

## **Time Travel Wolwekloof 1773**

### **Facts**

#### **Cape frontier in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century**

The land north and east of the mountain ranges of the Cape interior was for a long time, the land of khoi and san. The khoi herders moved their cattle and sheep in a semi-nomadic lifestyle and lived in small villages, kraals. The San hunter-gatherers had a profound knowledge of the environment, hunted the game and used plants for cooking and medicine.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the whole situation changed. The colonists at the Cape moved eastwards and northwards and the colony expanded further and further inland. The farms at the frontier were rather isolated and their main way of living was holding sheep and cattle breeding. The burghers held servants and used slave labour. Their herders moved the livestock up and down the mountains to find the best grazing land and pastures, a typical transhumance.

In the beginning the khoi herders took advantage of the trekkers but very soon the relations became more hostile. The khoi and the free burghers used the same land and the same water holes for their cattle. Through the burgher activities, the soil deteriorated and the game decreased. The khoi and the san got more and more marginalised and their traditional way of life was threatened. Still small groups of san, like the sonqua, tried to keep on living an independent life in the mountains. But many of the khoisan fought back in order to survive.

It was not easy to pass the mountain ranges at the frontier. In 1765 the farmer Jon Moster built a pass, called Mostert's hoek's pass, over the Witzenberg and Skurweberge mountains from Breede river valley to Warm Bokkeveld. The pass was so steep and hard that the wagons had to be dismantled. Jon Moster had his farm, Wolwekloof, on the southern side of the mountains. Maybe once or twice a year the burghers at Warm Bokkeveld travelled through the pass to Stellenbosch to buy the utensils, clothes and foodstuff they needed and to baptize their children and go to church. It was farmers like Pieter van Heerden and Barend Pienaar.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the mountains at Bokkeveld and Roggeveld were also attractive as hiding places for runaways and outlaws. Runaway slaves, servants, deserted soldiers and seamen, and from the 1770s also khoi and san, formed droster gangs with men, women and children. These people felt a common consciousness of oppression and tried to survive in the mountains, avoiding discovery, by stealing cattle, tools, food and clothes from the farmers.

In order to defend their farms, the burghers set up military commandos to track and kill the drosters. "I shall come with a commando of Bokkeveld people, if I get permission from the Landdrost, and shot dead all of the kraal-dwelling Hottentots and bastaards because they only exist by stealing," Pieter van Heerden pronounced in April 1772. The heaviest fighting at the frontier was in the period 1770-1800. As a consequence of the resistance a General Commando was set up in 1774 in order to crush all enemies. It was a fight of life and death. Now the final eradication of the khoi and the san cultures took place. After the turn of the century 1800 there was nothing left of their traditional way of living and most of their people had been killed.

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century explorers and scientists were allowed to go inland to do research. Two Swedes, Carl Peter Thunberg and Anders Sparrman, were among the first ones to get that permission. In October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1773 Thunberg travelled through Mostert's Hoek and described the pass, in April 1776 Sparrman did the same thing. They were both committed disciples of the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus and examined and named thousands of flowers, birds, animals and insects.

## **Scenario**

### **At the outskirts of Wolwekloof farm in the mountain ranges 1773**

It is very tense in the whole of the frontier districts. You don't know who to trust or who to rely on. It is dangerous to stay and it is dangerous to travel.

Yesterday the free burghers, Pieter van Heerden, from the farm Riet Valley and Barend Pienaar, Drie Fonteyn, started their yearly trip from Warm Bokkeveld to Stellenbosch. They travel in a big company with their families, slaves and servants. The shepherds bring the sheep and cattle up to the mountains for better grazing. Some of the cattle are also going to be sold on the market in Stellenbosch. The wives like to go shopping, to buy new clothes and hats but also pots, foodstuff and brandy. This time the youngest child of Pieter and his wife is going to be baptized.

It was really tough yesterday, to travel through Mostert's Hoek Pass. The wagons were dismantled and all the stuff carried on the back of the oxens. The hottentots and the slaves worked hard to get all the goods safe down in the valley. Late at night they all arrived at Jon Mostert's farm Wolwekloof.

Today is a day of rest for the farmers and the cattle. The families are in Jon Mostert's house to pay the toll, to eat and drink, talk and plan. The slaves and the servants, on their side, have to work as usual: repair and put together the wagons, wash and mend some of the clothes. Get the weapons and ammunition ready. The herders look after the cattle. But today there is also some time for singing and dancing and to listen to some of the old legends.

In the group on the pastures by the river, some other people have joined the servants and the slaves. Everyone realize who they are, outlaws from the mountains, but no one dare to talk loud about it. But people whisper and talk silently. Maybe it is better to abandon their masters and to join the drosters. Or is it safer to stay at the farm?

Today is the chance to steal some of the cattle and runaway. But as an outlaw you are very exposed and will be hunted by the commandos. What will be your choice?

We know that there are still small groups of hunter-gatherers in the mountains, but we almost never meet them. But maybe today some of them will be interested to join the group, in order to get some food. Perhaps they still know how to do and interpret the holy paintings.

There are also other people who travel at the frontier, scientists devoted to botany and zoology. But can we trust those Europeans?

Tomorrow the party is leaving Jon Mostert's farm for Stellenbosch. Is it still the same people travelling with the same amount of cattle or have some disappeared?

### **Key questions**

- The violence at the frontier, Why? What is the cause? How to solve it?
- The future for the khoi/hottentots, san/bushmen, slaves, burghers?
- The future for me – what am I going to do? Join the drosters? Stay at a farm? Going north to the free Oorlands?

### **Roles**

Slaves to Pieter van Heerden and Barend Pienaar

Servants/ shepherds/ hottentots/ bastard hottentots to Mr van Heerden and Mr Pienaar

Drosters (hottentots, bushmen, runaway slaves, soldiers/ seamen)

Independant hunter-gatherers, sonqua

Carl Peter Thunberg and guide

Servant to Jan Mostert

### **Activities**

- Repair the wagons, wheels, cover etc.(8 people) - Jeremy  
Grease leather straps, saddles etc. - Michael
- Washing and mending clothes (8 people) - Tracey
- Making of play dolls (6 people) – Ann, Beverly
- Blacksmith work (6 people) - Richard
- Make coffee, bread, butter (11 people) – Bertdene, Renee, Cordelia
- Painting (7 people) - Lasse
- Make ammunition, cast bullets (7 people) – Louis, Small
- Make medicine (7 people) – *Corrie?*
- Examine plants (10 people) – Pav
- Rolling tobacco (7) – Brent + a person from Worcester
- Weaving of baskets -
- Cutting grass -
- Dances (18 people) – Brenda

More leaders: Kobus, Nduli teachers

Ebbe Westergren, Kalmar County Museum, Sweden

Bertdene Laubscher, Togyers museum

**Time plan**

- 11.00 Preparations – Louis, Kobus, students, Helen, Bertdene, Jeremy, Brent, Ann, Renne
- 13.20 Delegates arrive
  - Dress up, role cards – Helen, Bertdene, Ann, Renee, Brenda, Tracey, Ella, Sweden, Louis, Small, Brent, Lasse, Jeremy
- 13.50 Nigel Penn
- 14.15 Presentation, rules, initiation
- 14.40 Time travel starts. Thunberg arrives
- 15.00 Activities
- 15.35 Coffee, discussion of key questions
  - Dance
- 16.10 Time travel back
  - Reflections?
- 16.30 Gunnar takes over
  - Clean up
- 17.10 Buses are leaving