreel and Groot Batsambreel (the two mountains on either side of Constantiaberg), others were Eenkop, Eenkop se Merrick and Katoerkop.

Bebbies remembers the cold store company at the harbour and their trawler Phanella. He also recalls the early harbour masters; Mr Davies, Carter, Lancaster and Liggett, many of whom were Master Mariners and wore their full captains uniform with cap.

When Bebbies had his boat built he named it the White Rose after his father’s boat of the same name. She was built in Bellville by the boat-builder Mr Schneider. When completed the boat was taken by trailer to Cape
Bebbies recalls one occasion when they were fishing at Wolfgat and catching Cape Salmon. “The weather conditions were perfect but late in the afternoon a thick mist set in. We were unable to see the harbour and it was only when we picked up the smell of the seals at Seal Island that we could ascertain the direction of Kalk Bay. In those days we did not have fish finders or radar.”

Bebbies played rugby for the Kalk Bay Marines and was a front ranker. They were coached by the Springbok player Dougie Hopwood assisted by Mr Tommy Carse. The team practised once a week at a ground on Red Hill above Simon’s Town as well as on the harbour beach at Kalk Bay.

Bebbies was very good friends with Mr Cooper of Kalk Bay who was the state auditor and board member of Standard Bank and often took him and his son out to sea. Today Ishmael, the fourth generation Cosyn, has a small boat with an outboard motor in Kalk Bay, called the Gosling, named after the Snow Goose which was once Mr Cooper’s boat.

Jimmy Edwards

Following in his father John’s footsteps, Jimmy Edwards born 1896 took to the sea. He owned the well known boats Lucky Star, Morning Star and Star of the Sea. His boats were very popular among weekend ‘trippers’ whom he charged 10 bob for the day’s outing. The Star of the Sea, his third and biggest boat, was built by Schneider & Son in Bellville and was launched in Table Bay harbour in 1955. Father Doran from St James Catholic Church “blessed” her on the launching.
For his bravery in trying to assist the naval trainees caught by freak waves outside the harbour in 1967 he was awarded a certificate from the South African Red Cross Society.

On another occasion Jimmy Edwards was involved along with the Simon’s Town boat Challenger in the rescue of the Jasmina. The alarm was raised when Awam Fortune, one of Jasmina’s eleven crew, made a daring swim against the currents to reach the rocks below the lighthouse. Here he informed the lighthouse keepers of the vessel’s engine breakdown and that they were dragging anchor towards the rocks.

The lighthouse keepers radioed Simon’s Town and the high speed crashboat Zest belonging to Roy Rumble was immediately dispatched. On her arrival it was found that the Jasmina was already too close inshore and the Star of the Sea and the Challenger were called. Ropes were successfully passed to the distressed vessel which was then towed to Kalk Bay harbour.
Mr Buhr a German boat-builder who built many of the open boats for the fishermen in those days. There was just him and his wife and they put the boats on a trailer to transport to Kalk Bay. A boat would cost 280 pounds. Fishermen recall that his wife helped him saw the long planks and as she was fond of wine he would place a bottle at the end of the timber and when she had sawn to the end she could have the bottle. He built both Morning Star and Lucky Star for Jimmy Edwards in Retreat. Before the Lucky Star was completed Mr Buhr was knocked down and killed by a car on the Main Road outside his home.

(De H. van Diggelen)

The Fish Family

The Fish family is descended from one of the early settlers in Kalk Bay. Grandfather Fish came from Windsor in England, just outside of London. He built a house on the main road which he named “Windsor House,” from which Windsor Road derived its name.

His son (Jerry’s father) had a new boat built in 1922 called Nobis Sperandum (Don’t Worry). It was built in Philippi by a Danish boat-builder by the name of Tiely. He took the boat up to Luderitz by rail to catch crayfish. On his return to Kalk Bay he started to take his friends from the Salt River Railway workshop on weekend fishing trips, for which they contributed five shillings towards the fuel costs. He is credited with having started what is termed today the “tripper business.”

When Glen Charles (Jerry) Fish was 17 years old the boat was given to him. He later renamed the boat Violet Glen, after his mother and himself. When he first started fishing many boats still used sail power and the factory at Kalk Bay bought the fish. “Bait could be caught by leaning over the side and scooping a basket of pilchards out of the water.”

Star of the Sea undergoing trials after her construction in Table Bay. (Edwards)
The Fish family have always been among the most popular skippers, like the late John Fish with his boat *Gay Adventurer*, and Uncle Jerry’s nephew, Dennis Fish with his boat *Suiderster*.

Richard was well known as captain of the local rugby team, the Marines, and for his talent in kicking the ball.

The Poggenpoel brothers, along with their cousins Vickey and Tommy Newman acquired their first boat, the *Anna Amelia*, built in 1946, by means of a loan from Fiscor.

During the 1950s they were asked by the owner of a fishing company in Cape Town docks, the late Roy Shapero, to help catch his entitlement, as quotas were called in those days, of rock lobsters. There was a lot of fish at this time and catching crayfish was not as profitable. There was, in fact, little interest in the crayfishing industry, but they decided to “take a gamble” and catch at 8 shillings per 100 crayfish plus the additional promise of their own entitlement if they caught the entitlement for three seasons. “Unless you already had a “K” licence it was impossible to get into the crayfishing industry even at that time,” said Kobie. The gamble paid off and today they have their “own” quota. They also have a “M” licence allowing them to net pilchards.

Once they had paid off their loan they had another boat built, the 40-ft *Marion Dawn* (named after Kobie’s daughter), which was built in 1962 by Louw & Halvorsen. They later bought the *Star of the Sea* from Jimmy Edwards, after she had sunk at her moorings in the 1974 storm. They spent a great deal of money re-building the boat and today have a fleet of three of Kalk Bay’s larger and well maintained boats. Today there are fourth generation Poggenpoels carrying on the tradition; Richard’s son Sedick and Kobie’s son Jacobus.

**The Fish family**

The Fish family have always been among the most popular skippers, like the late John Fish with his boat *Gay Adventurer*, and Uncle Jerry’s nephew, Dennis Fish with his boat *Suiderster*.

(Above) Jerry Fish and skipper ‘Wagie’ Gameldien have a chat on the deck of Jerry’s other boat which he named after his daughter Geraldine. *(The Argus)*

**The Poggenpoel Family**

Dirk Poggenpoel came to Kalk Bay in about 1850 and soon had two sail and oar fishing boats. He employed several people to hawk the catches from fish carts he owned. During the whaling season he skippered the *Springbok* for the Aurets. The house he built above the Mosque still stands today. When he could no longer fish on account of his age he sold up and went to live in Diep River. His son, also named Dirk, continued with the tradition. In 1928 Dirk senior lost a son when the *Columbia* sank in Table Bay.

Dirk junior fished until he was 83 years of age. His sons, Kobie, Richard, Leonard, Dick and Abe grew up in the house their grandfather had built and, like their father, attended the local school, called the “klip skool.”

They carried on the family tradition and became fishermen, working on Louis Williams’ boat when he started netting pilchards for the new Atlantic Fishing Factory in Philippi.

**The Anna Amelia, the Poggenpoel brothers’ first boat.** *(G.Stibbe)*
Vincent Cloete's family can be traced back through three generations of Kalk Bay fishermen. His grandfather had a boat called *Mary Jane*, popularly known as *Water Baby*. He married into another family with a long line of involvement in the local industry, the Clarence family.

George Clarence, Vincent’s grandfather lost his life in the *Hamilton* disaster in 1922 which left his grandmother to raise a large family, one of whom was his mother then aged 12.

Vincent was born in the same cottage as his father, in Windsor Road behind the New Kings. The cottage still stands today. Areas of Kalk Bay had different names in those days. The fishermen’s flats are in the area once known as “Die land,” the area near the New Kings was “Die middelgrond” and where the Mosque stands was “Die Dam.”

Along with the other children of Kalk Bay Vincent attended the “Klipskool” where two teachers, one of whom was the principal, taught them in a room with a curtain dividing the classes.

After school the children went up the mountain to chop firewood for the stoves. If the weather was pleasant they would go and play on the beach. When their fathers returned from fishing and were having an afternoon nap, the children were not allowed to play near the houses.

An expression recalled by him reveals the poverty among some of the households, “Ag jy het opgemaak in ’n huis waar die furniture van blikkies gemaak is.” This referred to the crates in which four drums of fuel were supplied. The crates were converted into kitchen cupboards with a pole and curtain across the front.

His mother told him that many of the cottages belonged to a family who thought they were very “posh.” When the fishermen sent their children to buy milk they were made to drop their tickey or sixpence into a bucket of boiling water to sterilize it before the lady of the house would accept it.

The Kalk Bay fishermen worked with hand lines throughout the year unlike other communities on the West coast where there were spells of catching crayfish or trawling. The Kalk Bay fishermen became well known for their skills.

Like many of his generation, Vincent worked for several seasons on the West coast, catching crayfish in Luderitz for ten shillings per hundred pound weight and catching snoek in Walvis Bay. The snoek had to be flecked, salted and packed in the hold and then packed into railway trucks on their arrival in port. All this for sixpence a snoek!

Vincent Cloete on his boat *Sunshine*. For many years he has been the leader and spokesman for the local fishing community, a member of the Ratepayers’ Association, chairman of the Rock lobster and Line Fishing Association and was a founder member of the False Bay Conservation Society. (I.Moss)
He also spent time on the pilchard trawlers and saved sufficient to return to Kalk Bay, build his own home and acquire his own boats. One boat he named after his daughter Colleen. His other boat was named Sunshine because the Portuguese fishermen who delivered her to Kalk Bay had to sail along a coast they did not know and each night they anchored in a bay. They only set off again once the sun was shining. This suited Vincent because his other daughter’s name is Gail.

When the weather was bad the fishermen walked back to Kalk Bay where they waited a few days until conditions improved. It was the same when they were near Cape Point and bad weather set in. They beached their boats at Buffels Bay and camped, or if the bad weather was expected to last a few days, they would walk back to Kalk Bay.

**Joseph Williams**

In July 1997 Joseph Williams retired after 35 years service with the Department of Sea Fisheries. For 33 of those years he was stationed at Kalk Bay. In the earlier days of his career he worked night shift and was on duty in the small office at the entrance to the outer jetty where people paid to fish off the wall.

He has seen the nights when certain boatowners trawled the white stumpnose in the harbour and he was one of the first people on the scene when the naval cutter capsized outside the harbour in 1965.

When the explosion took place in the fish market in the early 1980s, Joseph who was standing nearby first thought it was the Navy gun practice but looked up to see the roof of the fish market bowed up and a dark black cloud of smoke above it.

Although he has seen a lot of fish landed at Kalk Bay over the years, Joseph has never had the desire to go to sea on the boats, preferring to keep his feet on solid ground. The quiet confident manner in which he put the fishing boats on the slip gained him the respect of all the boat owners.

The skipper and owner of *Glory May*, **Eegie Orgill**, is said to be the first to take his boat around to Hout Bay for the snoek season. In earlier years the boats were put on railway trucks for transport to Cape Town docks or they were taken by wagon to Hout Bay.

**Mrs Lyness** was the wife of the assistant harbour master and owner / skipper of *Lucille Way*. She went to sea every day and was as good at catching fish as any of the crew. Some fishermen say she lost a finger when a seal took off with a snoek on her line at Cape Point. The nylon apparently tangled in her hands and wrapped around one of her fingers.

When she took her boat to fish from Table Bay for the snoek, she asked her crew to lock her in the engine room at night when they went home. She was afraid of all the “drifters” in the docks. She also took the *Lucille Way* to Lamberts Bay to catch crayfish.
Sulayman Achmat

*Sea Foam* was one of the fishing boats working from Simon’s Town in the 1940s. One fateful day while fishing for sharks at Cape Point a rough sea and fog set in. The *Sea Foam*, with eight crew aboard, was hit by a large wave and rolled over. Achmat Achmat managed to free himself from the heavy fishing lines, pull off his sea boots and surface only to find three other crew members struggling in the water. He hung onto the upturned hull for as long as possible but the strong waves eventually washed him off and he swam for the shore. When some fishermen on the shore saw him crawl across the rocks all bruised and cut, the alarm was raised and a Royal Navy tug from Simon’s Town and fishing boats from Kalk Bay went to the rescue. Unfortunately there were no other survivors. The bodies of six of the missing seven men were washed up later. Hundreds of people attended the funeral at the Dido Valley Cemetery where five were laid to rest in the Moslem section, one in the Dutch Reformed and one in the Roman Catholic section. A special relief fund was instituted to provide aid for the families.

Sulayman Achmat spent much of his childhood playing near the Military camps at Simon’s Town and acquired the nickname “Boera.” His family were involved in the fishing industry and it was his uncle who survived the *Sea Foam* disaster. At a very young age he helped with the trekking at Jaffa’s Beach and later went onto the line fishing boats at Simon’s Town and then graduated to the trawling boats at Walvis Bay.

In between the trawling seasons he caught crayfish with a dinghy at Witsands and, when the weather was too bad on the Atlantic side, moved to Mackerel Bay where he trekked with his own boat and net. With the reclaiming of land for the expansion of the Naval dockyard Jaffa’s trekking operation was moved to Mackerel Bay. There were two beaches on which a Mr Lawrence trekked and one of these was allocated to Jaffa. Sulayman did not have his own permit to trek but Mr Lawrence’s crew all worked in the dockyard and this meant he could only trek on the weekends, holidays or at night. If Mr Lawrence’s crew were not available and there was a shoal of fish in the area then Sulayman would trek with his own boat.

During the 1970s the Coloured Development Corporation assisted many fishermen in acquiring their own dinghies, nets and engines. Several operators got themselves into financial difficulties and Sulayman took over their enterprises and paid off their debts. Starting with two dinghies, ST44 and ST49 he eventually accumulated 10 dinghies. In those days a “K” licence was needed for each boat and there was a system of “catch as you can,” until the quota was full. Those who were quicker and caught more, earned more. In buying up other concerns he also acquired shares in the Drommedaris Company, for whom the quota was caught. These quotas, or “entitlements” as they were referred to, were sold for R20 per kilo, which in those days was a great deal of money. With fourteen “K” licences, he bought the *Ang Jerry* in Kalk Bay and along with catching his own crayfish, assisted others in catching their allotments. In the 1980’s the quota system was introduced and, based on previous performance, Sulayman was allocated 13 tons of crayfish. Over the years with the reduction in the TAC his quota has been reduced to 6.2 tons (1998)

He entered into a partnership with a lifelong friend, M E (Kapietie) Manuel, and they bought the *Ivy Doreen*, another of Kalk Bay’s larger boats. In recent times he has decided the future lies in larger boats with freezing capacity which are capable of “poling for tuna, long lining and seine netting.” He has recently invested R2m in his new boat *Zay Yaan*, named after his daughter. He has the trekking rights for Mackerel Bay, his own crayfish quota and a 483ton pilchard quota which he intends catching with the new boat for a Gansbaai factory.

Sulayman Achmat known to all as “Boera,” standing in front of his latest vessel *Zay Yaan*. (G.Sibbe)

Theresa, fisherman Basil Laguma’s wife, at work making snoek dollies. During a snoek run she makes up to 500 lures a day. (I. Moss)
The Harbour Master

Pat Stacey took over as harbour master in Kalk Bay when the “upgrading plans” were in progress and the climate had changed to one in which all interested parties were consulted before major decisions were made. This put the role of harbour master in a “hot seat.”

His first real test was after the destruction of the wooden jetty in the April 1993 storm. He had to mediate between the boat owners, fishermen, local community and business groups to get acceptable plans for a replacement jetty accepted by all.

He is possibly the only harbour master to don a wetsuit and inspect the moorings in the harbour and has managed to rearrange the positions of vessels so that the larger ones are on the outer wall and the smaller ones inside the new jetty. There have been other notable changes from the cleaning and selling of fish, the provision of adequate lighting at night, the use of parking facilities to the problem of crime and vagrants. Regular scubadive “clean up” operations to remove all the rubbish from the harbour floor take place. The University of Cape Town now hold their annual rag regatta, “anything that floats” in the harbour and many film teams use the facilities as a backdrop for their movies.

During the initial meetings about upgrading Kalk Bay it became evident that, despite all the claims that the harbour was running at a loss, the exact figures were not available as all fishing harbours were pooled together. According to his many statements to the press, it is one of Mr Stacey’s major concerns that the harbour generates sufficient income to meet the running and maintenance costs. 70% of the income generated in the harbour is from the slipway and, according to the harbour master, “harbour tariffs should be increased seven fold to meet the costs.” The boatowners are already hard pressed to meet the present costs of running and maintaining a boat and certainly not in a position to withstand massive tariff increases. Little can be done to improve the income from the entrance, parking or tourism because of the limitations of road access. The slipway facilities, however, are in high demand and there may be opportunities to further development such a service. There could be some form of tariff on the more valuable catches that are landed in the harbour such as rocklobsters,white fish and pilchards. A contribution from all the ski boats that use the facilities to off-load and sell their fish, would also help cover the harbour expenses.

Pat Stacey’s official title is Principal Marine Conservation Officer. That makes him responsible for enforcing the legislation regarding the marine resources; apprehending crayfish and perlemoen poachers, keeping a check on the sizes of fish landed, the licensing and manning of the boats and keeping an eye on pollution. In recognition of his efforts he was presented a merit award by the Muizenberg Rotary Club in 1996.

With the possibility of permits being issued to boat owners to take tourists out “whale watching,” Mr Stacey has requested a small boat to be stationed at the harbour so that he “can keep an eye on licensed operators.” Over the years there have been several “patrol” craft stationed at Kalk Bay. Most times they ended up with engine breakdowns or other such difficulties and were withdrawn from the harbour.
The SA Police Waterwing moved to Kalk Bay harbour in 1993. Their primary function was stated as “to maintain law and order and prevent crime within the territorial waters of South Africa and to improve community involvement regarding their own safety.” Very recently they have closed down their station at Kalk Bay and moved back to Simon’s Town.

A prayer of Scottish fishermen is used as follows:

Skipper: Be the ship blest
Crew: By God the Father blest.
Skipper: Be the ship blest.
Crew: And by God the Son blest.
Skipper: Be the ship blest.
Crew: By God the Spirit blest.
Skipper: What can fear with God the Father near?
Crew: Naught can afear
Skipper: What can afear and God the Son is near?
Crew: Naught can afear
Skipper: What can afear, And God the Spirit is near
Crew: Naught can afear.
Skipper: What care is bred, Being of all o’erhead?
Crew: No care is bred.
Skipper: What care is bred, The King of all o’erhead?
Crew: No care is bred
Skipper: What care is bred, Spirit of all o’erhead?
Crew: No care is bred.
All: Being of all,
the King of all,
the Spirit of all,
Over our head.
Eternal fall.
Near to us sure
For evermore.

The Annual “Blessing” of the Fleet
This takes place annually at Kalk Bay harbour and is usually held on the Sunday after St Andrew’s Day 30th November. St Andrew is the patron saint of fishermen. The service is conducted jointly by the priests of the St James Roman Catholic and Holy Trinity Anglican Churches and has been held regularly since 1977. A “blessing” is pronounced upon the Kalk Bay fishing boats for the coming year, for the safety of the boats and crew, and that God may be bounteous to them by granting good catches of fish.

The service consists of an opening prayer, thanksgiving, a prayer for God’s mercy, a sea-related Gospel reading and homily and the singing of appropriate hymns including “Eternal Father, Strong to Save,” “Hail, Queen of Heaven the ocean star,” “Brightly beams our Father’s mercy, from His lighthouse evermore,” “A little ship was on the sea ... when lo! a storm began to rise” and “Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us, o’er the world’s tempestuous sea.” Fishermen and others gathered then go in procession to the end of the jetty.

Fishermen and their families are joined by the local residents for the “Blessing” of the Fleet Service. (The Argus)
The following prayers are used:

Holy Father, Creator of the Universe
You have given the seas and the life they contain for
the use and benefit of all
Protect our fishermen during this fishing season
and give them a bountiful catch
We ask your help, Father
Through our Lord Jesus Christ
Your Son, in the unity of your Holy Spirit,
One God, for ever and ever.

Lord how various are Your works.
In wisdom You have made them all,
the earth is full of Your creatures,
and there is the wide immeasurable sea.

(Left) 1994 Blessing of the Fleet conducted by Father Gabriel of St James Roman Catholic Church and Father Robin Burnett of Holy Trinity Anglican Church. Also pictured are Melanie Roberts, Philip Burnett and Tania Louis. (The Argus)
Crowds enjoy the Easter weekend camping on Kalk Bay beach. (G.Stibbe)
CHAPTER NINE
The Present Picture

The Nineteen Nineties
Over the past decades the Traditional Way of Life of the Kalk Bay line fishing industry has managed to survive the whaling era, the bottom trawling in False Bay, the shark fishing industry, the purse-seining invasion and the many forecasts of the demise of the industry.

This closing chapter takes a look at some of the other factors which have an influence on the lives of these fishermen. Some of these are very sensitive and controversial and, as they affect the livelihoods of people, often result in emotive arguments. Activities such as trek fishing, the growing ski-boat fraternity, the increasing number of seals, the changes in regulations of the Sea Fisheries and Department of Transport, and the ever increasing pressure to utilise the harbour for other groups and create a recreational area.

We have tried to be as calm and objective in our approach as we scratched at the surface of these issues. They are real issues and need addressing if this Traditional Way of Life is to be preserved.

The Trek Fishermen
The very early settlers used nets to catch haarders in False Bay as recorded by Lieutenant Coenraad van Breitenbach in 1671. Traditional trek fishermen have been active along the shores of False Bay for as long as the line fishermen. Their history has been one of struggles and battles with authorities and among themselves. While our story has been about the line fishermen of Kalk Bay, the following example from the Archives material is a sample of the trek fishermen's history.

In October 1929 D. van Breda and a group of forty trek fishermen of Simon’s Town petitioned the Administrator of the Cape about the illegal activities taking place at Cole Point (at the East Dockyard.) Despite an ordinance prohibiting fishing in the area, a man named Jaffa persisted on trek netting and was taking out large amounts of fish even though he had been warned and fined by the Simon’s Town magistrate. Because of rocks and the anchors of cargo and naval ships in the area, nets became fouled up and this resulted in shoals of fish being scared off. The fish were being diverted away from the coast and the chance of catching these large shoals was being lost at Long Beach. Klein Fish Hoek and Glencairn beach. The area known as “The Gat” (situated between Long Beach and the lower North Battery) had been closed to nets in September 1923, and this group of trek fishermen hoped that similar relief would be granted in the closure of Cole Point.

In more recent years their operations have been under a great deal of pressure from conservationists and recreational anglers who have succeeded in having the number of permit holders reduced from 84 to only 7. Today there are many restrictions placed on the “trekkers,” ranging from the types of nets they may use, the lengths of ropes and sections of the beach where they may operate to the times during which they may cast their nets. Recent research into the allegations that the trekking was damaging the seabed and destroying breeding stock has proved to be unfounded but the pressure on this “traditional” fishery remains.

Trek fishermen lift up the net as it is pulled up the beach to prevent fish escaping. (C. Leo Biden)

The Kalk Bay line fishermen have never taken sides in the controversy, possibly because some of their own members hold trek license permits or perhaps because they feel a kinship between the two fisheries when there is pressure from outside “noncommercial” groups. Supporters of the trek fishing claim that it is an important “tourist attraction” and that it is a sustainable method of fishing providing a source of fresh fish to the local residents.
A TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE

From the other side it is pointed out that many of the major hauls of fish are made in the early hours and at places like Smitswinkel Bay and Simon’s Town where few visitors ever witness the event. It is asked, “How can it be considered of any great benefit to the local community when the catch is then carted away in trucks to the large distribution companies?”

As for being a sustainable fishing method there is now serious concern over the stocks of white steenbras. It is also pointed out that this form of fishing does not support a large group or community; the permit holder and their immediate assistants are the main benefactors and the majority of helpers at a trek are gathered together when the event takes place and since it is such a seasonal business, it can hardly be considered “full time.”

There are very few fishermen who do not feel heartsore when they witness a truck load of large white steenbras taken out in one trek or when the shoals of yellowtail and kob fall prey to the trek net before any fishermen in the bay has had a chance to catch them with a line. Gone are the days when yellowtail were caught every season with rods from the Bullnose at Simon’s Town, or from the rocks at Sunny Cove or even from the boats in Fish Hoek Bay and steenbras from the beach at Clovelly. When viewing the quantity of fish taken in these nets by the few people involved, it is not difficult to understand the emotive distaste of the hundreds of line fishermen, both recreational and commercial, who believe that they could have caught some of those fish if the nets had allowed them to stay in the bay a while longer.

No one seems to know whether the prohibiting of nets will lead to an improvement in the resources and the ultimate dream of False Bay becoming “internationally renowned” for recreational fishing, attracting large numbers of visitors and boosting tourism. Mr John Wiley gave the following answer when he was criticised for closing the bay to purse-seine netting in 1983. “If scientists cannot find reasons for closing the bay to purse-seine netters, then I am perfectly prepared to be judged by the results.” (See chapter 7)

Sharks

False Bay is home to an abundance and variety of sharks. Simon van der Stel had his fishing lines broken by large sharks when he visited Seal Island in 1679. Over three hundred years later the fishermen still have their lines broken by big sharks. Today we know a lot more about them and the important role they play in the food chain.

Over the years there have been shark attacks in the bay with a few proving fatal. In Harbours of Memory by Lawrence Green there is an account of a man surviving a shark attack while swimming around the training ship General Botha in Simon’s Town. Later a 3,6 m shark with a 2,7m girth was caught and identified as having been responsible for the attack by matching his teeth with the marks left on the swimmer.

Cobern in his History of Fish Hoek tells of a visitor who went swimming and lost his Irish terrier. The next day a Kalk Bay boat harpooned a large tornynhaai in Fish Hoek and when it was cut open at the harbour, the body of the missing dog was discovered.

Most fishermen, whether recreational or professional, feel heartsore at the sight of huge shoals of fish being removed from the bay with one cast of a net. (The Argus)
In his autobiography *A Worthwhile Journey* Tromp van Diggelen recorded several encounters with large sharks. Jimmy Edwards, one of Kalk Bay’s famous skippers during the 1940s and 1950s, saw the rudder of his 10m boat disappear in the jaws of a very large shark. On another occasion when Nickey Goles was fishing from Tromp’s boat he caught an enormous *sjambokhaai* which broke the line and then charged the boat, jumping out of the water and over the cabin. Don Lindsay, when skippering the *Felicity*, nearly lost an arm when a shark leapt up and took his mackerel bait off the line he held out ready to cast. Bunny Pendlebury had occasion to leap on the top of his boat’s cabin to avoid the jaws of a shark that shot up out of the water right next to the boat. One of Kalk Bay’s top skippers, Dennis Fish, arrived one morning at Rocky Bank on his boat *Suiderster* to find a shoal of pilchards squeezed into a small area, held there by a big shoal of snoek. The top layers of pilchards were drying in the sun. On the outside of the snoek was a large shoal of bronze sharks feeding in a frenzy on the snoek.

Divers found themselves harassed by the sharks too and a possible explanation, given by Sea Fisheries, was that the culling of seals on Seal Island had stopped. The sharks could be hungry because no carcasses had been dumped into the sea. Another possibility was that the sharks had been provoked by the “trophy hunters.” With heavy lines they had been trying to catch a great white, nicknamed “The Submarine.” This shark was estimated to be 7 or 8 meters in length and weighing about 2 tons. Today these sharks are a protected species. The commercials are interested in the bronze shark and *vaalhaai* (soupfin shark) and the great whites are respected and left alone.

When the skippers find themselves being harassed by the large great whites they pull up anchor and move elsewhere. These are awesome fish and it is not uncommon to see one swallow a baby seal in one rush or to witness a larger seal being thrown about like a rag doll hanging in the jaws of a great white. The sea all around goes red from the blood and in a few moments it is all over. The monster swims away silently, sometimes just below the surface as it passes by the boat.

The fishermen know that, while catching kob or Cape Salmon, if only the fish’s head remains on the hook, bitten off in a neat half circle just behind the gills, it is time to pull up the anchor and move away. Sooner or later that shark is going to leap out of the water.

During the 1970s sharks in False Bay became particularly aggressive. There were many incidents when they gripped ski-boat propellers and shook the whole boat or leapt out of the water into a boat. In some cases crew members suffered serious injuries and on a number of occasions the boats were damaged.

**Seals**

Seals have always been a problem to fishermen, whether they are trawling or line fishing. Overseas the trawling industry experimented with transducers which produced the sounds made by killer whales. This was apparently very successful in keeping the seals at bay but it also scared off the shoals of fish they were seeking. Seals pose the most serious problem to the handline fishermen trying to catch snoek. They wait until a fish is caught on the line and then grab it and hold on. Many fishermen have been injured as the line is torn through their hands. Some have come close to losing their eyes when the seals surface with the fish and the lead and hook suddenly shoot back towards the boat. A hook embedded in a man’s face or hands has to be pushed through the flesh until the barb can be cut off and the hook removed. The frustrations are enormous when a boat is surrounded by a dozen or more seals and only one out of ten snoek caught gets past the seals and is landed on deck. It makes no difference if the boat steams off to fish elsewhere because the seals just follow. On some days when the fishermen are trying to catch reef fish the seals will follow the boat from bank to bank, taking off the fish whenever one is hooked. They do not even bother to eat these fish but leave them floating on the surface so they can dive down again and grab the next fish on someone’s line.
Skipper Paul Sasman well remembers one particular seal that followed his boat *Alma Lucie* all morning. It took fish off the lines continuously and try as they might they could not get rid of the seal. It followed the boat from bank to bank until they gave up and headed home. To add insult the seal accompanied them all the way back into Kalk Bay harbour.

The fishermen have blamed the seals for the depletion of stocks and for many years the seals were culled on a regular basis. Thousands were regularly killed on Seal Island and the pelts brought ashore at Kalk Bay for the overseas market. There were one or two attempts to produce pet food from the carcasses but in most instances these were dumped at sea. In the 1980s there was a public outcry over the culling of seals and the pelt market collapsed. The reasoning behind the culling was questioned and the Government was forced to place a moratorium on the culling while scientific investigations were undertaken.

Results of research thus far have found the seals “not guilty” of most of the charges against them. While it is common knowledge that the seals harass the snoek line fishermen, they are not depleting the stocks of any fish and it is very unlikely that any culling programme will be re-introduced without very strong scientific backing in the near future.

**Ski-boats**

The name ski-boat was originally associated with the boats developed for launching through the surf on the beaches of Natal. Today the term is loosely applied to all the boats kept on trailers and moved around the coast between launching sites. Early in the 1970’s and 1980’s “the infringement” of the ski-boat activities on the professional fishermen was noted with some concern. The Reinecke report in 1980 advised the State to implement “protection for the professionals.” In 1991 it was estimated that there were 10 000 ski-boats in South Africa and the line fish they brought in was valued at R100 million per year. According to the Sea Fisheries there were 3 100 registered and about 1 500 non-registered boats launching in the Cape. It is also estimated that less than 10% of these boats are crewed by fishermen who depend on the sea for their livelihood. The majority are part time fishermen or people who take leave from their jobs to go fishing when there is a run of snoek, yellowtail or kob. The recreational ski-boat fishermen are a very powerful group in terms of monetary value when compared to the small independent hand line operators of Kalk Bay.

The fast ski-boats are usually the first to arrive in the harbour and off-load their snoek. Some boats manage a second trip for the day. (G. Stibbe)

When there is a run of snoek hundreds of ski-boats descend on the area. In False Bay the launching sites are quickly congested and boats wait hours in long queues for a turn to launch. The markets get flooded with fish and the Kalk Bay professional with his “chug-chuggie” is completely swamped by the invasion. In years past the Kalk Bay boats would go to work off Dassen Island, staying at sea for a week or longer with “factory” boats calling each day from Saldanha or Hout Bay to collect their catches and deliver water, fuel and food to the boats. This system has been replaced by the larger freezer boats and the fast ski-boats all targeting the snoek.

The numbers of ski-boats continue to grow. (G. Stibbe)
A serious problem for areas like False Bay arises when, for example, 100 ski-boats launch for a snoek run, each boat with an average crew of six, and then the snoek slack off or do not come on the bite. These boats are then tempted to join the local boats and scratch on the banks for reef fish with the hope of recovering their costs for the day. This added pressure on the Bay’s resources is enormous.

“A” and “B” Licences

Trawling was banned years ago in False Bay. More recently purse-seine netting was prohibited and in the 1980s, after detailed research the National Line Fish Management Plan was instituted. In an attempt to limit the pressures and manage the resource, entry into the commercial sector was closed by freezing the allocation of licenses. A bona fide full time fisherman, whose sole source of income was from fishing was allocated an “A” license for his boat The recreational or part time fishermen became “semicommercial” and classed as “B” licence.

The A and B licence system has not proved too successful. Despite the freezing of the A licences, the commercial sector over the years has still grown and today the licence has a monetary value. Despite all the claims to the contrary A licences can be purchased whether by a bona fide full time fisherman or not. There are many people with full time jobs who own A licence boats. The B licence has gone the same way and because of the open access nature of recreational fishing, there has been a vast increase in the number of participants. A new system has been introduced whereby a “permit” for fishing is given to the individual, while the boat has to have its own fishing licence. The situation is very delicate because of the money people have invested to get these licences / permits. There are certain criteria attached to these licences, such as filling in statistic returns and regular renewals of the safety certificate of the boats, none of which assist in the control of the pressure on the resources.

There appears to be a simple solution; check the statistic returns and see who is actually operating as a full time fisherman and which ones are obviously recreational fishermen! Unfortunately this is not so simple. In order to obtain an accurate feedback from the fishermen on what they catch, the information is “confidential” and used for scientific research only. It is believed, and possibly correctly so, that should this information be available to other departments, then the fishermen would not be inclined to return accurate information. The section that issues the licences, therefore, does not have access to the statistics and has no means of checking whether the holder of an A licence is in fact a bona fide fisherman, whose sole source of income is from the fishing (the conditions under which these A licences were first issued). He could be a doctor or farmer and go fishing on the weekends only, or take leave in the snoek season. He could run his boat with paying “trippers” on weekends and holidays, without providing work for a single full time fisherman and yet reap the full benefits from the A licence.

It is not uncommon to see advertisements in the newspapers for fishing licenses “wanted” or “for sale.” One solution that has been suggested is for commercial fishermen to be registered and to carry some sort of ID document, and for the boats to be restricted to the areas in which they are registered. They should be licensed either commercial or recreational without the grey area of “semi-commercial.” Mr Richard Ball, when Chairman of the SA Squid and Line Fish Industry Association said, “There is no such thing as semi-commercial fishing. You can’t be half pregnant.”

Size restrictions and bag limits

Size restrictions, closed seasons and a ban on seriously endangered species are applied to both licences and a number of bag limits are applied to the B licences. Fish like snoek and tunny have no limits applied to them. There is no connection with the agency issuing the safety certificate and that issuing the fishing licence, apart from the latter wanting to see the valid safety certificate before renewing the fishing permit. This leads to another controversial issue: there is nothing to stop any boat with a valid safety certificate putting to sea and filling to the gunwales with yellowtail or snoek. The only regulation is that the fish may not be sold.

Marine sanctuaries and artificial reefs

Marine reserve areas were established in which the reef fish could have the time to grow to maturity and become the parent population for the survival of the various species. Research has shown, for example, that a 10 kg adult fish may produce 200 eggs which are carried by the currents to adjacent areas. Because it takes so many years for some of these fish to mature it is impossible to rotate the reserves. The larger fish that have taken years to recover (and can live up to 20 years and more) would be cleaned out by fishermen in a matter of months were it not for the sanctuaries.

Several ships were sunk in False Bay to create artificial reefs to attract reef fish and to provide scuba diving sites. Most of these were sunk in deep water on
a sandy bottom and have been successful as diving sites but have failed to enhance reef fish productivity. It appears that the reef fish do not move away from natural reefs and, as they do not feed on sand-dwelling prey, they have little inclination to move and inhabit the sunken wrecks, which now lie below the thermocline in colder water.

What is needed are larger areas held as sanctuaries for much longer periods. These would not only provide breeding stock but preserve many other forms of plant and animal below the water. It would be useful for research, education and other activities such as scuba diving. All of this would require adequate policing and the full co-operation of the public, before the desired results can ever be achieved.

Changes in the industry
Weather patterns have changed, sea temperatures seem to fluctuate quickly, certain species, like the mackerel are caught before they ever get into False Bay. The white stumpnose no longer appear in the harbour, the chokka are scarce and, some years, the snoek hardly make a showing.

Large shoals of yellowtail are taken each year by the trek nets and few are caught on the hand lines. Today the boats are equipped with faster engines, sophisticated electronic equipment such as echo sounders, radar and Satellite Positioning Systems (GPS). Radio communication among the boats and with shore is being replaced by more private calls on cellular phones. While market prices of fish landed on the quay are still controlled by the hawkers, some skippers have managed to arrange their own markets for fish.

The costs involved in maintaining the boats has increased drastically. With the increased fuel and bait prices it is no longer viable to go to sea on the off-chance of finding some fish. Many boats wait until there are definite indications of fish in the bay. A large number of the boat owners supplement their income by taking paying trippers to sea as crew. This helps cover the costs and makes up for the shortage of available crew. This has always been a part of their tradition but has now become more of a necessity. Today there are far more stringent safety regulations, surveys and skippers tickets. The costs of these help to push up the basic maintenance costs.

Licences have not been issued since 1984 and many boats have either left Kalk Bay to fish in other areas, or have been withdrawn. Many over the years have been sold to the diamond divers on the West coast.

There have also been many changes of ownership. An even larger proportion of those working out of the harbour are not resident in Kalk Bay nor are they descendants of the original fishing families.

The fishing scene has changed; the vast majority of fishermen have found it impossible to sit around in Kalk Bay when there is nothing to catch. These men have always been freelance, and in order to make a living it is necessary to move with the mobile ski-boats about the coast after the snoek, or to make trips on the squid and tunny boats. There are many times in the year when vessels remain at their moorings in the harbour because the crew (freelance fishermen) have moved away to catch the snoek on ski-boats.

The fishermen work for themselves and can make their own decisions. While this independence may be a strength in some ways it also has a downside. It has not helped to unite the local industry but has resulted in the creation of small groups concerned with their own survival. There are now several different groups involved in the local industry, with a certain amount of overlapping, but not one group truly represents the future interests of Kalk Bay’s fishing industry.

When the discussions about redeveloping and upgrading Kalk Bay began early in 1990 a strong organisation was formed to represent all the fishermen. (This was done with help and support from many so called “outsiders” or non-fishermen.) It was called the Line Fishing Association but as soon as their initial fear of losing the harbour to yachts had been allayed the association became defunct and was absorbed by the Kalk Bay Rock lobster Association, a group which represents those boat owners and fishermen who share the benefits of the quota Mr Wiley gave them.

Another group in Kalk Bay, have managed to obtain a pilchard quota which they purse-seine in the bay. They are also in the process of trying to obtain their own rocklobster quota and to establish a fish-packing facility, with the assurance that this will benefit the fishermen.

Yet another group of boat owners and fishermen have shares in the Waterfront Development Company (former Kalk Bay Boat Owners’ with the fish market building.) Today this is a business venture with little to do with the local fishing industry but can be credited for the introduction of other forms of activities to the harbour area, namely a popular restaurant, shops and a dive charter business.
Several boat owners have formed another company and obtained an abalone quota. They too are intent on obtaining their own rock lobster, white fish and pilchard quotas. Among these are a few boat owners with their own individual crayfish and pilchard quotas. There is a fair amount of overlapping, with some individuals being members of all and subsequently benefiting from several quota allocations.

There is a growing dependence on access to quotas of perlemoen, rock lobster, white fish and pilchards. While some of the quotas are granted to holders who actually catch the fish themselves, others are referred to as “paper quotas.” The quota having been granted to someone who does not have the means to catch it and who then gives it to someone else to catch but receives the money, less the cost of catching.

Mr John Wiley was criticised strongly by the rest of the fishing industry when he stood up for the Kalk Bay fishermen and granted them the original 30 ton quota. For more than ten years now the Rock Lobster Association has received several hundred thousand rand per annum from its quota. While much good has been done in respect of providing insurance cover and payouts each year to its beneficiaries to supplement their income and assist in covering maintenance costs of the boats, it is believed in some quarters, that a golden opportunity has been lost. By now the local industry should have united, enlarged, recruited more members, secured the infrastructure necessary to land and market their quota and receive its FULL benefit. Other quotas could have been sought such as white fish, abalone, pilchard and squid and the necessary vessels and equipment purchased to catch and market these quotas. Continuous work could be provided throughout the year with sufficient incentives to attract fishermen and keep the tradition alive. Most important too, something could be put back into the local industry and harbour.

In 1992 there was talk of the harbour being privatised and Mr Neville Riley, then City Planner of Cape Town and member of the Steering Committee for the upgrading of Kalk Bay, pointed out that there were large companies interested in developing the harbour. Recently a Japanese offer to make a substantial “foreign aid” investment in the harbour was made known and there are apparently other large companies expressing similar interests.

Boat owners find themselves under pressure from the Harbour Authorities and others who keep accusing them of the heavy subsidy they enjoy from the taxpayer. The growing population and development of the shore line around False Bay introduces new threats from pollution, while more and more people are being retrenched and turning to fishing as a means of making a living. This, together with the large recreational sector is putting unparalleled pressure on the resources. The changes in the political scene have brought forth new words like “black empowerment” and “freedom of access; disadvantaged and marginalised communities; subsistence fishermen and redistribution.” At the same time there are calls for proper management and controls; scientific, economic and environmental impact studies.

The disputes and disagreements among the local fishermen are the main topic of conversation in the harbour and are frequently aired in the local press. To any outsider it must appear very confusing and a clear indication of the lack of unity in the local industry. It is getting harder to justify the continued use of the harbour for the few line fishing boats.

In its present state Kalk Bay harbour could not accommodate more vessels than it does. The storms of the past are proof that there is insufficient room for too many boats, in particular large craft and there is no possible way luxury craft such as yachts could survive alongside the working fishing craft in the existing harbour. A study of previous storms and the layout of the harbour will confirm that the only possible expansion would be along the lines of the
Fiscor proposal in 1984 which suggests development out onto the reef in front of the harbour. This will provide extra space and shelter to all of the present harbour area. There could be launching facilities for trailer boats, a yacht club and a modern boat yard with gantry lifts to hoist boats out onto cradles for maintenance and repairs alongside the existing slipway. This is a desperately needed facility for the boating and fishing industry and would, apart from the obvious jobs created, provide a fair income to the harbour. Many other lucrative tourist facilities could be incorporated.

For Kalk Bay to be successful as a tourist area, or to cope with any expansion of the harbour something would have to be done to improve the roads. Again the solution has been proposed before ... the Boyes Drive extension. The present road system cannot even handle the weekend traffic let alone a run of snoek in False Bay and the associated extra hawkers, fishermen and visitors.

For more than 100 years *The Traditional Way of Life* has been regularly accused of being outdated, antiquated and inefficient, yet it has continued to survive. The Kalk Bay fishermen have been given many a guarantee that the present area of the harbour will remain a commercial working line fishing harbour. Strong leadership is needed to bring unity and vision, combined with the willingness to share the resources, if the fishermen want to entrench their *Traditional Way of Life* into the next century.

*The slipways at Kalk Bay generate the most income towards the harbour expenses. It is the one area that has potential for expansion.* (G. Stibbe)
(Above) The Star of the Sea returns with a load of pilchards. (G. Stibbe)

(Below) Fish trawled by the Gary being off-loaded. (G. Stibbe)
Severe storms over the years have proved that, in its present state Kalk Bay, is not an ideal harbour for large boats, yachts or pleasure craft. On most days it may appear there is plenty of space available for more boats to be accommodated in the harbour. However when a storm comes boats on the outer wall need to move and there is little room left to manoeuvre.

(The Argus)

Stop Press, 14 October 1998

For many years now there have been rumours that something is going to be done about the licensing and issuing of fishing permits.

In terms of The Marine Living Resources Act, 1998 Sea Fisheries have just released new application forms for fishing permits. These set out the new criteria under which applications must be made. All persons engaged in the fishing industry or owning boats are now required to reapply for permits.

One of the main objectives of new fishing policies is “...towards addressing historical imbalances and achieving equity within the fishing industry.” It is hoped that at the end of the day the entire confusion about licensing will be cleared up and that those who make a living from the sea are the ones issued with such permits.
In earlier days the fishermen who did not live in Kalk Bay had to catch the last train and sleep on the boats. Today most arrive in bakkies or cars and gather on the quay at 3:30am to buy their boxes of bait and climb on their respective boats. By 4.30 there is a long line of stern lights as the boats steam off towards Cape Point. (The Argus)

When the boats arrive at the snoek grounds it is near daybreak. Fishermen, warmly dressed against the cold, prepare their lead and bait lines. With cold fingers the first snoek is not the easiest to handle. Usually it is swung under the arm and its neck is broken. This is done very quickly by the experts. In past days the fishermen clubbed the fish on the back of the head with a wooden batten. (The Argus)
and a hook. Some fishermen use a larger hook with a barb while many prefer the barbless hook. This allows a faster action of breaking the neck, removing the hook and getting the line back in the water for the next snoek.

While the snoek are feeding, men work flat out, lines tangle, men shout and swear at each other and the boats charge around trying to get in on the action. When the seals start grabbing the snoek the frustrations reach a high. It is also a time when accidents happen. A line suddenly catapulted back at the boat when the seal lets go can end up with a fisherman getting a hook in his face.

In a swift movement the hook is removed and the snoek’s neck broken. (G.Stibbe)

Each man had his own favourite combination of lead and dollie. Every possible colour combination is tried. If someone is seen to be having more success with a yellow lead then others change and follow suit. (D.Lindsay)

Some mornings the snoek start biting immediately. Other days it is a game of patience and bait lines are tried at all levels from drift lines to deep lines near the bottom.

When the snoek start feeding wildly the fishermen use a lead line. This consists of a snoek lead, either plain, chrome or painted an attractive colour. Below this is a dollie or skirt made from strips of coloured rubber

(Above) Fishermen wait patiently with bait lines in the water. (D.Lindsay)
(Left) The fish is thrown up on the quay in heaps which are then auctioned to the highest bidder. Sellers scream out the bids “Five Rand, six rand ... daars six fifty ... daars seven rand.” Crowds push to get a glimpse of the fish. Buyers sell to the public from their tables and scream out their prices in competition with the auctioneers. (The Argus)

(Right) At midday the boats start heading back to the harbour for the market. If it has been a good day then everyone will be full of smiles. Fish for the market are counted with each man knowing his own tally. A fish is usually kept to take home and these “fries” are flecked and prepared on the trip back to the harbour. (The Argus)

(Right) The harbour is usually congested. The boats take their place in the queue as they arrive at the harbour. Some days they can wait outside the harbour for over an hour before there is place to come alongside and off-load their fish. A special area is designated for the faster ski-boats to off-load and often they manage two trips for the day. (The Argus)

(Left) The fish is thrown up on the quay in heaps which are then auctioned to the highest bidder. Sellers scream out the bids “Five Rand, six rand ... daars six fifty ... daars seven rand.” Crowds push to get a glimpse of the fish. Buyers sell to the public from their tables and scream out their prices in competition with the auctioneers. (The Argus)
Once sold the fish is counted before being loaded onto the langganners bakkie. One of the crew is present all the time. It is also his duty to collect the money and today the calculator is used in place of the ready reckoner book of the past. As fast as one hawker leaves the harbour another takes his place. The general public have to park away from the harbour area because of congestion. The traffic on the Main Road is continually disrupted by the traffic lights changing. Before the introduction of the traffic lights, access to the harbour was a nightmare. (SALibrary)

Once finished alongside the quay those boats needing to top up their fuel tanks move to the supply corner and the others make their way back to their moorings. There the boats are washed down and everything packed away for the next day’s fishing. (The Argus)
Crew gather around the skipper who works out the money and pays each man for his individual catch. If money is owed to the boat for bait it is deducted and then the “boat share” is taken off. Those who are good at catching snoek and manage high tallies earn more. Before going home many of the men will have to call in at the shop and buy more hooks, leads and even new lines. Obviously the skipper wants a crew that can catch well and the crew need a skipper who can put them on the fish.

(The Argus)
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