

**Robololo Burial Ground
Previously known as Flenters
Knysna**

prepared for

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By

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Background history to unmarked burial ground at Less Formal Residential Settlement: Erven 214, 243, 3432, 5042, 3522, 3544 (Flenters, Robololo and Concordia West)

Introduction

In October 2007 the remains of a human burial was uncovered in the vicinity of the Flenters/Robololo/Concordia West less formal residential settlement. It has subsequently come to light that human remains were found on at least two another erven within the settlement and that the uncovering of these human remains had been reported to the Knysna Municipality as early as October 2003/2004 (Figure 1).

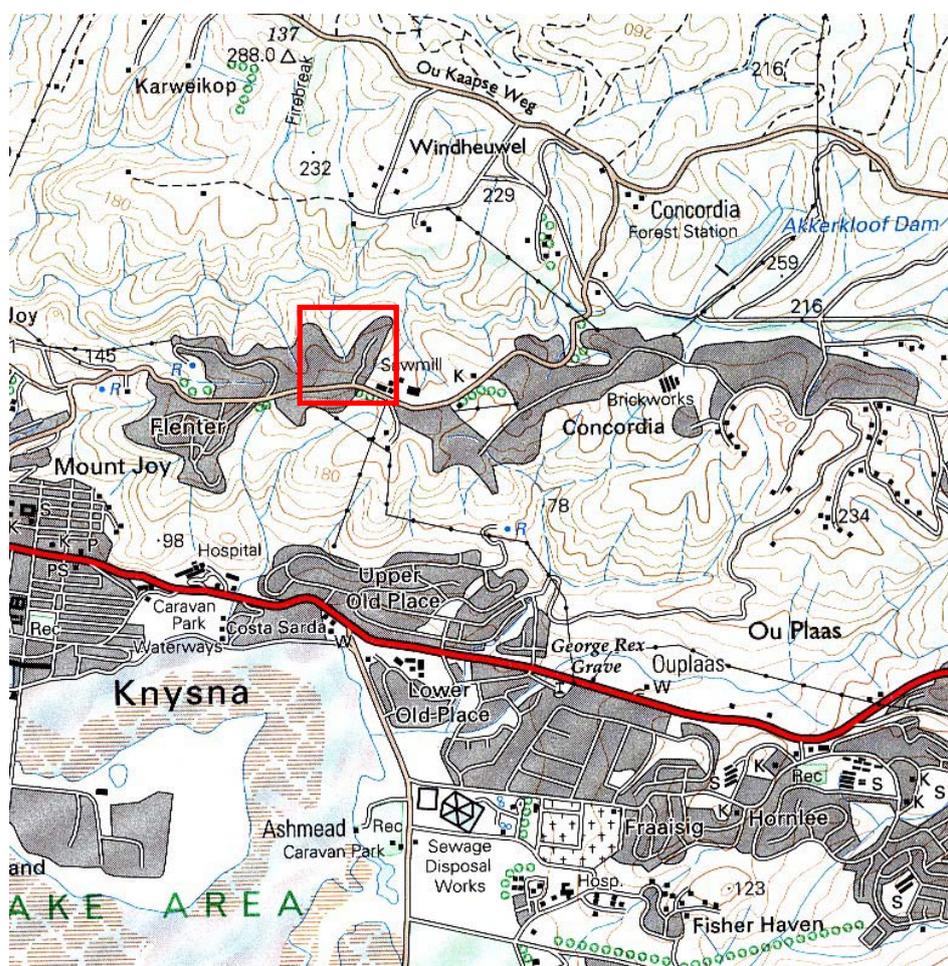


Figure 1: Enlargement of study area 1:50 000 topographical map of Knysna 3423 AA Knysna. The area where the burials were found is outlined in red and the detail is shown in Figure 3.

The background history comprised two parts: an archival and deeds search (Harriet Clift) and an oral history component, which included the investigation of the current municipal records at Knysna and was undertaken by Kathy Schultz.

Transfer history

The Robololo/Flenters/Concordia West settlement is located on part of the farm Melkhoutkraal originally granted to Stephanus Terblans in 1770 as a loan farm. It was acquired by George Rex in the early 1800s and was regranted to Rex in 1816 as a perpetual quitrent. The village of Knysna was founded in 1825 and in 1890 Erf 214 was acquired by the municipality of Knysna. Erven 214, 243, 3432, 5042, 3522, 3544 can all trace their origin back to the Goerge Rex regrant of 1816. No traces were found in the transfer history of these erven of a burial ground, nor reference made to the land being use for burial purposes. The land had been in the ownership of the Knysna Municipality since 1890 and it was clear that any further indication to land use would have to be found in the municipal records: in 1883 and 1897, amendments to the Public Health law were published stipulating that no new cemeteries were to be opened within any urban areas, or in the outlying areas, without the

permission of the Governor or local authority (Section 63 Act 4 of 1883; Section 44 Act 23 of 1897).

Fleners/Robololo

Fleners is associated with the housing for the labour of the Fechtters saw mill established in 1936, which still exists on the eastern boundary of Robololo. Fleners must have predated the saw mill as, according to municipal records c1932, people were living outside the designated area. By the 1950s the ridge above Knysna had become a band of informal settlements providing labour for the Knysna and the nearby industries.

Wit Lokasie, Jood se Kamp, and Concordia were all areas situated on the ridge above Knysna that housed employees classified Black during the apartheid era. Concordia was the largest of the settlements and apparently the oldest.

Knysna Municipality never registered a formal location for occupation by Black citizens during the apartheid era, therefore residential building structures and services remained informal within the Wit Lokasie, Fleners (pre 1932), Jood se Kamp and Concordia areas (Figure 2). A survey conducted in 1959 by Professor S P Cilliers, Sociology Department Stellenbosch University, revealed that 110 adults originally from the Eastern Cape lived in Fleners, Wit Lokasie, Joods se Kamp and Concordia. The survey identified a further 46 adults classified Black that were living in areas classified White. These families were subsequently moved to Fleners during the 1960's.

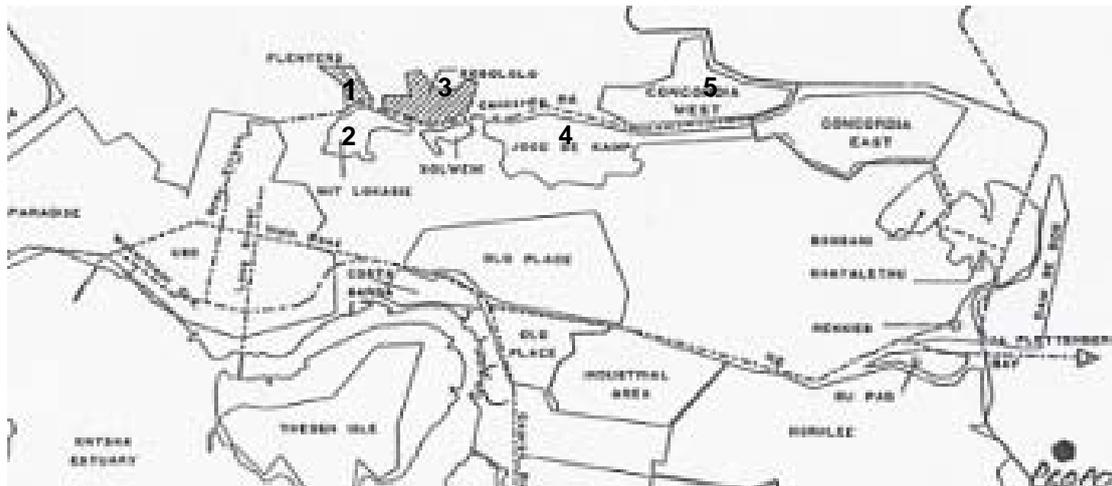


Figure 2: Detail of Plan of Knysna (undated) showing the informal settlements of Knysna: Fleners (1), Wit Lokasie (2), Robololo (3), Jood se Kamp (4) and Concordia West (5) (Knysna Municipal File series 16/6/1 Essential Services, Cemeteries & Cremations)

Cemeteries

A random sample of the Knysna municipal records at the Cape Archives 1933-1972 made mention of at least two burial grounds outside the limits of Knysna associated with the informal settlements, but no specific location is given:

- 1) Indigent burial ground at Concordia was to be fenced in 1949 (3/KNY 1/1/1/13 p131) – but was already established by 1932 (3/KNY 1/1/17 p 96, 106, 120).
- 2) Burial ground at the Municipal location

According to the interviewees, during the Apartheid era, no decent provision was made for the burial of so-called 'Black' people and bodies were usually buried in the area between the Municipal burial ground (Figure 1) and the high water mark next to the old rubbish dump. The Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, however, did make provision for 'Black' members of the congregation to be buried in their cemeteries.

It was repeatedly mentioned in the interviews that each denomination had a separate burial area on the hillside and that the entire hillside was in fact covered with graves. Residents at

the Fleners/Robololo site belonged to the Wesleyan, African Methodist Episcopal or Ethiopian Church, Congregational and Folks Kerk with some representation of the Zionist, Full Gospel and non-Christian churches.

The Knysna burial orders (3/KNY 11/2) list only 5 burials in the Municipal location and at Concordia between 1956 and 1962.

Location	Date	Name	Age
Municipal location	Aug 1958	Rosie Claasens	1 year
Concordia	Sept 1958	Stanley Vokana	1 ½ year
Location	Nov 1956	Xakata Dayman	40 years
Location burial ground	Sept 1962	L Sheppard	- infant
Concordia	March 1962	Sandra Norongo	- infant

Discovery of the human remains

In July 2004 Knysna Municipality received a letter of objection from the New National Party Assistance to Voters office (signed by Mr W Best). The letter was headed “Skeiding van ou begraafplaas” (Demolition of old burial ground) and raised community concerns about development taking place on the old Fleners burial ground during which human bones were exposed and dug up.

Mr. Lombard, head of Knysna Municipal Housing at the time responded by saying that bones had been found and dug up - but that they had been placed in a coffin (after consultation with residents) and given to a Municipal cemetery official for re-burial in the Knysna Municipal cemetery. His response further states that Municipality had no record of there ever having been a burial ground in Fleners (Robololo) and that no formal objections regarding a burial site had been received from the public during the past 15-20 years of informal occupation of the Robololo site¹.



Figure 3: Aerial photography (2000) with cadastral boundaries superimposed. The erven outlined in white indicate where human remains have been found (erven 14124, 14159 and 14258). The approximate location of the Wesleyan burial ground is outlined in red.

The footprints of the settlements of Wit lokasie and Fleners are clearly visible on the aerial photography of 1936, 1942 (Job 6 Strip 38) and 1958 (Job 421 Strip 12), but no traces were visible of the burial ground.

¹ Knysna Municipal file series 16/6/2 document number 10014634

Conclusion

The burials are associated with the informal settlement of Flenter/Robololo and Concordia which probably date to the early 20th century. The last burials may have taken place in 1970s. The churches associated with at least some of the burials should have records of who was buried there and when.

Although no maps showing the extent of the burial ground has been found, the oral history suggests that the entire hillside of Flenter/Robololo/Concordia above Knysna may be affected.

Recommendations

Those graves older than 60 years are protected by the National Heritage Resources Act and a permit is required before these burials may be exhumed (destroy, damage, alter and/or removed from the original position).

The Municipality must develop a management plan for the Flenter/Robololo/Concordia site in order to deal with the burials. A professional archaeologist as well as an undertakers firm should be included in the consultation process.

According to the National Heritage Resources Act Section 36(5) - a concerted effort must be made to contact the communities who are associated with the burial ground and local interest groups must be recognised in the consultation process in determining where the bodies should be re-interred.

Sources

National Archives, Cape Town

HAWC Index		Marriages, births and burials 1890 -
3/KNY 11/2		Burial orders 1956-1962
3/KNY 1/1/1/7-8		Council minutes 1932-1935
3/KNY 1/1/1/13, 14		Council minutes 1949-1952
3?kny 1/1/1/26, 27		Council minutes 1962
3/KNY 1/1/1/44-46		Council minutes 1971-1972
M1/3956	c1860	Shows allotments, no burial grounds
M3/1633	1890	Divisional map of Knysna – no burial grounds shown

Deeds Office, Cape Town

Knysna Municipal File Series 16/6/2

Storrar, P 1974 Geroge Rex: death of a legend. Johannesburg: MacMillan SA Publishers
Tapson, W 1967. Timber and tides. The story of Knysna and Plettenberg Bay. Johannesburg: General Litho Ltd

Appendix 1: Interviews conducted by Kathleen Schultz November 2007

Interview 1 (no contact number)

Ms. Edna Oktober (previously Stuurman) aged 57 and her brother Henry were interviewed in Ms Oktober's home in Hornley, Knysna on the 20th November 2007.

They stated that their father was employed by Fechtters sawmill and as children had lived in Flenters. Other employees who lived at Flenters at that time had surnames, Stevens, Solomons, Brown and Laart. Both Edna and Henry remembered the entire slope of this hill side on which Robololo informal settlement is now situated, as being a cemetery, utilized by the Utopia (Ethiopian), Wesleyan and Zion churches. People who were not affiliated to a particular church or religion were also buried in this burial ground.

The Stuurman family left Flenters in 1958.

It was also cited that a large tree grew in the cemetery (the tree is no longer there) under which a homeless person, known to the community as 'Mal Koos' was buried.

Deceased members of Ms Oktober's family (Stuurman) were not buried in the Flenters burial ground as they were Roman Catholic.

The Stuurman family moved to Wit Lokasie in 1958 and in 1968 were forcibly removed to Hornley, where they currently reside.

Ms Oktober knew of two people who were buried in the Flenters cemetery.

1. Evelin Malapi whose surviving family moved to the Ceres or Ashton area and
2. Tata Rooibaard. It was not known where her surviving family members now reside.

Henry Stuurman mentioned that as children they played in the river bed bordering on the northern aspect of Flenters where caves existed, thought by him to have been used or occupied during the pre-colonial era.

Interview 2 (contact number 044 3825 614 work)

Mr. Simon Grootboom

As a young boy Mr. Grootboom used to dig graves in the Wesleyan section of the Flenters grave site. He stated that he could not remember exactly when the cemetery was last used, but he thinks around 1972.

I went to the Flenters (Robololo) burial site with Mr Grootboom where he pointed out the extent of the Wesleyan cemetery. See demarcated area in aerial photo above.

Interview 3 (contact number 076 6479 575)

A telephonic interview was held with Mr. W Best who had written to Mr. Lombard, Head of Housing, Knysna Municipality in 2004, expressing concern that service providers had exhumed human remains while laying services for the intended up-grading of shack dwellings in Robololo. Mr. Lombard replied to Mr. Best's written concerns stating that;

- Municipality had no official record of a burial site in Flenters.
- Human bones had been exposed while laying services.
- After consultation with residents, the bones were placed in a coffin and given to the cemetery superintendent for reburial in the Knysna Municipal burial grounds.
- He denied allegations that Municipality had granted permission to (vernitig) demolish the burial site.
- He also responded by saying that informal dwellings had been erected over the last 15 – 20 years on the Robololo site and that Municipality had received no written objections regarding the erection of shacks on the alleged burial site.

During the telephonic interview Mr. Best stated that objections had been lodged with Municipality orally during public meetings. His letter dated 13th July 2004 was his first written objection.

After submitting the communities concerns in writing Mr. Best took it upon himself to interview elders of the Flenters community. Together they compiled a comprehensive list of names of people who were buried on the site. He states that Municipal officials did not pay attention to his research and were not prepared to accept the fact that a burial ground existed on the Robololo informal settlement. The construction of RDP houses has been ongoing since his objections were raised.

Mr. Best is currently working in George and commutes to Knysna over weekends. He has promised to provide the list of names of people buried in Robololo and other information he has gathered over his years of research. (Due to extensive flooding in Knysna this past weekend, Mr. Best was unable to provide the promised information. When received it will be forwarded to C.H.A.R.M, to be read as an annexure to this report.)

Interview 4 (Contact address 230 Protea Street Hornley)

Mr. Freek Stevens known as Tembani, currently stays with Ms. Annie Rhodes in Hornley. Apparently Mr. Stevens lived in the Flenters area from the 1930's. He is 90 years old, but was confused about the time scale of his life. Relatives state that he will remember past events, given time to place events in order in his mind.

Interview 5 (contact number 044 385 0350)

Mr. Candy (Shakespear) Arends

Mr. Arends was born in Knysna in 1949 and although not a Flenters resident he is well informed about the history of Knysna and the forced removals that took place here.

Mr Arends supplied background information regarding burial sites for people classified Black. He stated that prior to 1963 a Municipal burial ground for non denominational people existed below the Municipal burial ground in Knysna Road. It was referred to as the High Tide burial ground because the water table was so high that water was reached before four feet of earth had been dug for the grave. It was considered a social disgrace to be buried there. After 1963 the Hunters Home Municipal burial ground was opened. His mother was buried at Hunters Home in 1965. He also stated that people classified Black were buried at Hunters Home, but it was far away from Flenters site and burials continued in the Robololo/Flenters site.

Interview 6 (contact number 044 8781 618 - George)

Mr. Mike Welkom – telephonic interview

Mr. Welkom stated that his grandparents Sina Welkom and Willem Welkom are buried in the Flenters burial ground. They were members of the Volks Kerk. He was a child at the time of their death which was in the early 1950's. He remembers the burial site being extensive at the time of their burial. He has many other relatives who were buried there, aunts and uncles. He will contact his older sister now living in Cape Town in order to get their names. Mr Welkom would like to be consulted before the removal of his family members remains. He was not aware that an informal settlement existed on the site, not having been to that area for a long time.

Appendix 2 : Deed Summary: Erven 214, 243, 3432, 5042, 3522, 3544 (Flenters, Robololo and Concordia West)

Erf No	Diagram	Deed	Date	Extent	From	To	Price	Comment
212		GeoQuit 1.37	30/11/1816	2948 M	Grant	George Rex		
213		31	5/12/1845	1285 M 200 SR	G Rex and others	John Sutherland		Ex 212
214	328/1873	237	17/07/1873	265 M 406 SR 120 SF	Insolvent Estate John Sutherland	Civil Commission in trust for proprietors of erven in Newhaven		
243								
214	328/1873	237	17/07/1873	265 M 406 SR 120 SF	Insolvent Estate John Sutherland	Civil Commission in trust for proprietors of erven in Newhaven		Ex 213
214		113	10/02/1890	265 M 406 SR 120 SF	Civil Commission etc	Municipality of Knysna		
Various subdivisions of Erf 214 1890-1904, 1930s and 1950-1960s								
2248	6965/1949	6940	30/04/1951	9.2426M	Council of Municipality of Knysna	Isak Katz		
243	4865/43	14760	2/09/1946	1026.9711 M	Certificate of Amended Title on consolidation	John Truter Stoebel and Martha Gesina Stroebe		ex 213 and 2065
255		14761	2/09/1946	342.3237 M	JT Stroebe	Martha Gesina Stoebe		Portion 3
Rem 243		14762	2/09/1946	684.6474 M	JT Stroebe	John Truter Stoebe		
Rem 243		9037	11/06/1952	684.6474 M	Estate late JT Stroebe	5 children		Remains in Stroebe family until 1970s
2241		1060	21/01/1974	4.2827 ha	Expropriated	Community Development Board		Remainder kept in Stroebe family, with additional portions expropriated
2248	6965/1949	6940	30/04/1951	9.2426M	Council of Municipality of Knysna	Isak Katz		ex 214
2248		18387	18/12/1956	9.2426M	I Katz	Concordia Timber Co		Sold in liquidation
2773		5505	25/04/1963	23.521 SF	CRT	Concordia Timber Co		
Rem 2248		17850	10/06/1980	7.6834 ha	Concordia Timber Co Pty Ltd	Sesmo Belgeggings		
Rem 2248					Expropriated RSA Ex 551/80			