



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

Stories of the South Peninsula

**Historical research, stories and heritage tourism opportunities in
the South Peninsula**



SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

The peninsula from Cape Point Nature Reserve

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Background

The primary objective of this project was to prepare a series of 'story packages' providing the content for historical interpretive stories of the 'far' South Peninsula. Stories cover the geographical area of Chapman's Peak southwards to include Imhoff, Ocean View, Masiphumelele, Kommetjie, Witsand, Misty Cliffs and Scarborough, Plateau Road, Cape Point, Smitswinkel Bay to Miller's Point, Boulders, Simon's Town, Red Hill, Glencairn and Fish Hoek to Muizenberg.

The purposes for which these stories are to be told are threefold, namely to support tourism development; to stimulate local interest; and to promote appropriate and sustainable protection of heritage resources through education, stimulation of interest and appropriate knowledge.

To this end, the linking of historical stories and tourism development requires an approach to story-telling that goes beyond the mere recording of historic events. The use of accessible language has been a focus. Moreover, it requires an approach that both recognises the iconic, picture-postcard image of parts of Cape Town (to which tourists are drawn initially), but extends it further to address the particular genius loci that is Cape Town's 'Deep South', in all its complexity and coloured by memory, ambivalences and contradictory experiences. We believe there is a need to balance the more conventional approach, which selects people or events deemed worthy of commemoration (for example, the Battle of Muizenberg) to tell the story of places, by interweaving popular memory and culture into these recordings (for example, the rich Muslim culture that existed in Simon's Town before the removal under the Group Areas Act).

Thus, these are stories, familiar and unfamiliar, that link intangible heritage with (largely) material forms and are about real-life characters and events that have shaped our past. The tone of these stories is conversational in order to engage local residents and tourists alike, and can be utilised in story-telling mode (by tour guides for example) or to fulfil on-site interpretive requirements.

Stories have been selected to balance historical themes from prehistory, through pre-colonial to colonial settlement, apartheid and democratic South Africa. The history of Cape Town's South Peninsula has been very ably and comprehensively recorded by many of its residents, and we wish to acknowledge and give thanks to all those cited as references.

Referencing

The stories are intended for popular consumption. Therefore, the traditionally detailed referencing that would be expected of historical research was not regarded as appropriate in this instance, although full accuracy in terms of content and referencing has been sought. All references utilised have been listed. In respect of images, reference sources have been provided, which are open-source as far as possible.

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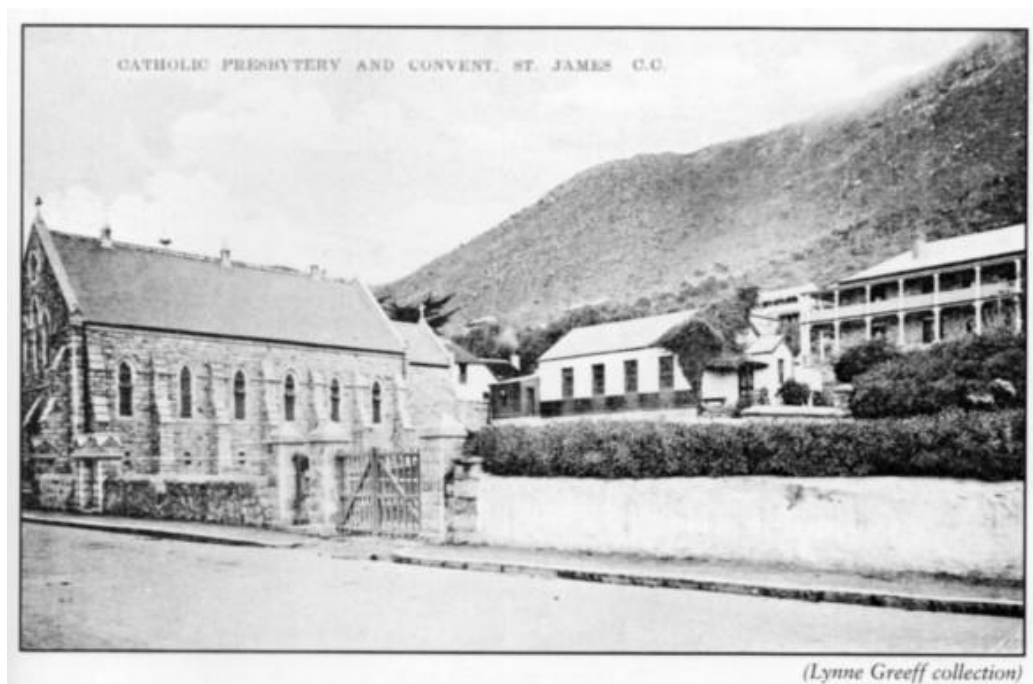
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11. Culture: Language, education, faith and philosophy

(K. Dugmore Ström)

Leftover spaces – unused rooms in private houses, church vestries, storerooms, lofts and cellars; these were the unlikely and, often, unsuitable places where teachers set up early schools at the Cape. If a room was too small, an eager teacher would even take in pupils in successive sessions. Such a teacher was the renowned, some say eccentric, Father Duignan of St James. He fitted several classes a day, of up to 15 children a time, into a 4½ x 3 ½ m² room behind the Catholic church where he was the priest. His determination to dole out the 'three Rs' – reading, 'riting and 'rithmitic – to the poor of Kalk Bay, along with his version of Catholic doctrine, was one of the qualities that endeared this hardworking priest to his devoted parishioners. Father Duignan impressed the community in many ways with his great vigour, and went way beyond ordinary priestly duties by taking on building works for the church and for the school. (Imagine a building contractor dressed in priestly garb!) The busy priest lived simply in a little cottage near the church, and could be stern, but was known to have a heart of gold.



Catholic church and the Star of the Sea school, also showing the main convent building and the classroom block added in 1920.

Father Duignan, in taking up the cause of educating poor fishermen's children in the 1870s,²⁷ was following in the footsteps of many resolute educators who pioneered formal education in the villages of the South Peninsula. In Simon's Town and Kalk Bay, many schools had been founded by 1880 – the provision of education per capita was higher in early Simon's Town than in similar small towns in the developing Cape Colony.²⁸ One of Father Duignan's many achievements in terms of education in the area was to grow the Catholic mission school from strength to strength. This school, initially run from a tiny room by the father himself, grew to become the renowned Star of the Sea convent. In the early years, the convent school taught boys and girls up to standard two (today's grade 4). By 1894, still under the leadership of Father Duignan, a total of 60 pupils (51 coloured and nine white) were noted in an inspection report, still making do with rooms inherited from other uses. The Star of the Sea convent was built in 1908. The beautiful stone-and-plaster convent buildings are still a great asset to the gracious aura of the Main Road in St James. In addition to the convent, the Catholics of St James ran the St James mission school – a separate but connected school that taught the children of poorer parents. Even once Father Duignan had a number of devoted Dominican sisters to primarily run the two schools, he enthusiastically remained involved with education. He held night classes for the Filipino boys who had to work on fishing boats during the day. The 'mission school' component of the Catholic school was relocated to Kalk Bay in 1921, which brought it nearer to the homes of the most of its attending children from the fishing community. The St James schools, like many schools in the South Peninsula, have a proud heritage as true community schools, keeping the diverse community together throughout the adversities faced over the past century.²⁹ Obstacles on the path to success

²⁷ The first Catholic mission school was established in 1874. Walker (2010).

²⁸ Report on Public Education for the Years 1853, 1854; Report on Public Education for the Year 1859, 1860; Report of the Superintendent-General of Education for the Year 1867 and 1868.

²⁹ Walker (2010).

were to test the mettle of the educators of the South Peninsula down the generations. Funding and a lack of space and teachers were common problems, first during the colonial years, and later again when the tragedy of South Africa's Group Areas Act upset much of the achievements of earlier years of education by the closing of established schools and the starting of new ones. But in spite of past adversities, education in the South Peninsula is an asset to the area today.



The Star of the Sea campus as it is today.

By the later 19th century, the greater South Peninsula had become quite populous, and education was increasingly seen as desirable – pupil numbers and demand meant that schools were now also in demand. Luckily, in many instances, funding was available, as South Africa's gold and diamond finds worked miracles for the economy. Many new church buildings started to appear, often with associated school buildings. These took pride of place in the townscapes, giving civic expression to religious dedication and reflecting growing pride in the achievements of education.

In spite of many school closures due to racial legislation in the 1950s, many schools founded during the 19th century are still running in the South Peninsula today. Many 19th-century schools were started in rather out-of-the-way places, wherever they could be squeezed into vestries, houses, cellars and the like. As funds for education increased in the colony, schools moved out of their backroom realms, and started to have a strong public presence in villages such as Simon's Town and Kalk Bay. At first, one-room schools were the norm, often built with donated funds. Yet, even as funding increased, it often only came in a trickle rather than a steady flow: The stories of early educators and faith leaders being strong in the face of adversity are a recurring theme in the telling of school histories.

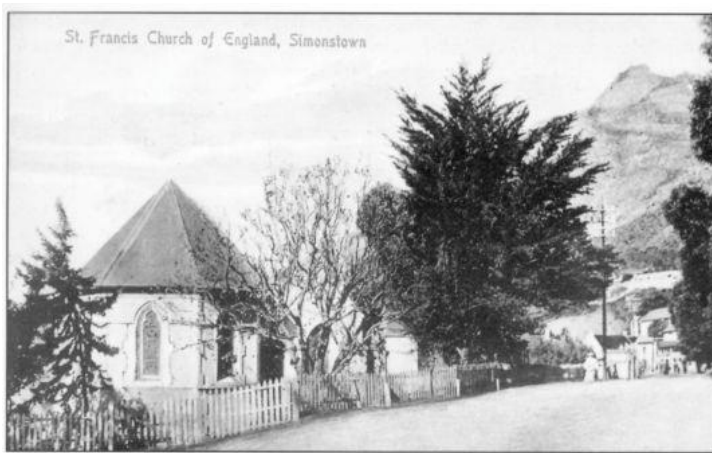
One interesting school-founding story involves a threesome of feisty upper-income ladies, who put their money where their mouths were in service of their Anglican parish of Kalk Bay. For 28 years, a modest shed building in Kalk Bay served the Anglican community as a school

during the week, altering its function to chapel each Sunday. Anglicans of 1857, whose knees ached on the pocked-stone floor of the church-come-school, were glad indeed when Lady Grey, wife of Bishop Grey, was moved to donate funds for a new, smooth, warm wooden floor. Some 20 years on, in 1879, the delighted Anglican population of Kalk Bay was able to move their worship to their beautiful new Holy Trinity church building. Three dedicated ladies stepped forward to donate funds for their dear parish in Kalk Bay, one Alice Pocklington and her friends, sisters Harriet and Charlotte Humphreys. Alice and her friends were remarkable and, at the same time, typical: remarkable in that few in any era have cared enough for others to 'step up' as they did, but also typical of their own era, when it was not unusual for wealthy people of religious inclination to be generous to civic projects. These three ladies also built Douglas Cottage as an orphanage, enlarged the Anglican mission school, and converted Dalebrook House into a cottage hospital. Their efforts made a great contribution to the welfare of the whole community.³⁰ Alice, Harriet and Charlotte hired a top-notch London architect to design the Kalk Bay Holy Trinity Church, and it stands proud and pretty today.



The Holy Trinity Church and Dalebrook House circa 1900.

³⁰ Walker (2010).



Anglican Church, Simon's Town.



Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Kalk Bay.

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) played an important part in education development in South Africa, and was well represented in Kalk Bay and Simon's Town. The DRC mission school in Kalk Bay was run from a room behind the church. It was a small concern, and like all schools designated 'mission school', it was intended mainly for poorer children. Then, as now in South Africa, 'poor' often meant Muslim, coloured or black children. Mission schools often provided only four to six years of education.

In times past, religion was often the backbone of education, and most early schools of the South Peninsula are, or were, associated with mosques or churches. Over the years, the seafaring South Peninsula attracted to itself people of several cultures. As is commonly the case where societies are slowly knit together from several cultures, each group within the small towns of the South Peninsula promoted their own religious traditions. Religious groupings, in turn, promoted certain customs based on those of faraway mother institutions of the same name. The South Peninsula boasts many a well-loved building bearing up the traditions of Islam, Dutch Protestantism, Anglicanism, Catholicism, Wesleyanism and many other faiths. The architectural language employed by different faiths is interesting, and it is worth looking for similarities in buildings made by, for instance, Catholics or Muslims in different South Peninsula locations. Some schools have lost their ties with the religion and have become secular establishments. Historically, the educational offerings of the varied schools differed enormously, as there was little standardisation, and schools were free to teach what they wished, at least up until 1853, when the government initiated its first *Report on Public Education*, which did more in the way of investigation than implementation.



The Dutch Reformed church in Simon's Town.

Most religions urge their adherents to take care of their broader communities in a multitude of ways. Schools and churches have often been safe havens in difficult times. The role of the South Peninsula communities as safe hideaways for runaways and outcasts has been explored by some authors – the Simon's Town area was a known safe haven for runaway slaves from the 1700s (see "Sultans and slaves"). Schools and churches played a role in fostering open-mindedness, although they could also hold a very conservative position – not enough study of the varied schools has been done to know what kind of philosophical positions guided their teachings. But it has been often noted that Simon's Town and Kalk Bay communities exhibited an ability to allow differences with grace and to be tolerant of change. Before the Group Areas Act removals, Simon's Town had the reputation for having been one of South Africa's most integrated micro-societies. Kalk Bay too was known as a place of relatively easy racial relations. However, there were marked divisions along poverty lines in both communities. The achievements of the South Peninsula's hybrid communities in having created their own version of social cohesion, whilst drawing nourishment from the customs of their varied past, must in part be the achievements of the teachers. Putting education first, and racial issues second, was successfully achieved in some South Peninsula schools, and the Simon's Town Museum rightly celebrates this, whilst also highlighting the tragedy of divisive attitudes that typified other schools. Language, more than anything, was the historic definer of a divide in education, until the Group Areas Act came into being and forced a racially based policy onto education. Language itself remained an issue, however, as the spoken language of a person was one of the qualities used in the very arbitrary application of the idea of separate 'races'.

Language has always been a hotly debated and conflict-ridden topic in education in the Cape as well as in South Africa more broadly. In South Africa today, students are free to choose two languages of tuition from 11 local languages, and several 'foreign' languages besides. This liberal attitude to choice of language is very recent, however, introduced only in the mid-1990s. And it is interesting that English, as a relative latecomer to South African soil, is the most readily accepted common tongue – most accept this as a 'natural', almost Darwinian, rise to prominence of the English tongue. Rather, the origins of English prevalence in South Africa are to be found in active promotion, particularly in schools. In contrast, indigenous languages were long suppressed at the Cape – including all the Nguni and Khoi languages, and, to a lesser extent, Afrikaans. To understand the context in which schools of the South Peninsula would have made their choices about their pupil intake and their language of tuition, it is worthwhile to consider broad government policies that influenced educators to make their choices. Education can never be unbiased: policy on education is based largely on the attitude of politicians. Politicians know that "education is everyone's business",³¹ and it is to politicians, more than anyone else, we must look to find the shaping of the South Peninsula school offerings through the centuries.

During the Dutch era, education was rather a *laissez faire* business. In contrast, the 19th century was "the British century" in South Africa, and British administrators made sure to put their stamp on this most vital of Cape society's institutions during their rule. Later, in the 20th century, after the country passed from British hands, the stamp of British education methods and policy remained. Through the increasingly racialised years after World War II, culminating in apartheid, education in South Africa came to express humanity's best and worst qualities. Many non-governmental organisations and small schools became renowned for their

31 Howes (1998) p 197.

resistance efforts to oppose the shutting down of schools set up during the colonial era. In the South Peninsula, a number of schools were nonetheless shut due to racial policies, such as the Group Areas Act of 1967 and other laws specifically aimed at reorganising education along racial lines. Many schools in Simon's Town were closed, drastically affecting the continuity of education in the town. Some of these were the infant school (founded 1851), the Wildschutsbrand school (founded 1860s), a multi-racial school for children of the surrounding farms (shut down in the 1970s), the St Francis Xavier mission school (1948–1967), the Muslim school (1923–1967) and the Arsenal Road school (1911–1970), which all suffered the same fate due to the Group Areas Act.



KALK BAY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

Pupils of the St James mission school, 1947.

It was largely the government of the day's highly objectionable efforts to impose specific languages upon schools that led to the education protests that swept through South Africa in 1976. Although most famously associated with Soweto (in greater Johannesburg), the fury of 1976 was played out across South Africa. In the South Peninsula, schools felt the repercussions: This was the moment when Jonathan Jansen,³² one of the South Peninsula's most famous sons and now a world-renowned education expert, was drawn fully into the politics of education.

Challenges have often tried the mettle of determined teachers: The will to learn and to teach burns strongly in some, and such a teacher is Jansen. Internationally celebrated for his wisdom and leadership, Professor Jansen was once a young lad whose whole world lay between his home and the streets in Steenberg and Muizenberg beach. As a kid, he spent many years more interested in riding his bike and playing soccer than in doing his homework. Encouragement from his high-school Latin teacher and running coach made Jansen see he could fly high in life. In spite of having experienced the traumas of Group Areas Act removals first-hand within his family, and having suffered racial slurs, Jansen put his past to work in a

³² Davis (2011).

determined way, and is now famous (or infamous, for some) for statements that provide 'no excuses'-type of encouragement to others in difficult circumstances.

Jansen's views on redemption and forgiveness, with a tough dose of realist criticism, have made him arguably the most important voice in education in South Africa today. Jansen keeps his ties with his South Peninsula primary school, Sullivan Primary. Sullivan Primary is one of the schools set up during those unsettled post-group areas years. The school celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2013. For many schools of the South Peninsula, the years 2013 to 2015 mark the dual anniversaries of both the implementation of the Group Areas Act and their founding. The difficult conditions of the 'birth' of many of these group areas schools are remembered at these anniversary functions – the struggle to fit into new school buildings, and the dust and wind of the newly built ones on Cape Flats sands. The successes of the



Sullivan Primary school children enjoying an outdoor science laboratory experience with headmaster Ernest Moore, 2013.

ensuing 50 years demonstrate that schools are above all about people, community and human effort – with effort, adversity becomes manageable. Sullivan Primary's learners singing their school song, "Anywhere, everywhere, we will strive on", exemplify this spirit.

As a former learner, Professor Jansen attended Sullivan Primary's 50th anniversary to share their joy, see his old friends, and spread his optimistic views on the power of hard work. Jansen insists on a forward-looking, redemptive attitude to past wrongs and future success in education. He

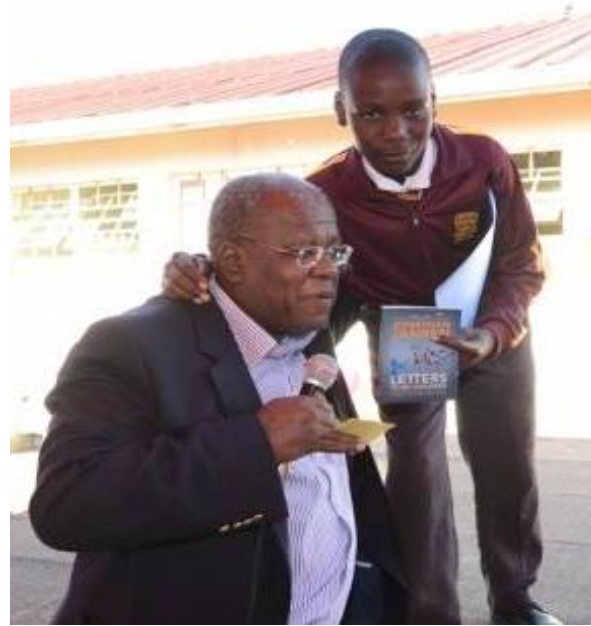
shows the way for South Africans to look back together over the past history of broader society and of education, and to draw from it valuable lessons, without becoming mired in depression. Why, for example, did it take over 200 years after the creation of written Xhosa for this South African language to gain official status as a 'language of instruction'? Useful Xhosa (as well as 'Hottentot'/Khoi) vocabulary lists were drawn up as early as 1777, but were not widely publicised. Xhosa in consistent written form dates from 1820.³³ Yet, neither Xhosa nor Hottentot/Khoi appears to have been considered as languages of instruction in early schools – even in Simon's Town, where a population of Africans, both locals and ex-slaves, settled during the mid-1800s. The marginalisation of indigenous African languages was, in the broader sense, part of the war on the speakers of those languages: By the early 1800s, Xhosa speakers were outlawed from the Cape Colony, forced by a series of laws to live in territories defined in battle behind the infamous eastern frontier some 1 000 km from the South Peninsula. They and their language were only welcome in the politically defined Cape Colony through written petition to the British Crown – and that petition had to be written in English.

³³ Jordan.

Whereas the Xhosa and Khoikhoi were conquered in pitched warfare, Afrikaans was subjected to another kind of battle, namely a battle for cultural supremacy, and schools were on the front line of this cultural rivalry. By 1795, when the British had decided it was their turn to seize the Cape Colony and the people in it, Afrikaans had become the language of everyday and business affairs. Although Afrikaans was a well-established and broadly used lingua franca, Dutch was still the language of law and government. As the early decades of the 19th century passed, so the British empire grew, and grew, and grew. Along with it, the idea of the planting of 'Englishness' in both language and culture was adopted as a major project by the British colonial system in all of their many colonies. By 1822, English was declared the sole official language of the Cape. This strong political move marked the end of what had been a quarter century of language neutrality. Sensibly, and with much political astuteness,

Lord Charles Somerset (the second British governor) and his administration had allowed life at the Cape to continue much as it had under the Dutch. Somerset was a masterful politician, who danced his way nimbly through the difficult social terrain set up by the mingling of local Cape society and new arrivals from Great Britain. Somerset appeased everyone, not least by hosting fabulous parties. However, his British subjects started to noisily oppose policies that allowed the prevalence of the 'Capiers' (Cape colonists); in other colonies, 'Britishness' had already taken hold more firmly and completely. Academics have marked a shift in the British empire towards adopting strong cultural chauvinism from around 1795.³⁴ English language dominance in South African education was further enforced by the policy drawn up by Sir John Herschel in 1934.³⁵ Herschel's ideas were strongly related to the growing dreams of the British realm to steep their colonies in 'Englishness'.

At the Cape, however, the seeds of 'Englishness' found ground both fertile and barren. Afrikaans speakers resisted English language policy steadfastly: The Cape's foremost school, Tot Nut van't Algemeen, which started up in central Cape Town in 1800, was an Afrikaans-medium school and the standard-bearer for education at the Cape. Many schools looked to Tot Nut as an example. Tot Nut's curriculum was innovative for the time, following what was then up-to-the-minute Enlightenment philosophy. Tot Nut's example of education is known to have been highly influential beyond its own walls: Researchers know that, at least from the early 1800s, there were educators at the Cape committed to giving at least some scholars 'the best' (or, at least, what they considered to be 'the best'), having been not only committed to nationalism in education, be it English or Afrikaans. Thus, although a school such as Tot Nut was an Afrikaans establishment, and its philosophy distinctly 'Dutch school', it



Professor Jonathan Jansen presenting a copy of his book "Letters from our Children" to a Sullivan Primary learner on the occasion of the school's 50th anniversary.

³⁴ Ross (2004).

³⁵ Ferguson & Immelman (1961).

was allowed by the British colonial government to flourish and become influential. Although, on the face of it, the colonial government's 1822 language policy looked as though it would suppress education in Afrikaans, it actually encouraged the growth of Afrikaans as a teaching medium in some ways. This was because the policy inadvertently encouraged the establishment of private Afrikaans schools throughout the colony. Like the example of Tot Nut, the history of the schools of the Southern Peninsula also serves as an example of the resilience of dedicated educators, who worked hard to transcend the boundaries of race, language and religion in the pursuit of good education. Schools such as the Undenominational Public School, which became Simon's Town High School in 1896, is still a flourishing community school today.

Today's giants of education, such as Professor Jansen, urge individuals to take on the task of making education work for all. His first precept for education to work in South Africa is that "teachers need to turn up for work every day". The daily grind, the substance of the school child's learning, is often shown to be surprisingly consistent over long expanses of time: Centuries pass, and yet, children still need to learn very much the same things to get by and to get ahead. Wars, suspicions, superstitions, rivalry and the will to power – these were all forces that directly shaped the history of education policy at the Cape. Over the decades, the British government struggled to decide whether it was best to educate the colonists and natives whom they sought to control, or whether minimal or no education for their subjects was the better option. By the time the Nationalist government inherited the education system, ideas of different types of education 'suited' to the different races' perceived needs were well established. Apartheid then solidified these ideas, with Dr Hendrik Verwoerd famously saying in 1950: "There is no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd."

The process of establishing good, solid education for all is still ongoing in South Africa, not least in the South Peninsula. Nelson Mandela said: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."³⁶ Education offers a levelling of playing fields in an unequal society. Having been built in 1814, the first Anglican church in South Africa³⁷ can offer a unique perspective of one church's views of the ups and downs of history. The church lost 70% of its congregation to Group Areas Act removals in 1967, but the congregation has endured, partly at its original site, and partly through the establishment of St Clare's Church in Ocean View – the 'new home' of the displaced congregant. Both congregations now cross the mountain from time to time to share worship. From both communities, those with the means and energy work together to assist poorer children, now mainly bound to Ocean View, with educational opportunities. Possibly the most important lesson a school can teach is to persevere – as the kids at Sullivan Primary sing in their school song, "Anywhere, everywhere, we will strive on".

³⁶ Mandela (2003).

³⁷ Anon (2000).

Acknowledgements and disclaimer

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