



HISTORY OF BEAUFORT WEST

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Other Famous Persons from Beaufort West

Bibliography

Too often travellers treat Beaufort West as a mere stopover on their journeys and not a destination as such. This bustling town has been a hive of activity since its establishment and can currently sleep 6,000 visitors per night at any given time.

Establishment and Growth

Establishment of Beaufort

Like several other towns in the Central Karoo, Beaufort West has its beginnings in the 18th century. In **1760** the farm Hooyvlakte was registered in the name of Jacob le Clercq. In **1797** Jacob married his second wife and a couple of years after that he died. His son, Abraham, and his stepmother continued farming. In no time at all Hooyvlakte became one of the most fertile farms north of Stellenbosch and Tulbach.¹

The magistrates of Tulbagh and Graaff-Reinett, Fischer and Stockenström, were tasked by Lord Charles Somerset, the then Governor of the Cape, to find a suitable place for a new town and magisterial seat. Hooyvlakte was identified as the ideal place. Both Hooyvlakte and a second farm of De Klerk², Boesjesmansberg, were sold to the government for 13,333 Rix-dollars and a stand on the northern banks of the Gamka River.³

The district of Beaufort was proclaimed on **27 November 1818**. The town was laid out in **1820** and became a municipality in **1836** unofficially. It was named after the Dukedom of Beaufort which has been in the family of Lord Charles Somerset since **1682**.⁴ The name Beaufort was changed to Beaufort West in **1861** in order to distinguish this town from similarly named towns like Port Beaufort and Fort Beaufort.⁵ For at least ten years after that, however, Beaufort West was still known as Beaufort.⁶

The first 53 stands that were surveyed are situated in Donkin and Bird streets, between the Kuils and Gamka Rivers. Kerk and Mark (Church and Market) Streets followed. De Clercq was the first landowner in Beaufort and he built his new house (which was later to become the Beaufort Hotel) at the northeastern side. De Clercq's original house at Hooyvlakte was to become the first drostdy and in the time of magistrate Meintjes (**1834**), a prison.⁷

On **19 January 1837** the first municipal regulations are officially adopted and proclaimed in the Government Gazette No. 1624 on **3 February 1838**.⁸ With this proclamation, Beaufort West became the first municipality in South Africa. However, full municipal status would only follow much later. According to Viviers Beaufort West received full municipal status on **26 February 1904** as proclaimed in the Government Gazette No 58 of that year.⁹ However, according to Bekker this only happened in **1907** with R W Maddison as first mayor.¹⁰ More information on the [early development of Beaufort West](#)

¹ Viviers, G.H. & S. 1969. p3

² Le Clercq was changed to the Dutch form, De Klerk

³ Viviers, G.H. & S. 1969. p5

⁴ Viviers, G.H. & S. 1969. p5

⁵ Haak, F. 1999. p26

⁶ Viviers, G.H. & S. 1969. p6

⁷ Viviers, G.H. & S. 1969. p7-8

⁸ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p10

⁹ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p10

¹⁰ Bekker, F. p.130

The Establishment of a Town Hall

An important milestone in the development and growth of Beaufort West was the establishment of a town hall.

On **20 July 1866** Beaufort West's [Town Hall](#) was taken into possession. A prerequisite for erecting the building was that it should include a library. On **23 October 1866** a bell imported from France was installed. On **25 October 1869** permission was granted to the postmaster to use one of the rooms as post office. By **29 January 1885**, however, this space became too small and a part of the library as well as the commissioner's office were also allocated to the post office. On **8 July 1878** a letterbox was affixed in the wall at the front door as well as a lamp above the door. The latter was in all probability the first outside wall-light in town. On **7 September 1894** the post office moved out of the town hall. The space previously occupied by the post office was allocated to the library. On **21 January 1901** the Council was informed that the side rooms were given to the commanding officer of the Remounts and that the British forces intend using town hall as a hospital. On **18 March 1901** the post office moved back in and on **16 April 1907** the library moved to a new building erected right next to the Town Hall. On **3 December 1965** the Town Hall was proclaimed a National Monument in Government Gazette, No 1912.¹¹

Kwa-Mandlenkozi and Rustdene

In **1879**, Beaufort West's town engineer, Avon Bruce-Brand, a former bodyguard of Queen Victoria and the man responsible for building of the Springfontein Dam north of the town 10 years earlier, was asked to identify a suitable area for a *Black Location*. He chose the southern side of the village and the western bank of the Gamka River. In little over a century this area was to become Kwa-Mandlenkosi Township.¹²

Bruce-Brand tabled a proposal for the location at a council meeting on **December 1, 1879**. This was accepted on **January 16, 1880**, and he was instructed to divide the area into stands. People who could afford to pay a municipal tax of 2/6d a month were allowed to build their own houses on these stands. Jonas Masimona was appointed supervisor of this first location on **December 14, 1880**. A "kaia", or small dwelling of raw stone, was erected for him and he received a salary of £3/10 a month. Jonas held this position until **August 21, 1883**, when F Potgieter succeeded him.¹³

By **April 1900**, 466 adults and 514 children lived in the township, which for many years was home to both Black and Coloured people. Rustdene, Newton and other Coloured townships eventually grew out of this township. Expansion started gradually after **1925** when the government proclaimed the old location a *Bantu Area*. Most residents at the time were Coloured. Expansion into Rustdene began in **1942** with the erection of 385 houses and continued well into the **1960s**. The Black township, which mushroomed along the banks of the Gamka, was for years referred to as "The Location". It had a colourful collection of mud, stone, iron and Hessian-covered huts. The Hessian huts received the fitting name of "Sakkiesbaai" from the inhabitants.¹⁴

Over the years many representations were made to the local authorities about the improvement of conditions in the township. Eventually the community felt its demands were being heard and they changed the name from "The Location" to Sidesaviwa, which

¹¹ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p21-22

¹² Beaufort West Tourism Bureau

¹³ Beaufort West Tourism Bureau

¹⁴ Beaufort West Tourism Bureau

means, “at last we have been heard”. The township retained this name until clouds of conflict throughout South Africa gave rise to ‘The Struggle.’ A young comrade, the 24-year old Mandlenkosi “Tsaka” Kratchi, a promising young boxer, was shot and killed in a police raid in Sidesaviwa on **January 22, 1985**. His death so shook the community that they opted to change the township’s name to Kwa-Mandlenkosi (the place of Mandlenkosi) to honour his memory. In time, the main road and high school were also named in memory of this young comrade.¹⁵

Municipal Services

Water

In the arid Karoo a sufficient water supply for both drinking and irrigation purposes can be seen as a matter of the utmost importance for the establishment of any settlement

The inhabitants of the first 43 stands didn’t have to worry about water. Strong fountains (one in the Gamka and one in the Kuils River) provided sufficient drinking and irrigation water. There were also enough slaves to carry water to the houses. With the erection of more houses, wells were dug. Since the water was only a few feet below the surface even this provided no inconvenience. As the town developed, however, more efficient planning for water provision was required. In **1839** the public donated £600 towards the building of a dam and flourmill. In **January 1849** the local surveyor, CL Stretch, was approached in connection with the building of a dam “teen geringe koste” (at low cost). At that stage there were already 53 irrigation stands. Stretch, however, was not able to come up with an acceptable plan. In **1851** a small dam was constructed close to the fountain at the reed-bush next to the Kuils River to which river water was directed. On **6 May 1851** it was decided to construct a small building over the fountain in the reed-bush. (This building washed away in **1869**.) The dam was rebuilt in **1853** in fear of it bursting its banks. In **February 1854** a municipal commission was called to try and determine whether there is any connection between the fountain in the Gamka and the one in the reed-bush. No connection could be found. **1858** proved to be another dry year and on **13 September** the Council decided to link the two fountains’ in order to augment the irrigation water supply. A furrow was constructed from the Gamka Fountain to the one in the reed-bush. In places it was up to six feet deep and dangerous as such. In **1866** a Mrs Bees fell into the furrow and drowned. This prompted the decision to cover the furrow with rocks (as it is to this day).¹⁶

One of the first dams to be built was Tinley’s Dam. Tinley was the local magistrate at that time and since the government provided the funds for this dam, it was decided to name it after Tinley. Although the dam was only completed in **1872**, a decision to build one was already made in **1853** and on **9 May** of the same year a suitable place was identified close to the Gamka Fountain, next to the river. For years the local brick-maker used this dam and originally people did their washing there but on **1 August 1875** the use of soap in the dam was prohibited. This dam has broken twice in its existence but could be fixed each time. Today it falls within the terrain of the golf course at the western side of North-End (“Noord-Einde”).¹⁷

Around **1863** a local Scottish engineer suggested that a dam be built in the Soutrivierpoort, approximately 30 miles (48 km) northeast of the town. This suggestion was rejected, but

¹⁵ Beaufort West Tourism Bureau

¹⁶ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p25-9

¹⁷ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p25-9

on **12 September 1865** the Town Council decided it would be feasible to build a permanent reservoir the Kuils River, at a location situated just above town. By **18 March 1867** the dam wall has reached a stage where the Kuils River could be blocked off. On **10 November 1867** George Wallis was informed that his tender of £1,750 was accepted for the building of the cofferdam. The dam was completed in **1869**. Not all the citizens of Beaufort were, however, comfortable with the close proximity of the new dam. On **23 March 1869** the Council received a petition signed by 25 of the town's inhabitants in which they warn of the possibility of heavy rains causing the dam wall to break and flooding the town. The townspeople's anxiety proved to be warranted. After a cloudburst and heavy rains in the mountains the dam wall collapsed on **23 October 1869** and 600 million gallons (2 700 million litres) of water rushed through the town.¹⁸

After four and a half years' of quarrelling and weighing the pros and cons, it was finally decided on **7 April 1874** to rebuild the dam but this time with larger outlets. By **2 March 1880** the rebuilding of the dam was completed. The total cost of the original dam was £3,561. The rebuilding costs, including the enlarged outlets, came to £18,106. On **22 April 1895** the entire dam area was declared a nature reserve. **1908** was yet another exceptionally dry year and the dam was almost empty. An attempt was made to save the fish but most of the fish died after being caught. A decision was made to enlarge the dam and on **1 August 1916** the work was completed. **1918** saw another flood and the inhabitants had to flee town because the water reached the top of the wall and the dam was close to 100% full. In **April 1941** the area saw another flood but the dam wall held.¹⁹ Today Springfontein Dam (indicated as such on the relevant 1:50 000 map sheet, otherwise known as the Beaufort West Dam) can still be seen at the northern entrance to the town, but it is almost completely silted up and contains water only after heavy rains.

On **1 December 1879** a certain Weeber made a proposal that the fountain below Springfontein Dam, utilised for drinking water, be closed off and be channelled by means of pipes to the town all along Donkin Street. Taps could then be affixed at convenient communal spots. Within a couple of months a neat little stone building was erected over the fountain with a pump on top but nothing ever came of the pipes.²⁰

In preparation for the intended railway line that would run through Beaufort, the Cape government informed the town council on **25 November 1878** of its intention to build a dam west of the town to serve the railway station and houses they intended erecting within two years. The well-known engineer Thomas Bain obtained the contract for building this dam. On **6 November 1888** the Droë (Dry) River, a tributary of the Gamka River, was blocked off by means of a cofferdam. A local railway foreman, Tommy Walker, was particularly popular amongst the railway people and was it decided to name the dam after him. This name, however, was never totally accepted by the farming community who referred to it as Stolshoek Dam since it was situated on the nearby farm, Stolshoek.²¹

On **June 17, 1892**, the town council decided that a more effective and modern drinking water system was needed. An advisor was appointed and a tender of £1,890,00 for the excavation of a water tunnel was accepted on **February 5, 1895**. The water system starts at the foot of the Nuweveld Mountains, nine kilometers north of Beaufort West, and consists of an underground shaft chamber that is linked to a pipeline by a 358-metre tunnel. The pipeline conveys the water to town by means of gravity. Some 271 m of the tunnel was excavated through rock. Sections of the sides and roof of the tunnel were strengthened by concrete. The remaining 87 m of the tunnel was constructed through soil

¹⁸ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p25-9

¹⁹ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p25-9

²⁰ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p25-9

²¹ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p25-9

formations. Here the sides of the tunnel were compacted with rock and the roof dome was wedged in with rock. A further three access shafts were sunk over the length of the tunnel. Water supply to the system is via seepage through the cracks and seams in the sides and roof of the tunnel. Vertical holes were also drilled into the floor at the central shaft chamber and at other points in the tunnel to further water delivery. The actual yield from this system in the early days is unknown²² but ironically the seepage from Gamka Dam that was built 4,3 km upstream from the system in **1955** forms a primary source of the system. The maximum flow from the system is 16 litre per second. During droughts, however, and depending on the water levels of the dam, a situation of zero flow could arise. Originally, the water was conveyed to Beaufort West by means of 125 mm diameter cast iron pipe. Over time, a large section of the pipeline has been replaced by asbestos and cement pipes. This historic water tunnel will continue to play an integral part in the town's water supply for years to come.²³

On **21 October 1895** the Council accepted a tender from FF de Koker for the building of a livestock dam at Grootplaat, the plateau on top of the Nuweveld Mountains. This was completed by **mid-1896** and is still in use today. Because stones in the walls are interwoven with wire, the dam is known as Draaddam ("Wire Dam").²⁴

Another dam was built in **1905** in the Kuils River at the eastern side of Die Lande across from Van der Spuystreet. The torrential floods of **1918**, however, proved to be the undoing of this dam and it was never rebuilt.²⁵

In **1907** a decision was taken to build a livestock dam at Kleinplaat. The only tender, that of PJ Verster Snr, was accepted on **7 April 1908**. This dam construction also consisted of wire and stone. However, it did not withstand the test of time and was washed away by heavy rains.²⁶

In **1955** the Gamka Dam was built eight miles north of Beaufort West, just beneath the confluence of the Donkergatspruit and the Gamka River. This dam is fed by a catchment of 41 square miles in the Nuweveld Mountains.²⁷ Presently Beaufort West's water supply comes from Gamka Dam and 19 boreholes. The historic water tunnel will also continue to play an integral part of the town's water supply in the future.²⁸

Apart from keeping the odd duck or pig out of irrigation furrows, the potential pollution of the town's water resources received serious attention for the first time on **November 5, 1874**, when the Town Council decided that nobody would be allowed to do their washing at any place in the two rivers any longer. Washing would from now on be limited to the drift in the Kuils River. In **1907** concrete washing basins were erected in two rows on the banks of the river at the initiative of Councilor Archie Krummeck. This also meant an additional income to the council. The basins were numbered from 1 to 51 and tickets were sold to the public for using a specific basin on a specific day. In **1937**, a laundry was created in the old power station, which eventually closed in **1952** and from then on everybody had to do his washing at home.²⁹ In **1899** quite a stir was created when the health inspector discovered that the British camp at North End was burying their night-soil on the koppie above the

²² According to the Beaufort Bugle of February/March 1996 the system yielded 14 400 gallons (65 462 litre) per day in 1898 which far less than the current maximum flow of 1 382 400 litre per 24 hour period.

²³ Venter, J.T. 1999. p49

²⁴ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p25-9

²⁵ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p25-9

²⁶ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p25-9

²⁷ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p25-9

²⁸ Venter, J.T. 1999. p49

²⁹ 'Blink Idee vir Wasdag in die Karoo,' **Rose's Round-Up, August 1998**

dam. During heavy rains the night-soil would be washed into the dam. The problem was solved by relocating to where the Hesperos home for the aged is today.³⁰

Lighting

Public lighting in Beaufort West started in all probability on **8 July 1878** when an outside lamp was affixed above the door of the post office, which at that stage occupied part of the town hall.

On **28 March 1899** the request from a Cape Town gas company to erect one of its new patent gas lamps in a central part of the town was welcomed by the town council. The council was notified on **29 January 1900** that the lamppost and gas lamp has been erected and that it would be lighted for the first time at **eight o'clock** that evening. Six years later on **13 June 1906**, at **7pm**, shopkeeper PJ Alport demonstrated one of his new *Lux*-petrol lamps which he erected at the corner of Kerk and Donkin Streets. The price for such a lamp was £25 but the commissioners did not fall for this demonstration and did not buy any of Alport's lamps. On **1 February 1910** a travelling salesman from the firm Connoley demonstrated his *Spaarzaam*-petrol lamp to the commissioners and this time it was decided to buy twelve of these. One of *Spaarzaam*- lamps were erected on the dam wall at the southern outlet. A Coloured by name of Klaas Koopman was appointed to service the twelve *Spaarzaam*-lamps. Each night, just before dark, Klaas could be seen riding his bicycle from lamp to lamp, filling it with just enough fuel to last until four in the morning and lighting it. With the exception of a few times during the First World War when fuel was not available, Klaas dutifully did this job for 15 years. These lampposts were placed right in the middle of the streets and the local doctor, dr Trichardt, once crashed into one and had to pay damages. The lamps were no longer needed when Beaufort West switched on its electricity for the first electrical streetlights in town on **7 October 1922**.³¹

Streets and bridges

Up to the year **1942** Beaufort West had no tarred roads. Each day the streets were watered by means of a water truck to combat the dust churned up by the traffic. This was not very effective and in **1943** the first streets were tarred namely Donkin Street, the section of Bird Street between Meintjes and Danie Theron Streets, and the section of Church Street between Bird and Nuwe Streets.³²

During **1947** the town engineer experimented by having Danie Theron Street sprayed with oil but this only brought temporary relief.³³

Early in the **1950s** Church Street in the direction of Hospital Hill was tarred and in **1954** the extension of Church Street over the Eric Louw Bridge to Hillside as well as the upper part of Donkin Street around the jail since this was the only untarred section of the national road between Cape Town and Johannesburg. In **1955 – 1958** a further 17 streets were tarred and the rest is history.³⁴

On **2 September 1891** the Weeber Bridge across the Gamka River was officially inaugurated. In **1949** a bridge across the Gamka River at the southern end of Donkin

³⁰ 'Besoedeling is Niks Nuuts nie,' **Rose's Round-Up, August 1998**

³¹ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p38

³² Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p43-44

³³ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p43-44

³⁴ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p43-44

Street was completed. A large dual way-traffic bridge between the town and station that replaced the old Weeber Bridge was inaugurated on **2 December 1961**.³⁵

Donkin Street itself, together with Bird Street the first two streets of the town, has been named after a very romantic man. Sir Rufane Donkin, who acted as Governor from **1820 – 1821** while Lord Charles Somerset was in England on leave. He was one of the world's true romantics. His wife Elizabeth died while they were stationed in India. He was devastated at the loss of the love of his life. Sir Rufane buried her in India, but had Elizabeth's heart embalmed so that he could carry it with him in a casket wherever he went. Many years later, when Sir Rufane died, his beloved Elizabeth's heart was buried with him in England.³⁶

Commercial Services

From the earliest of times through-traffic formed the life-artery of the town. The community of Beaufort West was always ensured of a continuous flow of customers to stimulate the growth of commercial facilities. It started with the north-south wagon road and after diamonds were discovered in **1868** Beaufort West became a popular stopover on the route between Cape Town and Kimberley. This town now entered its 'golden age.' Diamond diggers streamed through Beaufort West in large numbers. Hoteliers, bakers, producers of fodder and stable owners could almost not keep up with the demand for food and supplies. The completion of the railroad between Cape Town and Kimberley put a damper on the economic upswing in Beaufort West, but after gold was discovered in the Transvaal travellers started streaming through the town again. Well known entrepreneurs, such as Barney Barnato, invested in Beaufort West in order to utilise the passing traffic to the full.³⁷ Today the national road between Cape Town and Johannesburg still generates a large volume of through-traffic.

Shops

One of the first big shops was the well-known P.J. Alport & Co. Situated at the corner of Donkin Street and what was later to become Meintjes Street, it was in business from **1835 to 1965** after which the building served as storage rooms. Alport & Co ensured that the residents of Beaufort West were always up to date on the latest trends. In **1870**, for instance, they had on sale the first "Tandschar matches zonder reuk".³⁸

Soon more shops were to follow and Watson, Tennant & Co was short on the heels of Alport when they opened approximately **1839**. In **1850** Beaufort gets its first professional photographers, Townsend, Townsend and Folley as well as an apothecary. Krummeck's Bakery opened in **1860** and in **1896** Combrink & Co (butchery). In **1899** 'Koos Vettetjie,' as he was known, started trading under the name of J.P.J. Pienaar & Compagnie, Beperkt. After Pienaar's death in **1933** M.C. ('Oom Thys') Ellis bought the building and opened a general repair shop. Somewhere along the line the repair shop also started specialising in bicycles. The Good Hope Café was opened in **1902** by two Greeks, the Tzamtzis brothers and by **1915** the town had its first mechanic workshop, C. de Smidt & Co.³⁹ Both [MC Ellis se Werkwinkel \(MC Ellis' Workshop\)](#). (See photo1 and photo 2) and [Good Hope Café](#) is

³⁵ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p44-45

³⁶ Beaufort West Tourism Bureau

³⁷ Rose's Round-Up, Oct, 1997

³⁸ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p67-8

³⁹ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p68-74

still trading today. Inside Ellis's Workshop various items of interest are displayed. Hanging from the roof is [one of the earlier bicycles](#) with wooden wheels and which is not propelled forward by means of a chain. Also on display is an early version of what could very well be [the first exercise bike](#). "Oom Thys" was renowned for being a very practical man and he devised this contraption for a lady who was ordered by her doctor to get some exercise to strengthen her back and legs.

Bayer and Davidoff opened a large shop in **1901**. A large variety of goods, including groceries, were advertised thoroughly. The shop had inter alia 2350 pair of boots, 50 types of hats for men and 2800 men's shirts.⁴⁰

Hotels

Beaufort Hotel: Abraham de Clercq's first homestead, described as "The Old Hotel" and "De Oude Hotel" in documents dating **1870-75** was also known as the Beaufort Hotel. From **1880** it became the New Commercial Hotel. On **28 May 1912** a second storey was built. In **1936** the building is turned into flats known as the Star Flats.⁴¹

Commercial Hotel: It was erected in approximately **1845** at the western side of Nuwe Street, straight across from Meintjes Street. After some years it closed down but in **1873** a person named Honeybone bought the building and reopened the hotel. In approximately **1900** it was acquired by Cheifitz who used it as a shop until about **1934** when it was turned into dwelling units.⁴²

Royal Hotel: Situated at the corner of Meintjes and Donkin Street, it opened its doors on the **24th of January 1876** offering 'good clean accommodation, stabling and fodder.' It served the travellers of the wagon route and was the preferred stop for the *Red Line Coaches*. It was once a big double-storey home.⁴³

Masonic Hotel: In **June 1879** AK Morrison announced the opening of his new hotel as "Opposite Town Hall. A first class hotel, two doors from post and telegraph offices. Good stabling and forage."⁴⁴ It is known today as the [Karoo Lodge](#).

Railway Hotel: The first trains did not have dining salons and passengers who didn't have food, usually visited the Railway Hotel. It was erected in **1880** and was not really more than a refreshment room and tavern. This hotel caused a lot of strife amongst the local population because it sold alcoholic beverages on Sundays.⁴⁵

Camp Hotel: Situated in the Railway Camp and erected in **1884** by George Wright. In **1891** it was totally destroyed by a fire and was never rebuilt.⁴⁶

Queens Hotel: Completed in **1908** it was one of the first hotels to have gaslights.⁴⁷

Oasis Hotel: Opened in **1958** in Donkin Street, 66.⁴⁸

⁴⁰Bekker, F. p.195

⁴¹ Vivier, G.H. & S. p62-63

⁴² Vivier, G.H. & S. p63

⁴³ Vivier, G.H. & S. p63

⁴⁴ Vivier, G.H. & S. p64

⁴⁵ Vivier, G.H. & S. p64

⁴⁶ Vivier, G.H. & S. p64

⁴⁷ Vivier, G.H. & S. p65

⁴⁸ Vivier, G.H. & S. p65

Wagon Wheel Motel: Situated just above the Springfontein Dam, it opened its doors on **15 May 1955** and was the first fully licensed motel in the country.⁴⁹

Liquor trade

After the first liquor licences were issued in **1835** the liquor trade flourished but was soon to cause friction. On **6 April 1836** the Dutch Reformed Church Council decided to ask the government to close “de kantienen” (taverns) on “Nagmaals- voorbereidings- en dangseggingsdae” (Communion, preparatory and thanksgiving days). In **1854** the local licence council recommended that the sale of liquor be limited to “respectable people”. In **1875** the Church Council received a complaint that churchgoers repeatedly attend services under the influence of liquor.⁵⁰

Banking

The town’s first bank, *Beaufort Bank*, opened in **1854**. On **1 April 1864** the bank was taken over by the *Standard Bank of British South Africa Ltd*.⁵¹

In **1879** the *Cape Commercial Bank* opened a local regional branch office at the corner of Hill and Nuwe Streets. A couple of years later, however, it was closed again.⁵²

On **16 April 1891** *De Nationale Bank der Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek Beperkt* opens in Pretoria and soon had branches in other places. In 1902 the name of this bank changed to *The National Bank of South Africa*. On **16 June 1915**, the National Bank opened a branch in the Pritchard building at the corner of Donkin and Church Streets. In **1925** *The National Bank of South Africa, the Colonial Bank and the Anglo-Egyptian Bank* amalgamated to form *Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial and Overseas), or DCO*. In **1929** the bank moved to a part of the double-storey house that was erected next to [Pritchard House](#) in Donkin Street.⁵³

The local branch of the Landbank was founded on **1 April 1939** but up to **November 1940** when it moved to its newly erected building at the corner of Bird and Bank Street, all work was sent to the Cape Town branch.⁵⁴

Volkskas Ltd opened its local branch in the Sanlam building at the corner of Donkin and Unie Streets on **11 June 1954**. Not happy with the entrance being in a side street, Volkskas purchased its own stand at 353 Donkin Street. The old building that was situated here, known as Jubilee House, was demolished in **January 1961** to make place for the new building.⁵⁵ Volkskas has since been amalgamated into *ABSA Bank*.

Trust Bank of South Africa Ltd opened office on **3 October 1966** in the Sanlam building at the corner of Donkin and Unie Streets.⁵⁶ Trust Bank has since been disbanded.

⁴⁹ Vivier, G.H. & S. p65

⁵⁰ Vivier, G.H. & S. p60

⁵¹ Vivier, G.H. & S. p66

⁵² Vivier, G.H. & S. p66

⁵³ Vivier, G.H. & S. p66

⁵⁴ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p67 / Barclays History in South Africa

⁵⁵ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p67

⁵⁶ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p67

Architecture

Beaufort West's historic core has a mix of architectural styles. Most of these date back to the middle of the nineteenth century when the prosperity of the town during the diamond rush era attracted many Cape Town Architects, such as Charles Freeman, Fred Cherry, W Black and Forsythe & Parker.⁵⁷

Law and Order

Local matters

Commissioners were responsible for enforcing local ordinances. By the year **1848** Beaufort had four local commissioners, which increased to six in **1850**. These commissioners were in positions of great authority and no one was spared, not even their own. In **1856** commissioner Bantjes was fined because his ducks were found in a water furrow. In **1859**, Dr. Christie was fined 5s because he broke firewood from trees at Bulkraal. In **1856** E Hopkins had to pay a fine of £2 for emptying a chamber pot against the fence of stand 17. In **1874** Messrs TW Maddison, Doyce, Rattray and Summers were fined 10s each for shooting crackers on 5 November. In **1875** Mrs Van der Poel was fined 5s because her pigs were strayed into the street and one month later she had to pay £1 because the pigs were seen close to the fountain in the Gamka River. Lawyer CS Pillans and commissioner DG de Villiers were fined 1s each in **1875** because their ducks were trespassing in the water furrow. In the same year Jacob Adams had to pay £1 because his pigs were wandering the streets. Even the minister was not above the law and in **1876** The Reverend Guillet was fined 5s because he accidentally placed an obstruction in the water furrow which caused a 'small' bit of irrigation water to be channelled to his garden. In **1876** L Douwes removed a couple of ticks from his horse and threw it into the street. This little act cost him a fine of £2. In **1877** W Wernick was fined £10 for chopping down three poplar trees in the reed-bush beneath the dam wall. On **31 January 1833** it was decided to pay a reward 10s to anyone reporting a person urinating in public.⁵⁸

Quite a bit of money was collected by means of the above-mentioned fines, but as the town increased in size, the Council was forced to incorporate local taxes as additional means of income. Dog tax was already levied in **1853**. In **1860**, property tax rose to ½ p and in **1875** to 1p in the pound. Although the water pipeline was only constructed in **1898**, drinking water taxes already existed in **1878**. In **1899**, property tax was once again raised to 1½ d in the pound.⁵⁹

Local income was also augmented by means of 'exceeding fees.' The first dwellings and shops in Beaufort were beautiful gabled buildings with huge trees in the front to provide shade. Then Lord Charles Somerset started adding verandas to his official residences in the Victorian tradition and a new trend was set. This trend also reached Beaufort West and residents started adding verandas to their dwellings. In 1896, the *Beaufort Courier* strongly opposed this new trend, since beautiful shade trees had to make way for verandas. This problem was aggravated by the fact that most of these dwellings had also been erected right up against the sidewalk as was the use at that time. This meant that special permission had to be obtained from the council for exceeding the building line and to

⁵⁷ 'Once an Architects Haven,' **Roses Round-Up, March 1999**

⁵⁸ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p10

⁵⁹ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p10

actually erect these verandas on public walkways. As a result owners had to pay a yearly “exceeding fee” up to at least 1969. It is not sure whether this fee is still required.⁶⁰ The [building in Bird Street](#) that houses the Department of the Town Engineer today, is a good example of a building exceeding its building line on account of an added veranda

Circuit Court

Although the local commissioners had the power to judge and sentence lesser misdemeanours, it was the task of the Circuit Court to judge cases of a more serious nature, such as murder. After **1818** the Circuit Court visit Beaufort roundabout March every year. The first local execution took place in **January 1831** in the presence of the town residents and farmers from the area. A KhoiKhoin, Reuter Calie, was sentenced to hang for the murder of a farming family, Louis Nel, his wife and four children, two years earlier. The wife lived long enough to be able to identify Calie. As was the custom at that time such executions took place in public. In **1840** a young man by the name of Du Preez was sentenced to death for a murder he committed. In **1867** Judge Bell sentenced three people to death in Victoria West and as was the custom, sent them to Beaufort for execution. One of them was Mrs Mans who killed her husband. The other two were Taaibosch and Danzer who were found guilty of the gruesome murder of the magistrate of Victoria West and field-cornet Hendrikse. On **16 April 1908** William Baby was executed for the murder of a Coloured woman, Sarah Sly, with whom he lived at the time. All the executed were buried in the murderer’s cemetery north of the Springfontein Dam. With the enlargement of the dam years later, these graves were flooded. William Baby was in all probability the last person who was executed at Beaufort West. After that all executions took place in Pretoria.⁶¹



Health

After surviving a shipwreck at the Cape coast, James Christie qualified as doctor and moved to Beaufort West in **1833** where he became the town’s first government physician in **1837**.⁶² Dr Christie lived in Donkin Street in a house today known as [Clyde House](#). Clyde house, named after a river in Scotland, was used both as home and practice (clinic and consulting room).⁶³

The most feared diseases of the 19th century were smallpox, syphilis, and enteric fever. In **1876** syphilis has grown to such proportions that the help of the Cape Government was called in. **1882** was the year of smallpox. Since it was believed that the disease could be combated by whitewashing the walls of homes, lime and carbolic acid (for medicinal purposes) were distributed free of charge amongst the residents of Beaufort. Enteric fever also claimed its toll. This was mainly due to the close proximity of unhygienic butcheries, refuse dumps, cattle kraals and pound where flies participated in a prolific breeding program. It was only since **1880** when the council acquired a special dump-cart and dray-horses that refuse was regularly removed. The general habit of dumping dead animals just outside town was another source of danger. On **9 November 1881** the council made it obligatory for carcasses to be left at least half a mile from the Town Hall and a hundred yards from any public road.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p206-7

⁶¹ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p52-53

⁶² Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p53-60

⁶³ Bekker, F. 2000. p208

⁶⁴ Vivier, G.H. & S. p53-60

On **30 March 1839** Magistrate Meintjes, reported to the Colonial Secretary that the town was threatened by an outbreak of measles and that the local doctor, Dr Christie, was absent on a visit to England at that time.⁶⁵

On **May 2, 1840** the government doctors, SN Havinga van Zweely, indicated to the magistrate that since Beaufort was situated on the “wapad” (wagon road), smallpox could easily be spread from the neighbouring areas where the disease has already acquired a foothold. On the 20th of the following month, the first case of smallpox was reported.⁶⁶

At the same time leprosy was also on the increase and early in **1844** four new cases were reported. The unfortunate were sent to Hemel en Aarde (Heaven and Earth) – the Colony’s only institute for lepers at the time, situated in the valley between the Solitaire and Onrus Rivers in the Overberg. This institute existed between **1825** and **1845**. After that lepers across the Cape Colony were sent to Robben Island. Four hundred lepers were buried at Hemel en Aarde.⁶⁷

In **1885** a sanatorium for those suffering from respiratory disorders was started at Lemoenfontein Farm just outside Beaufort West by T B Butt, who owned the farm at that time. It was taken over by a Mr Allhusen, and later, during the Anglo-Boer War, a Mr Winterton turned it into a recuperation centre for British army officers. Winterton, an Englishman, had been one of Lemoenfontein’s first patients. He arrived at ‘death’s door’ in **1885**, but claimed to have been ‘miraculously cured’ at Lemoenfontein. Major the Hon A F V F Russell, wrote in his memoirs of recuperating at Lemoenfontein. He paid 8/6d a day, excluding drinks. The crisp, clean air of the Karoo was particularly favourable for patients suffering from respiratory disorders. A retired magistrate and former Transkei health inspector named Levin, and his wife, a nurse, ran a sanatorium in the old Drostdy building in Bird Street between **1920 and 1930**. This was called the [Matoppo House](#) Sanatorium. After **1930**, a double-storey house in New Street (built by the first mayor of the town, TW Maddison), was for several years used as sanatorium.⁶⁸ What is quite interesting is that at the beginning of the twentieth century the death rate per capita in Beaufort West was the highest in the world. The reason for this was that so many people with chest and other respiratory ailments travelled from Europe to seek the magic curative powers of the Karoo air. But, sadly, many who arrived were already far too ill, and a great many died shortly after stepping off the train.⁶⁹

1918 was the year of the Spanish influenza (“Groot Griep”). In some cases this disease wiped out entire families. Sometimes bodies were found days after they died. Day after day people had to be buried and many had to be buried in mass graves because there was simply not enough time to dig single graves and later on there were not enough people to dig graves. At the height of this disease (October), between 850 and 900 non-Europeans and 76 Europeans had died. In 1919 the council determined that the disease cost the town £678 10s 8d which was a considerable fortune for those days.⁷⁰

On Saturday, **5 February 1927** APJ Fourie opened the town’s first official hospital and in **1946** the first TB-hospital was opened east of the general hospital and close to Katjeskop. This hospital stood under the management of the Nelspoort Sanatorium. Due to a shortage of personnel, however, it became operational in **1948** only but from the very beginning it was clear that this hospital was totally insufficient and impractical. On **1**

⁶⁵ Vivier, G.H. & S. p53-60

⁶⁶ Vivier, G.H. & S. p53-60

⁶⁷ Vivier, G.H. & S. p53-60

⁶⁸ Vivier, G.H. & S. p53-60

⁶⁹ Beaufort Bugle, January, 1996

⁷⁰ Vivier, G.H. & S. p53-60

November 1956 the Mat de Jager settlement officially opened its doors. This institute was a joint venture of the municipality and SANTA and was originally an institution for Coloured TB-sufferers only.⁷¹ In **December 1947** the municipality acquired its first ambulance.⁷²

Education

The number of schools that Beaufort West has seen in its time is indicative of the high premium its residents put on education.

1. The First Government School
2. The Second Government School
3. The Boys' Grammar School
4. The Girls' Public School
5. Die Orange Grove-meisieskool
6. The Beaufort Public Boys' School
7. Die Armskool (School for the poor) (Changed to Excelsior Skool)
8. Die Excelsior-skool (Changed to (Voorbereidende Skool)
9. Die Voorbereidende Skool (Changed to A.H. Barnard Primary)
10. The Boys' High School
11. Die Laerskool Niko Brummer
12. Central High School
13. Die Laerskool Eric Louw
14. A.H. Barnard Primêre Skool
15. Bastiaanse Sekondêre Skool
16. Beaufort-Wes Sekondêre Skool
17. H.M. Dlikidla Primary School
18. Rustdene Primêre Skool (Changed to John D Crawford Primêre)
19. John. D. Crawford Primêre Skool
20. Mandlenkose Secondary School
21. St Matthews Primary
22. Teske Gedenk Primêr
23. Kleuterland Preprimêre Skool

Not all of these schools still exist today. Some had several name changes like "Die Armskool" which became Excelsior Skool in **1912**, then Voorbereidende Skool in **1920** and finally AH Barnard Primary School in **1962**. Laerskool Nico Brummer is an amalgamation of the local boys' and girls' schools, etc.⁷³ In **2000**, the town had a total of thirteen secondary, primary schools and pre-primary schools.⁷⁴

Newspaper

The first publication of the *Beaufort Courier and Government Gazette for the District of Beaufort West, Victoria West, Prince Albert, Fraserburg, Carnarvon and Willowmore* appeared on **1 October 1869**.⁷⁵ This newspaper is still published today (under the shortened name of *Courier*) and must, therefore, be one of the oldest newspapers still in business.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Vivier, G.H. & S. p53-60

⁷² Vivier, G.H. & S. p53-60

⁷³ Bekker, F. 2001. p63

⁷⁴ Bekker F. p.63

⁷⁵ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p117

⁷⁶ Bekker, F. 2001. p197

In its heyday *The Beaufort Courier* seemed to have been quite a popular paper. It was even read in Britain. In **October, 1891**, the editor of *The Courier* proudly announced that while the newspaper was available at top British reading rooms a new agreement had been reached. "By arrangement this paper is now filed in the handsome reading rooms of the Inter-Colonial Publishing Company in Leadenhall Street, London," he wrote. "Visitors to this great metropolis can now also call there to keep themselves 'au courant' with Beaufort news in particular and South African news in general. The editor and general manager of the reading rooms, Mr T H Simpson Jones, has also expressed his 'readiness to extend a hearty welcome to any friend of the Karoo and, to the best of his ability, advance their interests in the world's great emporium of trade."⁷⁷

The Railways

In **1874**, the Cape Government Railway decided to extend the railway network from Worcester to Beaufort West. Three possible routes were investigated. One route was from Wolsley via Ceres to Laingsburg and then to Beaufort West. The next route was from Worcester via Montague, Ladismith, Seweweekspoort, Prince Albert, Leeu Gamka to Beaufort West. The last route was from Worcester to Touws River, Laingsburg and Beaufort West. The last option was accepted and the line from Worcester to Beaufort West was completed in **1880**. Interestingly, many place names along the line has changed since its opening. Touws River used to be Landrosdrif, Laingsburg used to be Buffels River, Prince Albert Road used to be Wagonmaker's Kraal and Leeu Gamka was Bitter Water. Along the line were various hotels, which since have disappeared, e.g. Blood River Hotel near Antjieskraal, Rietfontein Hotel near Kruidfontein and Wydkyk Hotel just north of Leeu Gamka.⁷⁸

The completion of the railway line to Beaufort West contributed in quickening the pace of the platteland, which were previously tied to the pace and endurance of horse and ox, considerably. A trip from Cape Town to Beaufort West now only took 48 hours, where it took 12 days by a Fuller and Gibson coach in the past.⁷⁹

The Railway Camp in Beaufort West, which was later to become Hillside, belongs to the Railways and can be seen as a town in itself although it borders the main town. All the inhabitants are railway workers and no land is sold to the public. From the beginning of **1880** when the railway line reached Beaufort West, this area was known as Railway Camp. On **20 April 1880** a stand was allotted to the first general dealer, a Mr Brown. On **22 February 1881** a business stand was allotted to a Mr Mostert. During that same year Combrink & Co opened a butchery. By that time, there were 12 residences right across from the railway line in front of the platform. This first line of houses was subsequently demolished but the second row, numbers 13 to 23 still exist. After this followed First and Second Avenues. In order to connect to Camp and station with the town, a drift (ford) was constructed through the Gamka River as an extension of Kerk (Church) Street. By **1868** the Camp had its own hospital on the banks of the river, west of the current Weeber Bridge. In **1891** permission was granted to JB Lucas to erect a hotel at "stasiekoppie" (station hill) in approximately the place where the railway reservoir is situated today. The hotel was built but a couple of years after its completion it burnt down and was not rebuilt. In **1911** the Railway Camp got its first street lights – two massive petrol lamps known as *Spaarzaam*-lamps. On account of a shortage of fuel the Town Council decided on **19 March 1918** to allow only one light to burn at night – the one at the station house. In **1919**

⁷⁷ Rose's Round-Up, March 2003

⁷⁸ Bekker, F. p.83

⁷⁹ 'A Change of Pace,' *Rose's Round-Up*, June 1997.

the Railways installed electrical lights. Roundabout **1917** the railway camp became known as 'Hillside.' At about the same time Third to Sixth Avenue were pegged out and in time the area expanded northwards towards 'stasiekoppie.' In **1949** the Railways donated a piece of land to the Dutch Reformed Church. The following year a parsonage was erected and a church building was consecrated in **1952**. In **1961** a huge church hall was added. This Dutch Reformed Congregation is known as Gamkavallei. In **1954** a preparatory school opens next to the church building and in **1962** the school is enlarged to include standard five (grade seven). In **1968**, Hillside gets its own post office, Eric Louwburg, situated across from the church.⁸⁰

The Beaufort West Station as such was opened by Sir Bartle Frere, the then Governor of the Cape Colony, on **February 1, 1880**.⁸¹ Unfortunately, this building was demolished when the new station was built in the **1970s**. On February 5, 1880, the railway line to Beaufort West was opened by Sir Bartle Frere with the arrival of the first train.⁸²

Read more: [Railway Stories](#).

Natural Disasters

Beaufort West has had its fair share of floods in the past. The first known one occurred even before the town was established and the farm Hooyvlakte was still the property of De Clercq. A cloudburst in **1805** caused a flash flood during which 3,000 sheep drowned.⁸³ The first documented flooding after the establishment of the town occurred in **1837**. The Kuils River burst its banks due to a cloudburst. The only loss of life was that of the ten-year old girl of Jan Bantjes who was overtaken by the floodwaters at their home in Donkin Street.⁸⁴

In **1856** another flood apparently occurred, but could not have been too serious since all that is known is that the upper part of Donkin Street was washed away and that valuable soil has been carried to the sea.⁸⁵

One of the most serious floods in Beaufort West occurred when the wall of the Springfontein Dam collapsed in **1869**. Soon after the dam wall was completed the Town Council received a petition on **23 March 1869** signed by 25 of the town's inhabitants in which they warn of the possibility of heavy rains causing the dam wall to break and flooding the town. At this stage the dam had only one outlet on the northern side and in order to appease the people, it was decided to also build a southern outlet that would run through the side of the koppie. By **6 July** the new outlet was completed. After a cloudburst and heavy rains in the mountains three holes appeared in the dam wall on **23 October 1869**. Two of these could be plugged in time but the third one proved to be problematic. Roeloff JJ Eybers was lowered down to close off the hole by means of a bag filled with sand but was pulled through the hole with bag and all and lived to tell the tale. Soon afterwards the dam wall collapsed and 600 million gallons of water rushed through the town. Fortunately the majority of the townspeople were watching this catastrophe from the safety of a nearby koppie and apart from a couple of houses, only the Mission Church at

⁸⁰ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p17-18

⁸¹ 'A Change of Pace,' **Rose's Round-Up, June 1997**.

⁸² Bekker, F. 2001, p.85.

⁸³ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p35-7

⁸⁴ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p35-7

⁸⁵ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p35-7

the corner of Donkin and Meintjes Streets, the previous hospital right beneath the dam wall, Kleek's workshop and postmaster Cardwell's stables were washed away.⁸⁶

For John David Baird, eldest son of the town's first magistrate, John Baird, this flood meant a great deal of heartbreak. Just before the flood he received a letter from Scotland informing him that he was the only beneficiary of an immense fortune. Attorneys needed his father's original birth certificate as proof of their family's descent. John and his wife were ecstatic. They had seven children and his salary as a teacher could not cover all their needs. He collected all the documentary proof needed and put it away carefully. Then the flood came. The Baird's home, situated just below the dam wall, with everything in it, including the proof of his inheritance, was completely washed away. John Baird and his family barely escaped with their lives. For days afterwards John could be seen searching the surrounding veld very carefully, but the relevant documentary proof was never found. Over the years several Bairds in South Africa tried to lay claim to this Scottish fortune but no one could ever come up with the necessary proof of inheritance.⁸⁷

1918 turned out to be a very bad year. Apart from the Spanish influenza a serious flood hit the town. The Springfontein Dam was in danger of bursting its walls. The dam, however, held, but the more than eight inches (200 mm) of rain that fell from the sky in less than twelve hours, caused havoc in town. During this flood a four-year old child drowned.⁸⁸

One of the worst floods occurred on **6 April 1941**. People came from all over the area to attend the Communion Service. Little did they know that while they were preparing to attend the service, a cloudburst occurred on the Nuweveld farm, Donkergat, approximately fourteen miles (23 km) north of the town at six o'clock that morning. An unstoppable mass of water came storming into town. The early churchgoers were quite surprised to find their way to the church blocked by roaring streams of brown, muddy water where previously there were streets. A young man by the name of Paulse washed away with truck and all and drowned. Roussouw, a milkman, also drowned. Few houses escaped damage. Fortunately, the Springfontein dam was empty for quite some time before the flood and was therefore able to stop the majority of the floodwater before it hit the town.⁸⁹

The Karoo, however, is a place of extremes and if the disaster is not flooding, it might be drought or snow. At the time Beaufort West was founded the town already experienced its first drought and from there on droughts and, to a lesser extent, heavy snowfalls followed with regularity.

More information: [Droughts and snow from 1818 - 1969](#)

The Great Trek⁹⁰

Several people from the Beaufort district decided to join the Great Trek north to find a better life. In **1830**, 'Ryk' (Rich) Jan Botes and 'Lang' (Tall) Hans van Rensburg already left for Smithfield together with 15 families. Later on another 130 families left under leaders such as Pieter Daniel Jacobs from the farm Slangfontein, Jan Gerritze Bantjes from the Nieuweveld, Jacob Le Clercq from Soutrivier, Johan Godfried Mocke from Lombardskraal as well as Pieter Jacobus Jacobs.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p25-9

⁸⁷ Rose's Round-Up, August 2001

⁸⁸ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p35-7

⁸⁹ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p35-7

⁹⁰ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p135-9 (Primary source for Great Trek)

⁹¹ 'Op die Trekpad,' **Rose's Round-Up**, March 1997.

More information: [Important Trekkers from Beaufort West](#)

In **1988**, the [150th anniversary of the Great Trek](#) was commemorated in Beaufort West. In front of the Dutch Reformed Missionary Church is a concrete slab with imprints of the tracks of the ox-wagon used in the commemoration, the footprints of the leader of the team of oxen and horse-tracks. On **16 December 1998** the Rapportryers from Beaufort West unveiled a monument in honour of the Trekkers from Beaufort West who took part in the Battle of Blood River. A street next to Voortrekker Park in Beaufort West is named after Jacob le (de) Clercq, one of Beaufort West's leaders of the Great Trek and hero of Blood River.

The Anglo-Boer War

Beaufort West did not escape the Anglo-Boer War of **1899-1902**. After war broke out in October **1899**, the town was literally inundated with Kakies (British soldiers). They set up camp to the north of the town close to the present-day North End, but depended on the town for buying provisions. This camp was situated right above the town's water sources, which was a source of concern to the town council. The first camp was followed by another camp just across the Kuils River at the eastern side of the town and a third camp between the Gamka River and the railway station. Nine miles south of the town, close to the farm Weltevrede, was another camp with approximately 800 soldiers. Apart from the regular British forces, there were also 100 local Town Guards.

During the Anglo-Boer War Beaufort West had six blockhouses in order to defend the entrances to the town, the [railway bridge over the Gamka River](#) and other strategic locations. One such blockhouse was situated on 'Plantation Square,' where the present-day Gamka-Oos Dutch Reformed Church is situated (corner of Blyth and Thompson Streets). On the corner of Church and Donkin Streets, in front of the Old Town Hall, a corrugated iron and wood blockhouse was built which was supported by sandbags. Blockhouses, built from hewn rock were erected at Springfontein Dam and next to the [Gamka River train bridge](#). Blockhouses were also provided on all the koppies (hills). The [tower of the Dutch Reformed church](#) served as lookout point and about half a mile south of the town, on the old Hans River Road, a wooden lookout tower was erected. After the war ended in **June 1902**, the Town Council bought five of the blockhouses, 3 ¼ miles of fencing and approximately 600 poles for £20 from the military.⁹² The Council had the five blockhouses they bought demolished. Today, only the [stone blockhouse](#) at the train bridge can still be seen.⁹³

It would seem that the Town Council was kindly disposed towards the British soldiers at the beginning of the War, but these soldiers soon proved to be a nuisance. In **January 1900** the Town Council was quite upset after the health inspector discovered that the troops from the northern camp had buried their waste right above the Springfontein Dam. In order to solve this problem the camp was moved to the southern side of the koppie at the dam. The friction between soldier and civilian steadily increased. In **April** strong objection was raised against the large numbers of horses and mules in the streets and on the dam wall, but the officer in command reacted by stating that the council had no right to impound military animals.⁹⁴

⁹² Vivier, G.H. & S. p140-6

⁹³ Bekker, F. 2001, p.209

⁹⁴ Vivier, G.H. & S. p140-6

The increase in water consumption due to the large number of troops in and around the town was another major concern. A small dam in the Kuils River provided the town's communal laundry place with water.⁹⁵ However, the military installed a pipeline from the dam to one of their camps. As a result no water was available for laundry purposes. The War ended in **June 1902**. By **October** of the same year there were still a lot of troops, horses and mules in and around the town and the Cape Government was requested to recall these people and animals on account of the water shortage the town experienced.⁹⁶

During the second or guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War various Boer commandos from Transvaal and the Free State invaded the Cape Colony in order to release the pressure on the two Boer Republics. During this period Beaufort West and its environs became more directly involved in the War and various skirmishes took place between Boer and Briton in the Beaufort West District. A number of British as well as one Boer soldier are buried in three of Beaufort West's cemeteries. Unfortunately, these graves has been vandalised to a large extent. **Read more** about these graves in the following documents.

[War Graves in Beaufort West Anglican Cemetery \(A and B\)](#)

[War Graves in Beaufort West Methodist \(Wesleyan\) Cemetery](#)

[War Graves in Beaufort West Roman Catholic Cemetery](#)

[The Old Lady and the Horse.](#)

[People with Links to the Anglo-Boer War and Beaufort West](#)

Famous Persons Linked to Beaufort West (In alphabetical order according to surname)

Chris Barnard

[Dr Christiaan Barnard](#), world-renowned heart surgeon, needs no introduction. As one of four sons of the missionary minister, he grew up in the humble [parsonage](#) next to the Dutch Reformed Missionary Church in Beaufort West. Beaufort West has always had a special place in his heart. After his death, his [ashes were strewn](#) beneath a large palm tree outside a room of the parsonage, which was once the study of his beloved farther.

The [parsonage has been restored](#) to what it looked like when Dr Barnard lived there as a child. The Beaufort West Museum houses a [permanent exhibition](#) on Chris Barnard, which consists of more than 1 000 pieces, most of them gifts and presentations to Prof. Barnard from all over the world.

General Matthys Johan de Jager DTD DSO (with bar)

Matthys Johan de Jager, member of the Transvaal State Artillery, bodyguard for President Paul Kruger, hero of the Anglo-Boer War, policeman, soldier and general in the then South West Africa, had a rich life. He was born in Beaufort West during **January 1872**, but was never sure of his date of birth. It is shown as **January, 23** on his birth certificate, but since

⁹⁵ In the early days washing was done in the rivers but in the late 1870's the municipality erected two long rows of cement basins at the ford of the Kuils River.

⁹⁶ Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p. 140-6

he was born close to midnight, the register of baptism in Beaufort West Dutch Reformed Church indicates his date of birth as **January, 22**. MJ de Jager, as he was known, left Beaufort West in **1881** with his parents for the diamond fields. Later on the de Jager family moved to the Transvaal. In **1894** Matthys was employed by the Department of Education in Pretoria. During the Jameson Raid he served as troop sergeant-major in the *Pretoria Vrywilliger Kavallerie Korps* (Pretoria Volunteer Cavalry Corps) and in **1896** he was the only candidate who passed the Transvaal State Artillery's examination for second lieutenant. From hereon his military career really took off. During the Anglo-Boer War he was often mentioned for bravery. In **January 1902** he was captured by the British at Sandlaagte near Nelspan in the Ermelo district and was banned to St. Helena where he was imprisoned at Deadwood Camp. At his return to South Africa he was convinced by General Jan Smuts to join the Transvaal Police. He became the first person in South Africa to import Doberman-Pinschers for police work. During **1913** he joined the Union Forces and in **1915** he was sent to South West Africa by Generals Jan Smuts and Louis Botha as head of the Union Forces. During his service in South West Africa he was promoted to the rank of general. He died on a train just outside Beaufort West on **October 9, 1939**, while on his way to Cape Town for medical treatment. General de Jager was laid to rest in Windhoek (Namibia) with full military honours.⁹⁷

Patricia de Lille

Patricia de Lille the current leader of the Independent Democrats, was born in Beaufort West. She received her schooling at the Methodist Primary School and the Bastiaanse Hoërskool in Beaufort West. In **1974** she worked as a laboratory technician for Plascon Paints and remained there for 16 years. During this time, Ms de Lille became involved in Trade Union politics and joined the South African Chemical Workers' Union (SACWU). She started off as a shop steward and soon became SACWU's regional secretary. From there she went on to the National Executive Committee of SACWU and in **1988** she was elected as National Vice-President of The National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), the highest position for a woman in the trade union movement at that time. In **1989**, she was elected into the National Executive Committee of the Pan Africanist Movement (PAM), a wing of the PAC. During the CODESA negotiations, Patricia led the PAC delegation and after the first democratic elections, she was appointed as a member of parliament. Between **1994 and 1999**, she was the chairperson of the Transport committee and the chief whip for the PAC in parliament. Patricia is a trustee of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, the National Children's Rights Committee and the Helen Suzman Foundation. In **2003** she broke away from the PAC and formed a new political party, the Independent Democrats. She still holds a seat in parliament.⁹⁸

The Reverend Isaac Wauchope Dyobha:

Be quite and calm my countrymen, for what is taking place now is what you came here to do. We are all going to die, and that is what we came for. Brothers, we are drilling the death drill. I, a Zulu, say here and now that you are all my brothers... Xhosas, Swazis, Pondos, Basotho and all others, let us die like warriors. We are the sons of Africa. Raise your war cries my brothers, for though they made us leave our assegais back in the kraals, our voices are left with our bodies..."

(The Reverend Isaac Wauchope Dyobha)⁹⁹

⁹⁷Bekker, F, 2001, pp. 212-213.

⁹⁸ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/delille-p.htm> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patricia_de_Lille

⁹⁹ http://www.navy.mil.za/newnavy/mendi_history/mendi_hist.htm

Educated at Lovedale Mission, Isaac Wauchope Dyobha became a teacher and was the first Black South African to write a poem in English. In **1876** he was one of five evangelists sent to Nyasaland, but returned due to recurrent bouts of fever. He again took up teaching in the Eastern Cape and worked as an interpreter until he could enter the ministry. On qualifying he moved to Beaufort West, where he served the Congregational Church and was greatly loved by his community. During World War I Reverend Dyobha was on the [SS Mendi](#) when she was rammed in thick mist by another British ship the SS Daro in the English Channel on **February 21, 1917**. As the ship began to sink Reverend Dyobha called on the 802 Black South African servicemen aboard to perform the 'dance of death' and die like brothers.¹⁰⁰ The men sang and stamped the death dance together as the SS *Mendi* sank. 607 black troops along with 9 of their fellow white countrymen and all 33 crewmembers perished in the icy waters.¹⁰¹ At a **1996** Remembrance Day Service a plaque honouring Reverend Dyobha's bravery was handed over to the mayor of Beaufort West to be placed in the town's museum. The plaque was made from the brass of shell cases, hammered out, engraved and placed on a wooden panel by Colonel BC Geldenhuys, School of Armoury and, Commanding Officer Major D Smit of the Free State Work Farm at Tempe Army Base in Bloemfontein.¹⁰² The commemorative plaque bears the following inscription:

*Isaac Wauchope Dyobha entered the ministry and served the Congregational Church in Beaufort West. In 1916 he joined the South African Native Labour Contingent as an interpreter. On 21 February, 1917, he was on the SS Mendi in the English Channel when it sank. He is reputed to have called to the Black soldiers of diverse tribes to die together like brothers. They performed the Death Dance while the Mendi sank. Of 802 Black troops aboard, Dyobha and 606 drowned.*¹⁰³

The SAS Frans Erasmus, a South African Navy [Warrior class strike craft](#), was also renamed the SAS Isaac Dyobha in honour of Reverend Dyobha.¹⁰⁴ This is probably one of the few naval warships in the world named after a cleric.

The Reverend Guy Gething

The Reverend Guy Gething was the much loved parish priest who served the Christ Church community from **1869-1906**. It is said that he walked almost halfway across Africa to see a runaway slave safely home. Sadly, the name of the slave was never recorded. The story goes that in his early life, when travelling between far-flung farms to spread the gospel, Gething came upon a famished and terrified man who had fled from a cruel master. A great humanitarian, Gething took pity on him and, after giving him sustenance, pledged to guide him home personally. The incredible journey that followed resulted in a long and arduous trek, mostly on foot, to Nyasaland (present-day Malawi). After trudging from village to village to re-unite the man with his family, Gething walked back to the Cape, passing through dangerous territory alone. A small marble bust dedicated to the memory of Gething stands behind the pulpit in the Christ Church Anglican Church in Donkin Street between Devenish and Hill Streets. The inscription reads: *To the Glory of God and in thanksgiving for the life of Guy Gething, a pioneer priest of South Africa*. Gething is buried in Beaufort West.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Rose's Round-Up, August 1995

¹⁰¹ http://www.navy.mil.za/newnavy/mendi_history/mendi_hist.htm

¹⁰² Rose's Round-Up, Nov/Dec 1996

¹⁰³ Rose's Round-Up, October 1995

¹⁰⁴ Rose's Round-Up, March 1997.

¹⁰⁵ Rose's Round-Up, Nov/Dec 1996.

Mandlenkosi 'Tsaka' Kratchi

A young comrade, the 24-year old Mandlenkosi "Tsaka" Kratchi, a promising young boxer, was shot and killed in a police raid in Sidesaviwa on **January 22, 1985**. His death so shook the community that they opted to change the township's name to Kwa-Mandlenkosi (the place of Mandlenkosi) to honour his memory. In time, the main road and high school were also named in memory of this young comrade.¹⁰⁶

Mandlenkosi, fondly called "Tsaka" by his friends, was again honoured in **September 2001**, when two trees were planted to commemorate him during Arbor Week. One is at the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, from where he was buried, and the other is at his parents' home.¹⁰⁷

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry donated twenty trees for the environmental upliftment and greening of the township. Planted at several venues in Jabavu Street during Arbor Week, they line a Heroes Route to honour community leaders, freedom fighters, musicians and sportsmen. Each tree was planted in a private garden where individuals, schools and churches, who in time will benefit from the shade, will care for it. In time, a plaque will be placed at each tree as a permanent tribute to the person it honours.¹⁰⁸

Eric Louw

Dr Eric Louw, another one of Beaufort West's more famous residents, is viewed as the father of the Diplomatic services of the Union of South Africa. He spent his life in public service. In **1924** he became a Member of Parliament for Beaufort West and represented the town in parliament for more than 25 years. In **1925** he became South Africa's first trading commissioner and played an important role in Gen Hertzog's struggle to have the Union's constitutional status acknowledged. In **1929** he acted as the Union's High Commissioner in London. At the end of the same year Eric Louw became the Union's first Envoy Extraordinary in the United States. He founded chancelleries in Rome and Paris in **January 1934** and **October 1934** respectively. He was also responsible for the founding of a chancellery in Lisbon before he left the diplomatic services in **1937**. He represented South Africa at several international conferences and gatherings, including the League of Nations. In **1938** he once again became Member of Parliament for Beaufort West. At the beginning of Dr Malan's term in **1948** he became a member of the cabinet as Minister of Mining and Economic Development. Under Prime Minister J.G. Strijdom he filled the portfolio of Foreign Affairs and Finances. He was the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs from **1956** to **1963**. He was also at the head of the division Intelligence Services until the latter became a self-dependant division in **1961**. The Eric Louw Memorial Hall of the Beaufort West Museum, which is housed in the Old Town Hall, sets out Dr Louw's role in national and international affairs.¹⁰⁹

Sir John Charles Molteno

In the **mid-1800s**, a young English adventurer, later knighted, came to South Africa in search of his fortune, which he thought was to be found in farming. After working in Cape Town as a librarian, John Charles Molteno became a wool trader in the Karoo and acquired a farm at Nelspoort. By the time he was elected to the Cape Parliament in **1854**,

¹⁰⁶ Beaufort West Tourism Bureau

¹⁰⁷ Beaufort West Tourism Bureau

¹⁰⁸ Beaufort West Tourism Bureau

¹⁰⁹ Leaflet for the Eric H. Louw Memorial Hall, Beaufort-Wes

he owned huge estates in the area. A champion of responsible government and known as "the Lion of Beaufort West" he went on to become the Cape Colony's first Prime Minister (1872-1878). Molteno introduced the first [Saxon Merino sheep](#) to the Karoo. He also established the first bank in Beaufort.¹¹⁰

Kolekile Joseph (Joe) Renene

Joe Renene was the first Black person in South Africa to become a Supreme Court Judge. He attended St John's Primary School and Bastiaanse High School in Beaufort West. After matriculating from Bastiaanse he qualified as a teacher and returned to take up a teaching post at Bastiaanse. However, in **1967** the political climate forced Joe to relinquish his post. As a Black man he was not allowed to teach in a school not meant for Blacks. Joe left and went into business in the Transkei. He began to study privately as the business world was not meant for him. In **1971**, he received an Award of Excellence from the Institute of Chartered Secretaries in London. He then studied law at the University of Fort Hare and graduated with a B Juris in **1974** and LLB in **1976**. In **1997** he began lecturing in the Faculty of Law at Fort Hare and, in **1979**, became a senior lecturer. In **May 1982**, Joe went to Harvard to study for a Master's Degree in Medical Jurisprudence. After receiving his LLM in **1983**, he spent a year lecturing in law at the University of Oklahoma in the USA. Joe returned to South Africa in **1985** to take up a position as senior advocate in the Supreme Court of South Africa and Lesotho. He was later appointed Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of the Transkei where he worked until **1993**. In **1994**, he became a member of a technical committee drafting special legislation. The same year he was appointed Supreme Court Judge. Joe lost his battle against diabetes and died on **October 16, 1997**.¹¹¹

Other Famous Persons from Beaufort West (see document)

Large Families

Beaufort West has had some large families in its community. Andries du Toit from the farm Bulskolk was the father of 27 children (two wives) and earned through that the nickname "Twenty-Seven". Anna Erasmus (born Verster) from the farm Middelkraal brought 20 children into this world. When Willem Petrus Engelbrech from the farm Groendraai died at the age of 91, he had 178 direct descendants, 16 children, 86 grandchildren, 58 great-grandchildren, and 18 great-great-grandchildren. "Oom Izak" van Aarde and his wife had 15 children. Blessed indeed.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Central Karoo Regional Tourism Office: Nelspoort

¹¹¹ Rose's Round-Up, June 2003

¹¹² Vivier, G.H. & S. 1969. p206



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