

PETER E. RAPER AND MAURICE BOUCHER  
EDITORS

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ROBERT JACOB GORDON  
CAPE TRAVELS, 1777 TO 1786

VOLUME I

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Robert Jacob Gordon (1743–1795)

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## TWO

### A JOURNEY TO THE SNEEUBERG AND THE EASTERN FRONTIER, AND NORTH TO THE ORANGE RIVER, RETURNING ALONG THE COAST BETWEEN THE MOUTHS OF THE GREAT FISH AND GOURITS RIVERS, INITIALLY IN THE COMPANY OF WILLIAM PATERSON: OCTOBER 1777 TO MARCH 1778

6 October 1777, Monday I left the Cape at nine o'clock with Mr Paterson and my artist.<sup>1</sup> Yesterday evening at about five o'clock many porpoises<sup>2</sup> were washed ashore, wounded, I think in a fight. My portable barometer leaked, so I sent it to the Cape to be repaired. We continued our journey along the Tafel Mountains<sup>3</sup> and arrived at about two o'clock at 't Goed Geloof,<sup>4</sup> a wine farm belonging to a certain Becker, where we dined. After taking a walk we rode at five o'clock to Pieter Ecksteen's farm named 'Bergvliet',<sup>5</sup> where we spent the night. There we learnt that if wood ash is put into a kettle of boiling water, an egg can be boiled in it without its becoming too hard. At nine o'clock, temperature 62°. Fine, hot weather; slight easterly breeze.

7 [October 1777] At eight o'clock in the morning, 60°; NW wind, blowing up freshly. Overcast sky which covered the Tafel Mountains. Showers of rain throughout the entire day, the wind veering through the S. We wanted to continue our journey along the innermost shore<sup>6</sup> of False Bay at about ten o'clock. [However], after the wind died down it began to rain heavily in gusts, so we decided to remain at Bergvliet for another day. We went to the Constantias<sup>7</sup> in the afternoon and arrived back at Bergvliet in the evening. We found the statement about the ash to be false.

8 [October 1777] Fine, clear weather; SE wind. The thermometer stood at 54½°, the air having been noticeably cooled by the rain; at noon, 60°. Towards evening an overcast sky; a misty vapour lying on Hottentots Holland. We continued our proposed route to

1 Paterson accompanied the expedition until sickness compelled him to return to the Cape early in November 1777; Schumacher, the artist, went on with Gordon: Forbes and Rourke, eds, *Paterson's Cape Travels*, pp. 75, n. 125, 76, n. 146.

2 In the original text Gordon uses the word '*tonynen*', found also in the official record of the occurrence. Forbes and Rourke suggest that the fish were tunny or dolphin, and that they were wounded possibly by marlin: *ibid.*, p. 59, n. 2, n. 3.

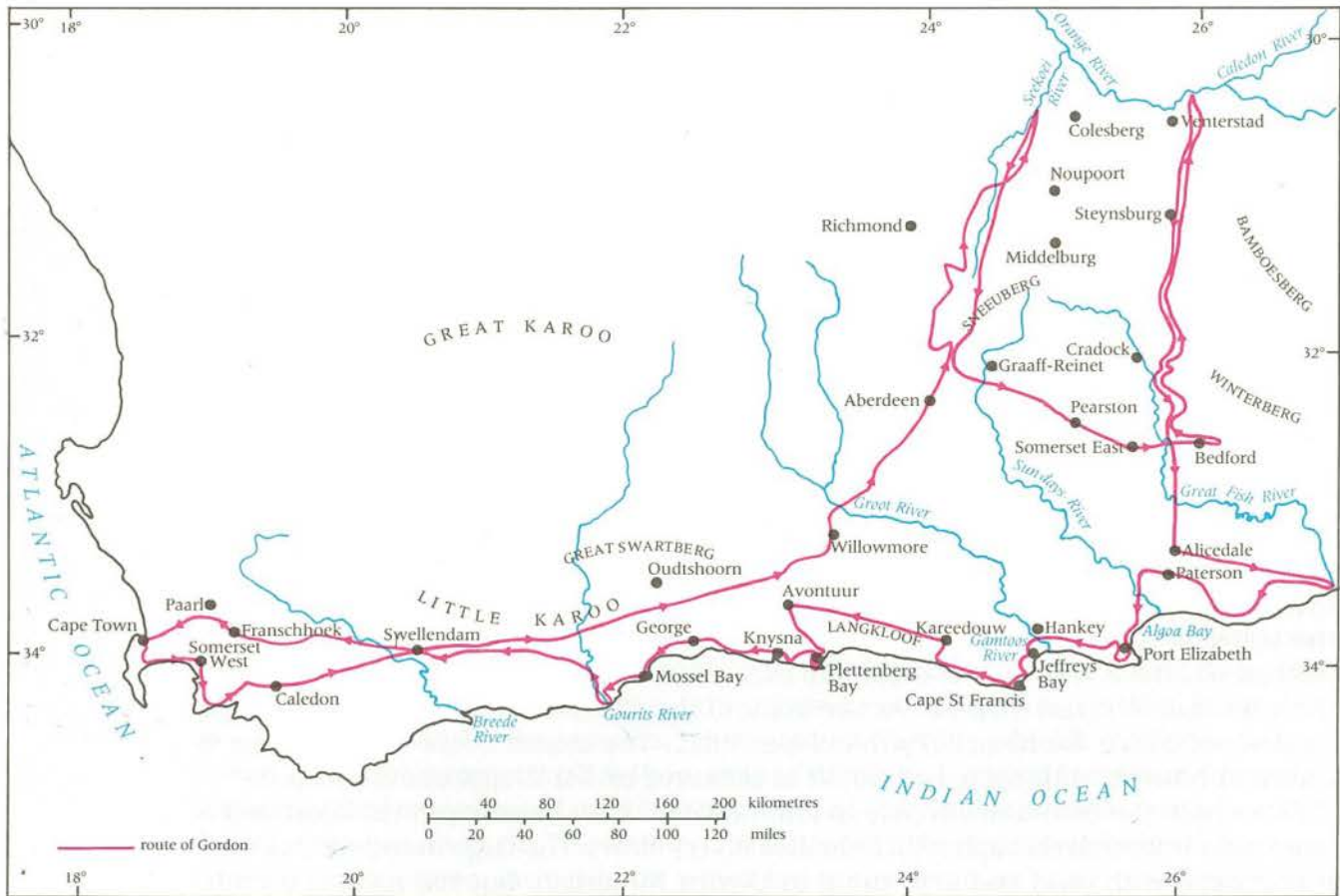
3 They run S to Vlakkenberg at the northern end of the Constantia range.

4 Bought by Josephus Anthonius Becker in 1775, the farm was praised by Paterson for its 'excellent European fruits'; it lay between Klaasenbosch and Wittebomen, S of Wynberg: Jeffreys, comp., *Kaapse Archiefstukken* . . . 1779, pp. 112–113; Forbes and Rourke, eds, *Paterson's Cape Travels*, p. 59.

5 Until 1712 it had formed part of the large Constantia estate; later, in 1769, Bergvliet was purchased by Hendrik Cloete's brother-in-law, Petrus Michiel Eksteen (1727–1779). The present-day Cape Town suburb of Bergvliet recalls the name of the farm: Forbes and Rourke, eds, *Paterson's Cape Travels*, p. 59, n. 6; Schutte, ed., *Briefwisseling*, p. 58.

6 The northern shore of False Bay, E of the Cape Peninsula.

7 Groot and Klein Constantia were portions of the original Constantia estate. Klein Constantia, later known as 'Hoop op Constantia', came into the hands of Johannes Nicolaas Colijn, (b. 1742) in 1776; Groot Constantia had been owned since 1759 by Jacobus van der Spuy (1719–1778): Schutte, ed., *Briefwisseling*, pp. 48–49, 49, n. 20, 112, n. 5.



Map 1 A journey to the Sneeuberg and the eastern frontier, and north to the Orange River, returning along the coast between the mouths of the Great Fish and Gourits Rivers, initially in the company of William Paterson: October 1777 to March 1778

is run by a sergeant and five men. There is [a] hospital as well. On this side of the river is another stock farm, after which is the Tygerhoek, also a Company stock farm, on which are a corporal and three men.

This Overberg district<sup>76</sup> is also sparsely populated, and even in the populated places one finds scarcely one farm in every four hours. The headquarters at Swellendam consist of four houses, namely, those of the landdrost, secretary, messenger and deputy. They are situated in a valley close to the southern foot of the large mountain range, in which are three ravines with both timber trees and trees for firewood. However, the best, named 'poespas', 'colonie' and 'appelbos',<sup>77</sup> have been cut down. The Koorlands River separates the houses of the landdrost and deputy from the other two; it is generally dry except when it rains and rises in the [Langeberg] bush. There are six heemraden, chosen from among the best colonists. Five or six meetings are held each year in the home of the landdrost, in addition to [activities relating to] other matters. This district has three mounted companies which have to come to exercise once a year, at the end of October. [It] is very extensive and stretches from Tygerhoek and Cape Anguillas along the south-eastern coast to the Kaffirs.<sup>78</sup> At present it is inhabited by 567 men, 372 women, 688 boys and 619 girls, and 11 *knechts*:<sup>79</sup> thus 2 257. They have 538 slaves, 198 slave women, 30 slave boys and 27 slave girls: thus 793.

The mountain range here has sharp peaks, with deep ravines and haphazard strata to be seen from the outside. The seasons in this entire district as far as Hottentots Holland are one month later than at the Cape. It produces excellent wheat, poor wine and excellent fruit where it will grow. The orange trees at the headquarters at Swellendam were for the most part infected with scale.

17 [October 1777] Thermometer this morning at eight o'clock, 58°; at noon, 64°; and this evening, 50°; strong NW wind. Remained at Swellendam, surveying everything around.

18 [October 1777] [Thermometer] this morning at eight o'clock, 56°; at noon, 75°; at ten in the evening, 55°. Hot weather; calm.

19 [October 1777] [Thermometer] this morning at eight, 50°; at noon, 70°; this evening at six o'clock, 63½°. Westerly wind; overcast, sultry, stormy sky. A little rain at and in the mountains.

18 and 19 [October 1777] Still at Swellendam. Was present at a sermon which was delivered by a *sieketrooster*,<sup>80</sup> a man who travels from place to place, since there is no preacher. There was only one farmer [present], although many of them are camped in the valley with their wagons for [the annual military] exercise.<sup>81</sup> Ate the flesh of

76 Lying E and SE of modern-day Caledon, the area gained its name from the circumstance that it lay on the other side of, or over, the Hottentots Holland Mountains.

77 The last two trees named are probably the kolonialebrak or vaalbrak, *Atriplex vestita*, and the appelblaar or stamperhout, *Ehretia rigida*. The word 'poespas', which perhaps gives its name to the Poespasvlei and other topographical features, is said to come from the Dutch for 'hotchpotch' or 'higgledy-piggledy'. Another explanation for the origin of the name 'Poespasvlei' is that it describes the jolting motion of wagons passing over the rock-strewn bed of the Poespas: see V.S. Forbes, ed., *Carl Peter Thunberg: Travels at the Cape of Good Hope, 1772-1775* (Cape Town, 1986), p. 74, n. 159.

78 The coastal extent of the district was then from Cape Agulhas to the mouth of the Bushmans River.

79 Servants and farm overseers.

80 A lay preacher's duties included comforting the sick, as the designation implies.

81 This was held in October in each Cape district.

many strips of venison lying to be dried by sun and wind;<sup>179</sup> it is used by the people here as bread.

The weather was very pleasant, with a soft, cool breeze from the E [and a] slightly cloudy sky. The wind veered with the sun and at the start of the afternoon blew from the SE and was strong and dry, but not as at the Cape. The cattle here in these plains live off various shrubs, often aromatic ones, and are healthy – their milk and butter delicious. Horses, however, do not [thrive] here and generally die, I think from lack of proper nutriment. We cleaned our guns and pitched the tent. Thunderstorms come mainly from the NNE and are very violent, accompanied by rains which cause the rivers to become swollen. Nevertheless, on 15 May last it rained heavily from the NW. The N wind here is otherwise dry and strong.

10 [November 1777] Last night the dogs made a great commotion, often leaping back fearfully. I went out of the tent at about midnight; [there was a] cloudy sky but moonlight. I could not see anything untoward, but my horse stood trembling by the wagon. The Hottentots were sleeping next to a little fire. I went into the tent again and, thinking the matter over again, I found that the flintlock I had taken with me had not been loaded when I had cleaned it yesterday evening. This morning the farmer said that the lion had been close to us and warned me not to leave the tent in the evening or at night without a burning torch in my hand. The wind blew violently from the SE all night long, but in the morning a misty rain fell and the wind died down. We departed NNE at daybreak through the veld without having a road, with a Hottentot as guide. We kept close to our right the low mountain or rather Swarte Ruggens, here called 'Rhinoster Mountain',<sup>180</sup> which extends to the E. We saw nine gnu, thirty hartebeest, twenty quagga and a multitude of springbok, but could not get a shot at any because of the open veld. Here are also a few rhinoceros still; we saw a spoor.

At about ten o'clock we came to an extensive plain separated from the Camdebo by only a low range of hills. Here we saw the Sneeuwberg range which encircles the Camdebo – as with a longbow. I saw no snow on that range, and it did not seem to me to be as high as the Rodesands Mountains<sup>181</sup> but the land does lie higher. Here we saw very large herds of springbok, but in relation to the extensive plain, few. I therefore think that the statement that one can club them to death with sticks is a fable, except when these creatures crowd together in passes through the mountains which are here not high and rise up like hillocks on the plain. They were so wild that we seldom had them in our sights, and although we saw fully ten thousand of them separated in different herds, we shot only two. These buck come down to these plains in search of water in about September, October and November, trekking to the S, always against the wind, and return when the veld becomes dry. They lamb once a year, producing one lamb, normally in August and September, but also in April. It is delicious game. The ewe has much smaller, thinner horns than the ram, and is also smaller. The measurements of an adult which bore a very immature lamb in the womb were, in Rhineland feet and inches: from nose to tail, 4 [feet]; the tail, which was black and bare below

179 Jerked meat, or biltong, is described.

180 The Renosterberg is evidently the western section of the hills running E, in the vicinity of Jansenville.

181 The Roodezandsberg forms part of the mountains E of the Berg River, W and NW of present-day Tulbagh.

advanced [their territory] further, since the Kaffirs say that they and all of their cattle come from the direction of the Mtamboenas.<sup>346</sup>

Today I saw some ostrich with lots of chicks, several hartebeest and two or three springbok and steenbok. Towards noon the wind became SW; very fine, clear weather. It is my intention now to proceed further to the N and then to see what I can do. Jan Durand, Hannes de Beer and Hannes Meintjes have undertaken the journey with me. We have my wagon and ten oxen, eight horses and eight Hottentots. Since these people live in enmity with us we shall be very much on our guard. I shall do everything in my power to speak to some of them, to see whether this violent war cannot be brought to a close. About a month ago, while out hunting with his Bastard Hottentot, the owner of this last farm – having encountered one of these Chinese who was also hunting – was wounded in the head and the Bastard in the nose by a poisoned arrow. The Chinese was shot dead after much effort.

Towards sunset we saw something that looked like a lion. De Beer and I rode thither and found it to be a preening wild peacock sitting on an anthill. We unyoked at the Tarca<sup>347</sup> and did not pitch our tent because the ground was too stony for the pegs. We travelled six hours NE today, ascending but gradually.

17 [December 1777] Last night fine weather with moonlight; I was wet with dew. I was not aware of anything untoward when I, who was on guard, went on my rounds and found everything in deep repose, because as was customary the horses and cattle were tethered near us and all guns were loaded. Tonight the weather was fine, with no wind, promising a hot day. We departed NE through the plain along the Tarka. The mountain [range] to my right which still extended NE but was becoming low, and which lies N of the Kaffirs, I named 'Companies Welvarens Mountains'.<sup>348</sup> The mountains which extend close to this mountain range, with ridges, to the left as far as the Sneeberg range, I named 'Boers Mountains', after the fiscal.<sup>349</sup> After two hours we crossed a small river which flows SE from Boers Mountains into the Tarka. This I named 'Staring's River' after the harbour-master.<sup>350</sup> Here we crossed the Tarka because it flows too close to the Boers Mountains beside a rock-face at this point. We rode past this cliff on the left bank, seeking to cross [the river] again because I wanted to go as far northwards as was feasible. After searching for a long time we found a suitable ford two hours further [on], with a rock slab where we had less than half a foot of water, but a strong current to contend with. We unhitched on the opposite bank at a spring which I named

346 They were perhaps the people from the area of the Mtamvuna River on the distant NE borders of the present-day Transkei.

347 The Tarka River.

348 In the name 'Company's prosperity mountains' the Dutch East India Company is referred to; the mountains are now known as the 'Winterberg' range: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 96.

349 These mountains are E of modern-day Cradock and include the Elandsberg, Michausberg and Barbersberg: *ibid.*, p. 96. Willem Cornelis Boers (1744–1803), independent fiscal at the Cape from 1774 to 1783, was greatly disliked by the Patriots for his overbearing manner. He was a man of science who gave much assistance to the French traveller Le Vaillant.

350 The river is now named the 'Gunsteling': *ibid.*, p. 96. Damiaan Hugo Staring (1736–1783), harbour-master at the Cape from 1773 to 1782, was as unpopular with the Patriots as the fiscal, Willem Cornelis Boers. In 1785 Boers married Staring's widow, Sophia Wyanda VerHuell (1749–1794).

'Charlotte's Fountain' after Mrs van Plettenberg.<sup>351</sup> As everywhere here, it was overgrown with reeds but filled with sweet water – which greatly pleased us, since we were thirsty on account of the hot weather.

After two readings of the barometer, which gave 26 inches 6 tenths, and after we had refreshed ourselves a little, we resumed our journey northwards, hoping to shoot fresh game since our supplies were low. After riding for an hour we shot an oribi<sup>352</sup> at a reedy spring. I had it drawn and measured it. We continued on our way across rising veld. After a further two hours we came to a low, stony mountain road, along which [we] passed through and over a poort. On one of these mountains the barometer stood at 26 [inches] 1 [tenth] at six o'clock. Lovely clear weather; cool S wind. When we were over these ridges we came to a reedy spring where we unyoked. In these reeds lived so many swallows that they darkened the sky in great flocks. After flying this way and that for some time they again settled in the reeds. Our route from Mevrouw Van Plettenberg's Charlotta Fountain was N, three hours. From the hill [where I used] the barometer I took a bearing on our route from the Fish River [at] Jacob Rasmus's<sup>353</sup> and found it to be NNE. We saw the northern extremity of the Bamboesberg to the N at a distance of six hours. Seen from this side, this mountain has the same height and shape as the Reuse Casteel in the Camdebo, and appears to be one and the same mountain as the Companies Welvaren, the Tarka flowing round behind the Bamboes Berg.<sup>354</sup> Itinerant farmers have so named it after a type of reed<sup>355</sup> which grows up in the ravines here and there. We have therefore advanced seven hours NNE, slightly E [and have] the veld rising with larger hillocks than behind the Sneeuwberg, but the same type of soil, now *gebroken veld*, then *caro veld*, but often entirely grassveld, with reedy springs and rainwater pools. [There are] rocks on the rising ground, but none in the plains; many anthills, and many anteaters: holes in the *caro bosjesveld* or broken bumpy veld, and almost no wood to cook a pot of food. Reddish-brown, friable, dusty, clayey soil [and] no flowers; in the *caro* some mesembryanthemums and many euphorbias. We saw several springbok, hartebeest and eland, but at a distance. The wind started blowing at sunrise and was fresh SSW with practically no clouds in the sky, and hot. There were no wild Bushmen, but we saw their footprints and the anthills they had robbed.

18 [December 1777] Last night we enjoyed fine, cool weather without a cloud in the sky and bright moonlight. A heavy dew fell. My dog leapt up three or four times and barked ferociously so that we think there were either wild Bushmen or cattle in the vicinity. I walked around our sleeping-place several times but saw nothing. My companions, and particularly the Hottentots, are very negligent and indolent. At daybreak we left in a northerly direction. Fine weather; gentle NE breeze. I named this spring 'Tantalus Fountain' because, although there was an over-abundance of very good

351 Cornelia Charlotte Feith (d. 1812) married Van Plettenberg in 1767, the year after the death of her first husband, the Dutch East India Company's Bengal director, Louis Taillefert.

352 The species is not widely distributed in southern Africa today: Smithers, *Land Mammals*, pp. 174–176.

353 Erasmus.

354 The Tarka does not flow as far N as this.

355 The southern mountain-bamboo, *Thamnocalamus tessellatus*.



water, neither horses nor cattle could drink it because of the steepness [of the banks].<sup>356</sup> We saw several springbok, one of which we shot, as well as a herd of gnu with calves, but we could not catch any of them. We passed some pools of fresh rainwater where we let the cattle drink and took along some water for ourselves. At a distance of an hour from the Bamboesberg we came across a herd of twenty eland, with two calves. We hunted them and wounded four but caught only one. Remained here at a small river which was not flowing at this time, but had large pools of water. As I could see from the flotsam, it must become very swollen in rainy weather. It had steep banks covered with reeds. We had the plateau of the Bamboes Berg an hour to the ENE of us here. I drew this region.

Our route today was six hours N, the landscape still the same, but mostly completely grassveld, although not as dense as in Cafferland. I went to take readings around the Bamboes Berg and found the barometer to be 26 inches in the plain. When we arrived at the mountain we found it was too late [to climb] and abounding in rock-faces, so we [just] climbed up several stages at the foot. The mountain is the same height as behind Princelo, or Camdebo Mountain, so that the mercury will be a few inches lower there. Grass and thorn-trees grew up to the cliffs, but beyond that there was nothing but rock. I did not see anything there that resembled reed or bamboo. While riding along it I saw a large herd of hartebeest but could not cut any of them off. We arrived at the wagon at sunset, where we ate delicious oribi soup. For this reason I gave the name of 'Oerebis River'<sup>357</sup> to this river, which extends southwards, with pools, to join the Tarka. When we reached this point at one o'clock, Meintjes and I went reconnoitring to see where we would bring the wagon through further on, [and] whether the river also comes from the mountains which lie all along our right. While riding through a pass between two rocky hills, going through dense green reeds, we found that the river still flows directly from the N. When we were riding back we saw that something had made a path through the reeds, but could distinguish nothing. One of our Hottentots, who came to us here, saw a large male lion which passed by at this place with several cubs. We drew the wagon further [away] from the reeds so as not to be attacked by it, since our party felt certain that would happen because it had cubs with it. We saw a rhinoceros path and droppings, greatly resembling those of hippopotamus. I allocated the watch and we made a fire. The day was very fine, though hot, with a light NE breeze. The mosquitoes, like those in Europe, plagued us because of the proximity of water and reeds.

19 [December 1777] We heard nothing untoward. Saw the footprints of wild Bushmen, but no people. Our guards were alert last night. The mosquitoes bothered us. Dew fell, and the weather was cool and pleasant. Our muskets in the tent had become very moist. This morning a jackal howled close to us in the reeds and we heard what sounded like people shouting. Fine weather; fresh northerly wind. We departed in a

356 Tantalus, of Greek legend, was the son of Zeus and Pluto. He was banished to the underworld for abusing a privilege accorded him by the gods and there condemned to stand in water with luscious fruits above him which constantly evaded his grasp and, appropriately in this comparison, a water-level which receded whenever he stooped to drink. His predicament is recalled in the English word 'tantalize' and the Dutch 'tantaliseren'.

357 Now called the 'Vlekpoort River', it is SE of modern-day Hofmeyr: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 96.

northerly direction. The veld here is hilly, as [it is] behind the Sneeuwberg. Although one continually passes over generally gradually rising veld, the horizon may be seen everywhere in the NW and W, always hemmed in at a distance by stony hills. Having passed the point of the Bamboesberg, a similar mountain<sup>358</sup> to the E by N can again be seen to the right which looks the same as the others, also with respect to its height, and which seems to be entirely attached, but does not form a regular range, although the strata all tend to be horizontal, with peaks and plateaus of every description. We saw two bushpig, some hartebeest and eland. The ants here build very many sharp points a foot long on top of their round anthills, something which I have not seen elsewhere.

According to the Hottentots, we had here – fully a day's journey on horseback to the W of us behind the Sneeuwberg – salt pans<sup>359</sup> from which the farmers obtain their salt, all of it being fine. If rainwater stands in them for just eight days, salt is formed. This morning we also passed a place where salt had crystallized out of the ground. Two of us, having ridden towards some Cape eland, saw a dog – small, with pointed ears, and which did not bark – following in their tracks. Then they saw a wild Hottentot sitting in the reeds. They called him and wanted to give him tobacco, but he remained sitting sullenly, watching, not wishing to come to them nor to speak. Since he was out hunting they did not want to risk being shot by a poisoned arrow, which he might first release out of fear, and they [therefore] rode away. I very much regretted not having been able to get [to] him, but I was on a hill busy taking bearings, and they did not come to us until noon. We unyoked opposite a conical, isolated mountain which I named 'De Toren van Babel'.<sup>360</sup> It was the same height as the flat Bamboes Berg. Here I perceived that the blue mountain-range which I had seen this morning was a continuation, without a break, of this very range, except that it formed a deep semicircle at this Toren van Babel with its opening facing the NW, and about the same height.

In the afternoon we experienced a thunderstorm which lasted half an hour, with heavy rain. We departed further N at one o'clock and saw in the evening that a branch of this mountain lay right in our way, extending W, but lower and more fragmented. We also saw mountains<sup>361</sup> at a great distance to the W. For the most part we traversed *caro*, but also *gebroken [veld]* and grassveld, [with] the same landscape [and] some pools of water, having till noon the Oerebis River still to our left, which rose in the NE, almost behind the Toren van Babel. Once we had crossed this river the veld became poorer, without water, so that I was afraid we would find no water this evening. I rode directly northwards with Meintjes to reconnoitre, and also to see whether we would be able to get past this mountain, since I want to go directly N. We found an abundance of rainwater. We kindled a smoky fire as a signal and proceeded into the low mountains. Here, as well as in the veld earlier today, we saw many hunting-places of piled-up stones, as well as places of defence [constructed by] the wild Bushmen, all made of stones heaped one on top of each other. Being on our guard we climbed the mountain and though the passage seems uncertain, we shall try it tomorrow, otherwise we shall

358 Evidently the Stormberg range between present-day Molteno and Dordrecht.

359 They are W by S of Hofmeyr: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 96.

360 Known as 'Spitskop' today, it is some twenty-two kilometres NW of Hofmeyr.

361 The Agter Renosterberg.

have to go W. We returned even before sunset and found the wagon at the water which, like all stagnant or sluggishly moving pools, tastes better than it looks, being thick and reddish-brown from the colour of the soil.

Today we managed eight hours N, and saw many gnu, some eland, hartebeest, bush-pig, partridge and springbok, but not in such large herds as behind the Sneeuwberg. At this waterhole, which I named 'Welgevonden',<sup>362</sup> were some of those large frogs. I heard their croaking but did not see them at all. The weather was very pleasant, though hot for a few hours before the thunderstorm. After the thunderstorm, the wind blew fresh NW until nightfall.

20 December [1777] Fine weather; cool NW breeze which veered to the W and became southerly in the evening. It was hot at noon. There was hardly any dew. Last night we heard nothing. In the morning two so-called 'hartebeest' came to drink at our waterhole that I had named 'Welgevonden'. We shattered the hind leg of one of them with a shot and pursued it until we caught up with it half an hour from the place, on our route. This animal had incidentally shown us a way for the wagon, so we rode to it. While I was busy surveying this mountain, which I named 'Dwars in de Weg',<sup>363</sup> and having it drawn, we saw several wild Bushmen walking on a ridge in the distance, but they went away again. Here I took a reading with the barometer and found it to be 25 inches  $3\frac{1}{2}$  tenths on a plain surrounded by mountains which were not as high as the Bamboesberg above this place. After having made several detours, W by N and [N], three hours' distance, directly N through the mountains, we came into a spacious green valley in which grew green reeds and grass in plenty. Here we unyoked, since the oxen were unwilling to continue along the uphill, stony way. We found here several deep, oval pools of stagnant water which must form a considerable river when it rains. We tasted the water and found it muddy; but when I climbed a mountain to see along which route we could get through further, and to look for wood to cook something, I saw near this pool another which did not look as green as the first. When, therefore, I returned with a load of wood from old, dead trees, since the mountains are also bare, I found that the water was very fresh and sweet. I named this place 'Groenendaal'.<sup>364</sup>

I made soup of springbok meat and, having regaled ourselves, we continued further northwards along this green valley, with several twists and turns between very rocky, bare hills. After travelling for an hour we rode through a poort between two hills of rock, through which this river or vlei passes, with dense reeds. I named this place 'Het Reuse Metselwerk'<sup>365</sup> because the rocks on these hills, being very large and heavy, lay loosely piled one on another in horizontal layers so that, had they not been so large, one would have said that it had been done by human hand. We travelled northwards

362 To reach it Gordon passed through a defile which he called 'De Leeuwepoort' and which is now part of the Maraisburg Irrigation Scheme on the Vlekpoort: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 96, Maps 15, 16.

363 The name describes the position of the mountain – lying across Gordon's path; it is the extension of the Zuurberg to the SE, to the S of present-day Steynsburg and including Dassiékranoskop.

364 It is probably situated at Groenfontein, SSE of Steynsburg: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 96.

365 This is probably Strydpoort or another similar defile leading N to the Steynsburg valley. Gordon gave the defile the name 'giant masonry' because it 'was presumably one that displayed mural jointing, a phenomenon common in those parts where dolerite dykes with numerous rectangular joints cause them to resemble the walls of cyclopean builders': *ibid.*, p. 96.

for another two hours through this defile and arrived in a large plain fully three hours wide and four hours long which I afterwards named 'Sir Archibald Campbell's Vlei'.<sup>366</sup> It was also full of reeds and grass, but for the most part cruel sour grass, as everywhere in this country. Here we unyoked. Our overall route has been five hours N. The mountain promises a passage to the N. The landscape is the same as before, but [with] grey clay and covered with grass, and lots of stones here and there. We saw springbok and many gnu. We imagined we saw a rhinoceros, but it disappeared. We found many very tasty wild onions.<sup>367</sup>

21 [December 1777] Last night the dog barked fiercely and the watch was very sleepy, so that while I was doing the rounds I frightened him twice, but we heard nothing. When the moon rose at midnight a heavy dew began to fall. It was very cold in the morning, with little wind. At sunrise a cool W breeze blew, and the weather was very fine. We departed in a northerly direction through the level valley, for the most part ascending gradually, with the mountains becoming more open, and lower to our left and in front of us. Here we saw many springbok, and herds of twenty and thirty gnu, but they were too restive to shoot. We rode up a rise where the level veld ended. I found the barometer to read 24 inches  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tenths, but one [instrument] gave a reading of 24 inches 2 tenths. There seemed to be some air in this one. We again travelled through a narrow plain, which I later named 'Lady Campbell's Plain'.<sup>368</sup> I saw a high ridge before us which promised nothing good. I rode out ahead to reconnoitre. When I arrived on the heights I saw a flat, descending plain, two high mountains like the Bamboesberg range in the NE at a distance of ten or twelve hours, while further to the W and N there were indeed some hills, but for the rest flat, grey, grassveld. However, the wagon could not descend here on account of the steepness and [the] stones. I went westwards along this height where I found a poort which was passable, though difficult to ascend because of stones. Near here I found the fresh hunting-place of a wild Bushman, who had lain in it to spy while hunting game, but I did not see him walking away. We warned the wagon, which reached the top, though with difficulty, after we had removed some stones from its path, and it rolled down the other side into the plain with ease. I found the barometer to read 24 inches  $6\frac{1}{2}$  tenths, having a large plain here. I took a reading of latitude using an octant and found it to be  $30^{\circ} 55' S$ , but cannot rely on this with certainty.

We unyoked half an hour N of the pass, which Durand named the 'Schep Moed

366 Campbell (1739–1791), soldier, administrator and parliamentarian, was governor of Jamaica from 1782 to 1785 and of Madras from 1786 to 1789. He was knighted in 1785 and both the phrasing here and the circumstances of Campbell's life indicate that Gordon's naming of this vlei, or plain, in the vicinity of modern-day Steynsburg was a later substitution, made perhaps in the course of a revision of his journal with publication in view. Gordon probably met Campbell on the latter's return from India. The question is explored by Forbes: *ibid.*, pp. 97, 110. In the original manuscript a name, probably 'De Vlakke Valey' had earlier been given; it has been scored through and substituted with the new name commemorating Campbell.

367 *Allium dregeanum*.

368 In addition to this name, Gordon's Map 3 gives the alternative name, 'Ramsay's Valeij'. In 1779 Sir Archibald Campbell married Amelia Ramsay (d. 1813). She was the daughter of the painter Allan Ramsay (1713–1784) and granddaughter of the Scottish poet of the same name (1686–1758). Clearly, as with the naming of a plain after her husband, this naming is a later substitution: see above, Chapter 2, n. 366.

28 [December 1777] Last night no dew; fine weather – also this morning; the wind NW. After a couple of hours SSW we had Castor's Mountain at a distance of four hours to the side of us. We saw many gnu, springbok and bontebok, which we hunted. A Bastard Hottentot shot a bontebok at a spring which we named accordingly. I found that this creature is the same as that of the highlands, but not altogether as bright in colour. Here we again found a lair of the wild Bushmen, but only for four or five couples. Their resting-places are like those of an animal, being a hollow three feet in diameter, seven inches deep in the middle, sloping up towards the sides in which are some few reeds. [Each] holds two, presumably man and wife. Some stones lay there, on which they rub their paint and which they use to break bones to obtain the marrow which they eat; [there were also] burnt reeds from their fire, since there is no wood here; and, where wood is obtainable, three or four long-branched sticks stand, on which they hang their supplies. Their mats, with which they cover their huts on one side, they take with them when they move – which they do daily. I found several pieces of them here. After having satisfied our hunger in a most delicious fashion, we continued on our journey, directly S, and arrived at Fagel's Fontein an hour after dark. It was very hot during the day, the wind following the sun. At evening it veered S and became sharply cold. We saw large herds of springbok and bontebok and many gnu as well, since the veld began to improve here and we [started] to see more game. It amazed me that there are no lion or rhinoceros or elephant here, since there is sufficient grass and [other] game and water; also no ostrich even though [these are] mainly plains. The tortoises are probably greatly reduced by the predators which are compelled by hunger to eat everything. Violent lightning towards evening.

29 [December 1777] Last night fine weather, though cold; no dew. Although there is no dew our firearms become damp in the tent every night. Good weather: fresh easterly breeze; mainly overcast sky with thunderclouds. We shot a bontebok. We departed S through the Schepmoed Poort [and] over the Gnus, Springbokke and Grote Vlakte, in the last of which we unyoked at noon, at the same place as previously. While hunting in the plains we had seen many gnu, springbok and several bontebok. The sky became very overcast from the NNW against the E wind. After resting for half an hour we departed, so as not to be overtaken by the rain in the Reuse Metselwerks Poort and Groenendaal. We immediately encountered severe thunderstorms with heavy rain, so that we were compelled by the cold and wet to unyoke in the Hartebeest Poort,<sup>404</sup> where we had hunted down this creature, and to dig a furrow around the tent for the drainage of the water.

30 [December 1777] Last night the wind blew strongly from the SE with cold and rain, and there was also thunder. This morning still dark; only an hour of sunlight. Again violent thunderstorms. While riding down the Dwars in de Weg Mountain we were overtaken by such a violent hailstorm that most of the hailstones were the size of doves' eggs, and the rest of hens' and ducks' eggs, and of the same shape, and large chunks of ice fell. This lasted about five minutes, and was accompanied by strong wind. We were in danger of being killed by the hail and took shelter behind the wagon. My

404 This defile was evidently SSE of modern-day Steynsburg.

dog put his head between his forepaws and lay thus, facing downwind. The thunder continued until four o'clock in the afternoon, but with lighter showers. For the first time in these regions we saw thirty-five ostrich, as well as many herds of gnu and some bushpig. From this Hartebeest Poort we struck off SSW. We saw a fire of the wild Bushmen in the plain towards which we were riding. At about five o'clock we unyoked close to this place, which we named 'De Chinese Fontein',<sup>405</sup> the water of which was very murky and red, from the soil. We saw from afar the wild Bushmen, of whom there were two, running to the mountains. Took a bearing of our previous outspan at the Orebis River one-and-a-half hours to the SE. The same soil as before, but very soft because of the rain. The wind S in the evening.

31 [December 1777] We continued on our journey SSW. After accompanying the wagon between some low hillocks, we rode out ahead after showing them the route to the mountains, for I intended riding directly to Van den Berg, in order to avoid the Tarka, which would surely be swollen by the rains, and also to rest. We saw very many gnu, and some eland. The weather was still overcast; NW wind; pleasant, cool weather. Cold last night; nevertheless a heavy dew. At noon we rode westwards through a rocky defile where very long reeds grew, with a spring. Named this place 'De Riet Poort'. Here we had a lovely shower of rain, after which the wind became SW. The reeds here were fully the height of a person above our heads while we sat on horseback. We continued on our journey, directing our course to the Tafelberg on which I had taken a bearing from the Fish River, and after a difficult trip arrived late in the afternoon at Van den Berg's farm nine or ten hours SSW of De Chinese Fontein. The landscape the same [as before]: grass and broken [veld] or bushveld, and some thorn-trees against the hills. We saw many partridge, rabbit and three large bushpig, as well as a herd of gnu and one of hartebeest, among which was a gnu. The so-called 'bushpig', although generally on the plains in herds of four [and] five to eight and nine, run so fast, holding their tails aloft at an angle, that a person on horseback would not in the end catch up with them.

1 January 1778 The wagon has not yet arrived, but I have not been concerned about the wild Bushmen, since they are far too timid. Last night it was cold, with heavy rain from the S. This morning, overcast sky; SSE wind; cold weather. At about three o'clock in the afternoon the wagon arrived. They had shot a large bushpig but had cut it up, so I could not examine it. The Hottentots call it '*kouw naba*', or 'ground rhinoceros'.<sup>406</sup> After I had obtained a team of fresh oxen, I preferred to leave while still on our feet, for fear of the water which ordinarily renders the ford over the Tarka impassable on the sixth day after rains in the Bamboesberg. I therefore left along the same route we had come thus far. My travelling companions continued celebrating New Year. When we arrived an hour before sunset in a shallow basin of [the] Boers Mountains, we saw a signal fire of the wild Bushmen at the angle of the mountain past which we had to travel. I therefore let the loose oxen be driven close to the wagon, loaded the musket, and rode with the wagon. Although it was already dusk we crossed the ridge of this range and [progressing] along cliffs, reached at about ten o'clock in the evening the Tarka-crossing

405 The spring recalls the popular name for the San; it would seem to be in the vicinity of the present-day town of Hofmeyr.

406 In modern Nama this name for a bushpig would be '*!hulnaba*'.

where we had slept the first time. It has been very cold all day long, particularly in the evening. Together with my Hottentot youth Hodies, a diligent young fellow, I tested the ford and found the water washing [over it], but very passable; and the water which we had expected to be cold was as warm as blood. Notwithstanding the steep banks and the gloom, I decided to ride across: this took place successfully. We unyoked on the opposite bank. I treated the Hottentots to tobacco and a tot, and plenty of mutton, and we celebrated New Year at this place. The four Hottentots of my travelling companions had remained behind, so I now remained alone with my servants.

2 [January 1778] Dew did not fall heavily.<sup>407</sup> When day dawned we continued on our previous route to Van Staden's at the Great Fish River. I rode out ahead and found that [the river] was not very high. Here my travelling companions joined me again. We found no one at home except several Hottentots, for the farmer with his wife and children had ridden to the Cape – as they normally do once a year. I had the wagon continue on its previous route. At this place I crossed the Great Fish River and rode to the farm of Andries Burgers, where my companions again remained, not trusting the Fish River. At this place I again crossed the river and came to the wagon. We continued our route through the large basin, over the great ridges, through the big Doornbome Dal and arrived as darkness fell at Phrens River Drift, a quarter of an hour NE of Botus's farm.<sup>408</sup> Since the ford over this river was very dangerous to ride into and out [of], we unyoked. This day we saw only two springbok and two steenbok, but at the houses the flies are becoming an extremely troublesome plague. In the forenoon the weather was calm and most beautiful. In the afternoon there was a pleasant SE breeze; towards evening it was misty and very cold, since we were constantly descending, and the sea or coastal air was breaking through the defile and low mountains of the Fish River.

3 [January 1778] When we wanted to cross the ford at daybreak, the oxen refused to pull up the steep bank, so that on three or four occasions the wagon almost overturned. After I myself had been busy for nearly two hours digging the road, the wagon [at] first pulled back, [but finally] we did reach the top. We continued on our previous wagon route and crossed the Great Fish River just about an hour S of Botus's [farm], the water being swift but not very deep. In the afternoon we reached Jacob Erasmus's farm [where we had been] previously. Last night it was cold and a little dew fell and [we had] cold, overcast weather [with a] strong NNW wind the entire day. I sent to Prinselo for my things which had been left behind.

4 [January 1778] Since my baggage had not yet arrived I rode to Prinselo's, accompanied by De Beer. When we arrived there I found that they had come to me but we had missed each other on the way. There I left De Beer, who was returning to the Camdebo, and set off back to the Great Fish River. Met [people] on foot, since at sunset I was close to Godissa's village; passed four Kaffir women who asked me for tobacco, but since I had nothing to give them they went to their village. Some lions still live here. Eight days ago they killed two cattle again. Three large males had been seen here, and yet I passed by without musket, armed only with my pistols, without seeing any-

407 This sentence is a marginal note in the manuscript.

408 Anthonie Botes of Enkhuizen farmed on the eastern bank of the Baviaans River, not far from its confluence with the Great Fish River. The Doornbome Dal is evidently N of the Baviaans River.

thing amiss, and it was dark when I came to the Fish River. There I learnt that the Bushmen had murdered two herdsmen and had stolen about two hundred cattle. The people round here are very neglectful about cattle. The herdsmen lie down and sleep, and I have encountered many herds thus; then the wild Bushmen, who see this from the mountains, come down and murder them, but never openly. Last night no dew fell [and] a strong NW wind blew with violent gusts. This morning fine weather; W wind. Found the barometer [read] 28 inches at the river. In the afternoon some thunderclouds came out of the NW over the mountains and returned from the SE with rain, as usual. I saw a large lizard swimming in the Fish River. I could not catch it. They swim and dive but do not move over the water, since they have no web between their toes.

5 [January 1778] Last night heavy rain fell from out of the SW, and the wind blew. This morning [we had] fair weather [and a] NW wind which veered through the W to the SE during the day in the afternoon. In the morning a crowd of merry Kaffirs came to escort me part of the way, with begging. I understood that they had been far in the veld.<sup>409</sup> I departed southwards with my four Hottentots, along the river to seek the seaward side. Two hours from Erasmus's we passed the farm of Labuscagne, an hour further that of Botha [and] two hours further that of Schalkwyk.<sup>410</sup> Although he [Schalkwyk] has many cattle I have seen better Hottentot huts than his. Crossing a mountain here I lost the river, which continued SE, and before I could come to it again evening overtook me, so that I outspanned at a pool of rainwater in a dale-like grassy plain. Route eight hours S by E½E. The landscape was grassy veld, with thorn-trees and *spekbomen* as also [on] the low range of mountains; all clayey soil. The further I went down to the sea, the fewer plains there were, the terrain consisting of large hills and mountains. We saw some springbok and eland, as well as two herds of hartebeest. Very pleasant weather today. Here live buffalo, rhinoceros and a few lion, but although I walked everywhere through the undergrowth, I saw none.

6 [January 1778] Last night a heavy dew fell, as generally happens when the weather is calm and clear, and after the moon set at midnight. Most beautiful weather; easterly breeze. I departed ESE to look for the river. Here we shot a springbok [and] wounded a hartebeest. After riding for fully an hour I saw several sheep, to which I rode, and coming to a wagon track we arrived at the farm of a certain Botha.<sup>411</sup> From here I rode SE on horseback to see the Little Fish River, [called] 'Kinka' by the Hottentots, flowing into the Great [Fish River]. This I saw after I had ridden SE for an hour; [I also saw] that a farm had been granted too far [for it] to form a real division or limit. Here, the Great Fish River comes with many bends from the N and the Little [Fish River flows] from the W, along a fairly high mountain range through which there was a defile. I sent the wagon through this [poort] to the source of the Bushmans River, which rises in the same mountains<sup>412</sup> in which is the confluence of the Little [Fish River] and Great Fish River. At this defile the commissioners erected the beacon which, together with that at

409 This sentence is a marginal note in the manuscript.

410 These farmers on the Great Fish River were perhaps Casper Labuschagne (baptized 1746), Jacobus Botha and Dirk van Schalkwyk. See Moodie, comp. and ed., *The Record*, part 3, pp. 76, n. 1, 85, n. 1.

411 Possibly he was a brother of Jacobus Botha.

412 The hills at Kommadagga, about fifty kilometres NW of present-day Grahamstown.



Bruins Hoogte, separates Swellendam to the S and Stellenbos to the N.<sup>413</sup> Here I rode across *caro*, grass and *gebroken veld*, with many *spek[bomen]* and thorn-bushes. After I had ridden through the Little Fish River and up this mountain (here many rhinoceros and buffalo live, as I saw from their spoor and droppings, but I encountered none), and when I reached the summit, I took a bearing on Erasmus's farm in the NNW, my route further SE by E. I noticed that the river flows directly E at this place, but afterwards it flows more S, closer to this mountain range which extends E. After going up hill and down dale for two hours, with many twists and turns, I came via a deep valley to the farm of a certain Besuiden Houd,<sup>414</sup> at one of the tributaries of the Bushmans River. From here I went further, often crossing this stream, at first mainly S for fully an hour, then through the most romantic defile I have ever seen, through which this stream flows. It extends for fully half an hour, and is very high and not even a flintlock's shot wide at the base, but wider at the top. The interlocking spurs fit onto each other [and] according to Buffon, water will have formed them. The strata are horizontal in many instances but at the beginning [of the ravine], although they were horizontal before the mountains were there, they are almost perpendicular, and I think that this ravine was formed by an earthquake. It was overgrown on both sides with bushes, especially euphorbia trees. I named this ravine 'De Natuuralisten Kloof'.<sup>415</sup> It winds from the S to the SE. There I saw several so-called 'dassies'<sup>416</sup> and heard some baboons. Riding further SE, I found the wagon, with which – since it was now nearly sunset – I unyoked at the farm of a certain Pieter Joubert.<sup>417</sup> There I found a crowd of Kaffirs, to whom I gave the rump of a springbok and some tobacco, with which they were very pleased. It was very hot today [with] almost no wind between the mountains, but on the summit a gentle SE breeze. The distance and direction travelled must be about six hours E by SE – but more, because of bends. Still the same terrain; also stony.

7 [January 1778] Heavy dew; fine weather though calm, promising a hot day. I departed eastwards through a narrow valley between not very high mountains. I found the barometer here at this tributary of the Bushmans River to read 28 inches 5 tenths. After a distance of two-and-a-half hours I came to the farm of Frans Joubert.<sup>418</sup> Thence, accompanied by a guide, I rode E by N for half an hour, then N over this mountain, and, after passing another three rises and depressions, in which grew a great deal of timber as at Prinslo's, at about two hours' distance from Joubert I found the large Kaffir village of Sjomoshi, the same one at which Mr Swellengrebel had been on the other side of the Coenap, where he [the chief] lives now as he did then. He is the brother of Coba and thus the son of Mahoti.<sup>419</sup> He was sitting under a thorn-tree with several

413 This boundary had been determined by the commission of 1769 to 1770.

414 Bezuidenhout.

415 'The naturalists' defile'.

416 The rock dassie, *Procavia capensis*: Smithers, *Land Mammals*, p. 135. 'Das' is the Dutch word for the European badger.

417 His farm was apparently situated along the Bushmans River NW of modern-day Alicedale.

418 François Joubert farmed in the vicinity of present-day Alicedale. In November 1776 Swellengrebel had been able to obtain meat and milk from him, but not bread: Godée Molsbergen, ed., *Reizen*, vol. 4, p. 17.

419 The relationships are unclear. 'Sjomoshi' is perhaps the 'Mosa' of Sparrman's narrative: Forbes, ed., *Anders Sparrman*, vol. 2, p. 200. The name is given as 'Mazan' in Moodie, comp. and ed., *The Record*, part 3, p. 112. Swellengrebel mentions only 'Jeramba' in this locality: Godée Molsbergen, ed., *Reizen*, vol. 4, pp. 11, 13, 14.

Kaffirs. After the customary 'cabe' I gave him a piece of tobacco and some beads. I asked for milk and he had it fetched at once, and held the basket himself, not drinking first, as the other Kaffirs do, but last. He showed me his wife and children, and when I asked him why he had but one, he said that was enough for him. In a short while there was a crowd of Kaffirs around me, some of them painted red and yellowish.<sup>420</sup> To each I gave about a pipeful of tobacco from my knapsack, until I had no more; they were very satisfied with this. After having spent some time here, since it was very hot, I took my leave (when they say 'cabe', they ordinarily stretch the right hand out straight) and rode back, followed by a whole crowd. As far as I could see eastwards in this valley, there were Kaffir huts between the thorn-trees and large herds of cattle. None of them had bread, which they call 'manassi', and none 'same', their wheat, since they had left their land and their crops were not ripe. At about three o'clock I reached Frans Joubert's, where the wagon had just arrived. The weather has been very hot, with little wind, though SE. The countryside the same: full of thorn-trees and shrubs; the distance two-and-a-half hours eastwards. The largest tributary of the Bushmans River rises at [the abode of] Sjomoshe, who said he would visit me. Lightning in the evening in the NW; hazy, hot sky. I saw a Hottentot woman formed like the rest.<sup>421</sup>

8 [January 1778] Last night it was close [and] overcast, this morning still hot. Schomooshi came at about seven o'clock. I honoured him with a sheep and we parted the best friends in the world. I left along a very mountainous, difficult path, with many twists and turns, going now W, then E, crossing the large offshoot of the Bushmans River, [but] nevertheless [travelling] SE by S till the afternoon [when we came] into a deep, grassy valley in which grew some bushes, where I had them unyoke for a while. I named this vale 'Swelengrebel's Dal', because Swelengrebel had spent the night in this place [and reported] having heard the lions roaring here.<sup>422</sup> At about ten o'clock a misty rain began to fall from the SE. After resting for an hour we inspanned, and after a distance of one hour SE by S over two rises, I turned WSW. The going became very good – all low, grassy ridges. Fully an hour before we came to the Bushmans River we saw large herds of cattle; shortly afterwards four Kaffirs, with their hands full of assegais, as is usual, and a couple of knobkerries, came to us without asking for anything. I spoke a few words of Kaffir to them and repeated some parts of their singing, whereupon, as they walked along, they began to sing and dance. Without being asked I gave them a piece of tobacco. Thereupon they wished to barter for my cattle. I told them that I came from afar and had none. They offered me an ox for my dog, but when I explained to them that I had but one, and that at night it had to guard me against *goronjama*,<sup>423</sup> which is 'lion' in their language, they were satisfied. Nevertheless, when

420 Ochre was used to produce these colours.

421 Perhaps she exhibited steatopygia, the physical condition whereby an excessive accumulation of fatty tissue is manifested above the buttocks: Singer, in Tobias, ed., *The Bushmen*, pp. 120–124. This anatomical phenomenon is common among both San and Khoikhoi. More probably, though, Gordon is referring to the so-called 'apron' which is formed by the elongation of the labia minora: see Gordon's journal entry for 25 October 1777.

422 On 5 November 1776 Swelengrebel stayed at Assegai Bush, nine kilometres NE of modern-day Sidbury: Godée Molsbergen, ed., *Reizen*, vol. 4, p. 17; Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 72.

423 The Xhosa word for 'lion' is 'ingonyama'.

I requested milk from them, they again asked me for the dog, and when I refused, they left. I crossed the Bushmans River, over which I could jump at this place with [the aid of] a stick, as it was not deep. It runs into the sea too swiftly to be a great river.<sup>424</sup> It flows across a plain at this point, though with large convolutions [and] with overgrown hills around it from N to S. Today I travelled nineteen hours [through] the same landscape, passing much blood-red clay [and seeing] a few flowers, being mainly antolisas. I saw some hartebeest and quagga. Unyoked on the opposite side of the river. The misty rain continued in gusts.

9 [January 1778] Last night I heard nothing; still the same weather and wind. The barometer read 29 inches 2 tenths at the river – thus we have climbed up a great deal since yesterday. The Kaffirs we had seen yesterday are [those] of Chief Langa, which means ‘sun’ in Kaffir; he is the brother of Gaggábe or Cambushi, and both are sons of the late paramount chief Paró or Paló.<sup>425</sup> He is not in his brother’s good books and is situated on the other side of the Bushmans Mountains, on this side of the Great Fish River. Yesterday we left him at a distance of two or three hours to our left. This morning, at a distance of more than two hundred paces, I shot with a bullet a blackish-brown vulture in flight; it was the same size and shape as the white-grey eagle.<sup>426</sup> I had it drawn. I left, at first [going] a quarter of an hour W, thereafter S and SE for another half an hour, but further if one considers the steep inclines and turns. Close to the river (which has more sinuosities than any I have seen up to now, with high, eroded banks, often of red clay, overgrown with thorn and other bushes) we found the elderly Chief Ruyter,<sup>427</sup> who has Gounaquas and Bastard Hottentots under him. This man has a polite manner and very pleasant appearance, and was wearing on his chest a copper plate with the emblem of the Company. His village is divided in two, the other portion being situated further to the SW. He had many cattle and sheep, and I have heard that he has several hundred men under him. I gave him a scarf and some tobacco, and also a drink (something which Sjomosi did not want but which Coba did). I also gave some gifts to his wife and children, and he provided me with some nice sour milk, such as the Kaffirs have, and a guide to take me down to the sea. He was very pleased when I informed him that my great chief liked him very much because he had always been a good chief.<sup>428</sup>

424 Its mouth is at present-day Kenton on Sea, twenty-three kilometres SW of Port Alfred.

425 Langa (c. 1704–1793), brother of Rharhabe (Gaggábe/Cambushi) was a son of Phalo (d. 1775). He was taken prisoner during the Second Frontier War of 1793 by Ndlambe (c. 1740–1828), in alliance with the Boers, and died in captivity: Peires, *The House of Phalo*, pp. 48–51.

426 Perhaps a young Cape vulture is compared here with the lighter-coloured tawny eagle, *Aquila rapax*. For these birds and other comparisons, see Maclean, *Roberts’ Birds*, 5 ed., pp. 108–109, 118.

427 Ruyter, of the mixed Hoengeiqua chiefdom near the mouth of the Bushmans River, was visited by several travellers, among them Swellengrebel and Paterson. Ruyter’s people came to claim sovereignty over the Zuurveld between the Sundays and the Great Fish Rivers. The name ‘Hoengeiqua’ means ‘people with hair’: Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp. 501–504.

428 Gordon’s comments here are of particular interest as an indication of the importance accorded by the Cape authorities to friendly relations with frontier peoples. Ruyter was regarded as a buffer between Xhosa incursions and European expansion and the comment on the partiality shown Ruyter by Gordon’s ‘great chief’ (Van Plettenberg) is in keeping with Cape government policy. See further, Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, eds, *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652–1820* (Cape Town and London, 1979), pp. 293–294, 297.

I took leave of him and travelled over many high, grassy ridges almost completely devoid of stones, with low shrubs growing in the hollows, S and SE, and also E, with many twists and heights which necessitated the use of the brake, until we unyoked at sunset at one of these shrubs in a valley. I named this place 'Hope's Valley', after the commissioner, Hope.<sup>429</sup> Today I saw lovely irises and also, as has been the case from the Tarka, three types of aloe – *succotrin*, *maculata* and *spinata*.<sup>430</sup> The soil has been clayey, but mixed with black, organic earth. I travelled past large herds of cattle belonging to Kaffirs and through a village, whence came many flies, as well as Kaffirs, men, women and children, who walked along with us in the best humour in the world. They are subject to Chief Thaka.<sup>431</sup> They again wanted to give me an ox in exchange for my dog and to barter cattle, but without being mischievous or beggarly. I gave them some tobacco. I wished to trade three assegais for a length of copper wire, but after the Kaffir had considered it for some time he only wanted to give me two; whereupon, to indicate that we had no desire to accommodate them in everything they did, [I] broke off the transaction. He ran to his village and brought three calves to trade for the copper wire, but I refused. Met other large groups of Kaffirs, and when I wanted to take a bearing on a high ridge, they crowded around me and watched the moving compass with amazement and apprehension. I instructed them to take away their assegais, since that instrument would not tolerate them and then I could not carry out my tasks. They leapt back in fear, and after I had taken an assegai from one's hand and agitated the compass with it to show them, I had difficulty in getting them to come back, since they were probably afraid that I would bewitch them.

In the evening I saw the sea at a distance of five or six hours to the S through a gap in the sand-dunes. Our overall route today has been SE½S, about five hours in a straight line, all along the right bank of the Bushmans River ([called] 'Çaugha' or 'hippopotamus' River by the Hottentots), now nearer, then further away, according to the manner in which these large or high ridges distorted the distance. We saw several hartebeest, eland and springbok, but [quite] wild. Here live also a number of elephant and many buffalo, but we saw none. The entire day the weather was misty from the SE, with showers of fine rain which turned to heavy rain towards evening but did not last for long. At sunset we saw a large plain stretching to the sea in the E beyond the Bushmans River, but there were still many high ridges before us and to our left. We heard dogs barking, so Kaffirs were present in the vicinity. Their large herds of cattle have cropped the entire veld short.

10 [January 1778] Last night it rained intermittently; nothing untoward [occurred]. With the coming of day the wind blew through the N, WNW, with clearing sky and fresh breeze. I heard the surge of the sea, so I think there has been a storm there. I travelled about eight hours ESE, still over the same high, hilly landscape, with detours.

429 Hendrik Hop (1716–1771) was the leader of an expedition of 1761 to 1762 which crossed the Orange River into Namaqualand.

430 Several aloes are common to this region: see Gilbert Westacott Reynolds, *The Aloes of Tropical Africa and Madagascar* (Mbabane, 1966), p. 145.

431 Perhaps he was the 'Captain Thatthoe' of Adriaan van Jaarsveld's report of 1781 on the expulsion of the Xhosa: Moodie, comp. and ed., *The Record*, part 3, pp. 110–111.

The weather became absolutely lovely, with the same breeze. By noon we had crossed the heights and were travelling over gently undulating [and] beautifully grassy fields, the same terrain as yesterday [with] not a single stone, and in the hollows, rainwater swamps in which were many ducks and teal.<sup>432</sup> To the right, at a distance of an hour, the high ridges, which became more bushy, stretched to the dunes. We passed many Kaffir villages and many herds of cattle, and I amused myself greatly with them [the people]. They danced and sang as they walked along beside the wagon. In the afternoon we saw a large kraal or village and it turned black with Kaffirs running towards me. They asked me to stop, for their chief was coming to me – which I did. Shortly afterwards two old, grey men arrived, accompanied by a large crowd of men, women and children [which] surrounded me on all sides. These [men] were the two chiefs Titi and Tsaka, the former the son of the elderly Paro's brother.<sup>433</sup> I gave them some tobacco. They asked me from whence I came, and for iron, to which I replied that I came from far beyond this land, and that I had no iron. Tsaka, who spoke Hottentot, asked for a gift which, he said, great people always did when they met each other. I gave each chief a string of beads, and the people small pieces of tobacco. They sent for milk, but I told them it was getting late and that I was in a hurry. They again asked for my dog, and when I refused, they accompanied me for a little while longer and then returned to their village.

We continued, following the same route, wounded a hartebeest and killed a number of ducks. At sunset we arrived at a village of the Kaffirs, who were at first afraid of me, but when I approached them and gave them tobacco, I found them to be the most cheerful, best people in the world. They showed me their gardens, gave me milk, and begged in great moderation. I watched them milking their cows, which are very tame. First they speak to them like someone intoning a prayer, without paying attention, then whistling. They bind the hind legs fast now and milk thus, the man continually talking. From this man, named Poemla, I traded a basket and calabash and, having gone through their huts and having heard their singing, returned to the tent by moonlight, attended by four Kaffirs who, after smoking, went to their village. These were soldiers or servants of Chief Umsella who lived across the river, or twelve hours E by N of us.<sup>434</sup> When I had been in the tent for an hour another Kaffir brought me a basket of milk. My horse had walked away to the Kaffir village and they returned it to me forthwith. The hyena howled close to us. Direction and distance today: eight or nine hours ESE. At noon I saw the mouth of the Fish River from a high mountain. I named this place 'Bleiswyk's Valley', after the state pensionary.<sup>435</sup>

432 The red-billed teal, *Anas erythrorhyncha*, or the Cape teal, *Anas capensis*: Maclean, *Roberts' Birds*, 5 ed., pp. 86–87, 88.

433 Perhaps they were Titi of the amaGwali and Tshaka of the Gqunukhwebe: Forbes, ed., *Anders Sparrman*, vol. 1, p. 204, n. 85; vol. 2, p. 200, n. 27. Tshaka was killed in 1793 when retreating with Langa: Peires, *The House of Phalo*, p. 51.

434 Umsella evidently lived in what is today the Ciskei. The distance and direction are given as a marginal interpolation in the manuscript.

435 Pieter van Bleiswijk (1724–1790) of Delft came to associate himself with the Patriots. The valley is perhaps today's Trappes Valley, forty kilometres SE of Grahamstown. Gordon would then have been about half that distance from the mouth of the Great Fish River.



Plate 27 Xhosa village in the eastern Cape

11 [January 1778] Light dew; misty air; still a strong WNW wind which made the weather clear and most pleasant. I gave some gifts to the Kaffirs and their wives and children, who had brought me milk in abundance, and left for the mouth of the Fish River. At first all the Kaffirs walked along, but afterwards there were [just] seven who remained with me. After riding for two hours ESE we came to dunes somewhat higher than the dunes of Holland, but not wide [and] covered with dense bush, in which are many buffalo and also elephant. I sought in vain for a path for the wagon, after which I rode directly to the river where I had seen an opening from on top of the dunes; but here, however, it was so densely overgrown that the wagon could not get through, and at the river high, steep banks of sand had been blown. I passed very close to two buffalo, which [at first] I did not see, standing in a thicket. When I was past they emerged, and my Hottentot shot at them, but he missed and they ran away. Here I unyoked and went with the Kaffirs and my Hottentot to the beach barely a quarter of an hour from here. The river was eighty or a hundred paces wide at this point, and flowed between hills overgrown with bushes, which made a beautiful sight. There was a sandbank at the mouth, across which the buffalo walked and swam. Hippopotamus live in this river, but not in the sea, since they avoid salt water. Found the beach to be level and sandy, devoid of rocks and with little surf, since the wind [blows less violently] by half on a beach, but not [in] a bay. As far as I could see the coast extended E by N and W½S. On the left bank of the river a rocky dune stretched into the sea quite half an hour; to the W the beach was level and lovely, after which one again came to a rocky dune. I found no attractive shells or amber.

The barometer read 29 [inches] 6 [tenths]. Lacking a horizon I could not obtain a really accurate calculation with my marine octant: got 77° 30'. The Kaffirs were amazed at all this, and at the fact that my fingers did not get wet from the mercury. I let them look at the sun through a darkened glass, at which they were most amazed. I drew the

views of the place and went to the wagon where I found a large crowd of other Kaffirs with bundles of assegais in their hands. I treated my six to a piece of meat and gave them a tot, which they merely sipped, and laughed at each other because of the faces they pulled when they tasted it. The entire group followed [me] back again. The other Kaffirs were Titi's warriors and from across the river. Since I was unable to ride along the coast to the Sundays River, as I had intended, I returned; and since the route was WNW for the most part, it was not too great a detour. I took leave of my friendly Kaffirs, and unyoked an hour before sunset in a valley which was three hours distant from the Kaffirs. I named this valley 'Douglas Valley' after Colonel Douglas.<sup>436</sup> I wanted to go to the river to shoot a hippopotamus but found the thickets too dense, since at the river it was all overgrown with low bushes, and abounding in elephant, buffalo and rhinoceros paths, so that one could get lost in the dark. Here I saw a rabbit, the first I have seen in this veld, as well as many hartebeest today.

12 [January 1778] Early in the morning three hyena came close to our place but retreated when a shot was fired. Still a WNW wind; fair weather.<sup>437</sup> We left early, almost on our previous route, past large groups of Kaffirs, with bundles of assegais, belonging to Chief Magorri: these people often use the 'r' for the 'l'. They begged audaciously, for which reason I gave them nothing, showing them that I was not afraid of them. I ordered them to go back, which they at last did, at a depression [on our way]. Our route was four hours WNW from Ruiter's, then with a small deviation N by W. We came through a Kaffir village of Chief Conga where, after we had been given milk in a very friendly fashion by the other Kaffirs, for which I presented them with beads, our guide sent by Ruiter told me that one of them had grabbed his shield and wanted to run to the wagon to fight me and take everything away, but that the others had prevented him. I laughed at this, and told him to inform them that I had not come there to do them any harm, but that if he molested me in the least, he would not easily try something like that again. We continued on our journey, and arrived at Ruiter's at sunset. The hyena again approached close. Had a long discussion with Ruiter. Ruiter's Hottentot name is 'Toena'; the Kaffirs call him 'Coosjo'.

13 [January 1778] Fine weather, but hot; slight easterly breeze which became W during the day. Little dew last night. I was visited by many Kaffirs, from whom I obtained by barter a shield and assegai. At this place are many wild turkeys,<sup>438</sup> as they are called here, a bird larger by half than a woodcock, [with] the same-shaped beak and head, and to a large extent the body. It is black, and the cock has a red forehead. The beak is also red. Having remained here until four o'clock in the afternoon I left in a NNW direction, to get onto the wagon path to the Sundays River. At Ruiter's village is a small village of a Hottentot named 'Trompetter',<sup>439</sup> who accompanied me part of the

436 This Douglas clan, like the Gordons, was a Dutch family of Scottish ancestry. Abraham Douglas was in 1787 steward of the stadtholder's estate; other family members served the Dutch East India Company. Gordon's return route towards the Sundays River took him inland behind Cape Padrone and Woody Cape.

437 These observations appear as a marginal note in the manuscript.

438 The bald ibis, or wilde kalkoen, *Geronticus calvus*: Maclean, *Roberts' Birds*, 5 ed., pp. 72–73. The comparison is made with the European woodcock, *Scolopax rusticula*, a game bird.

439 'Hans Trompetter', as he was called, has given his name to Trompetters Drift on the Great Fish River, fifty kilometres E by N of present-day Grahamstown. Trompetters Poort was possibly named after this man too.

way with two Kaffirs. These Gounacas or Gounaqua Hottentots are larger than the other Hottentots; they have also been almost absorbed by the Kaffirs and have intermingled with them.<sup>440</sup> Before I left I told the Kaffirs that our great chief wanted them to live beyond the Bushmans River and us on this side. They were most amazed at this, and not at all satisfied, asking what they had done wrong.<sup>441</sup>

After riding for an hour and a half, we passed the first stock farm, that of a certain Routenbag,<sup>442</sup> on which lived a European servant who lacked for everything. Since the moon was rising, I preferred to travel in the coolness. I left with a half-moon from the NNW to W by N. After riding for three hours we passed the stock farm of a man named 'Cok'<sup>443</sup> on which [farm] were several Hottentots. We now had the high ridges closer to our right, and dense vegetation of thorn and other shrubs. Out of these high ridges flows a little river which is usually dry, named 'Cournoei', that is, 'narrow thorn river',<sup>444</sup> which flows W along the ridges for about six hours and then SE into the Sundays River. For the most part we kept to the left bank of this river, crossing it [only] two or three times, and after riding for an hour through this undergrowth, came to a plain where we saw two large herds of buffalo, and three which were grazing alone. We wounded one badly in the chest, but it nevertheless ran into a thicket, so we did not dare pursue it in the night. After riding for fully an hour we outspanned at this river, at the place 'Áascou', or 'yellowwood thorn-tree'.<sup>445</sup> This evening there was thunder very far to the N; we also saw some lightning in the evening, but we had no rain. When we were a couple of hours from Routenbag's farm we encountered half an hour of sandy road, so that for the first time in the interior of the country the wheels of the wagon sank into sand. Our route was seven hours, with a bend from NNW to W. Mainly whitish-grey clay; grassy soil with undergrowth.

14 [January 1778] Fine weather; little dew. The wind had turned to the S; hot in the morning. During the night we heard many baboons screaming; the Hottentots said that a tiger was worrying them. We continued our journey in a SW, S and also SE direction, with many bends and hills, and also a great deal of undergrowth. When we were crossing this little river at the point where it swings SE, an animal leapt up and ran through the undergrowth close before me. I could see in a trice it was a lion. After riding on for fully an hour we stopped at the Sundays River which at this point flows into the large bend of the Swartkops River, where the last beacon of the Company stands.<sup>446</sup> This

440 The explanation for the larger physique of the Gonaqua (Gona) Khoi probably lies in the circumstance mentioned in the latter part of this sentence.

441 This illustrates a facet of the frontier problem. Land, as Giliomee has pointed out, was regarded by the Xhosa 'as communal property, the boundaries of which were hardly ever sharply defined': Elphick and Giliomee, eds, *The Shaping of South African Society*, p. 296.

442 Georg Friedrich Rautenbach (d. 1805): Hoge, 'Personalia of the Germans', p. 326.

443 Jacob Kok farmed at Zandvlakte, the present-day Sandflats which is near the town of Paterson. He is probably Johannes Jacobus Kock (Kok) (d. 1786): Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 87; De Villiers, *Genealogies*, vol. 1, p. 406.

444 The Coerney River; for the derivation of its name, see Nienaber and Raper, *Toponymica*, A, pp. 290–291.

445 This locality, described by Gordon in the journal entry of the following day, 14 January 1778, as the 'Geelhoute Boom', would seem to be to the NNW of Addo.

446 The exact position described is unclear. Gordon may mean the junction of the Coerney (Little Sundays) and Sundays Rivers: there is no conjunction between the Sundays and Swartkops Rivers. At this stage of his journey Gordon had not yet reached the beacon mentioned; erected in May 1752 on Beutler's expedition, it stood at the mouth of the Swartkops River in what is today Port Elizabeth: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, pp. 12–13.



river was about thirty paces wide and was up to the horse's stomach in depth. To the seaward side of this region are many buffalo [and] some lion and elephant. Here we obtained milk from a small village of Hottentots who were guarding the cattle of a farmer named 'Ferreira'.<sup>447</sup> There was also a small village situated a little further off. From the Geelhoute Boom to the Sundays River (which the Hottentots call 'Ghoag Ghou A' or 'marsh clay river') the distance is three hours. After noon we travelled S and SSW, and also SW, with many bends, and arrived an hour after sunset at the small river 'De Cougha' or 'soil river'.<sup>448</sup> From the Sundays River to here we have contended for the most part with an uncomfortable road, with a lot of limestone rocks and cobbles and many hollows, and the landscape [has consisted of] heavy, whitish-grey clay, *gebrosken velt*, with many [places] which resembled *parterres*<sup>449</sup> here and there of different shrubs, mixed with large numbers of euphorbias and aloes, which presented a most lovely sight since all the hills are green with vegetation. This morning I took a bearing on the S extremity of the high mountain,<sup>450</sup> W½S, which at a guess is situated sixteen hours on this side of the Gamtous River. At about five o'clock we arrived at a large plain from which we could see the sea. At the Cougha I found one of Ferreira's cattle farms, where a servant lived. Our combined route S by W½W: seven hours. The wind fresh SE during the day; mostly overcast sky. An hour before sunset we saw the large bend of the Swartkops River. We saw a number of hartebeest and shot several wild duck. Our provisions are finished.

15 [January 1778] Very pleasant weather; no dew. Fresh SE [wind]. I rode SW through dense thickets to the mouth of the Cougha; when [the river] flows it enters the sea in the middle of the large bay, opposite three high, rocky islands,<sup>451</sup> but that only happens once every seven or eight years. One of these rocks was barely an hour from the shore, another two hours and one, which seemed to be small, three or four hours [from it]. The shore was sandy and level, but the surf was strong; the wind fresh SE. Took a bearing on the country to the E as far as I could see, for the SE [wind] made the horizon hazy in the E, and the W [horizon] inclined very low, as far as I could see, to the S. I went down the coast to left and right and found no stones except a few which were on a level with the sand, and also few shells – and no pretty ones. When I attempted to cross the Cougha where it was silted up, the horse sank into the quicksand so that I had difficulty in getting through. At the river mouth I found the fresh spoor of two lion and the fresh spoor of many rhinoceros [identified thus] since the two tracks which cross are always tramped into one. One print was eight inches long. Here also live many buffalo. The undergrowth between and behind the dunes is as tall as [or] slightly taller than a man on horseback, but so dense with thorns, aloes and euphorbias that it is impossible to get through it except along the animal trails. I went to look for a rhinoceros but could not find one. Saw many water-fowl, among which were

447 Perhaps Salomon Ferreira (baptized 1749) who farmed in the region: *ibid.*, pp. 73–74.

448 The Coega River rises in the Great Winterhoek range and enters Algoa Bay NE of modern-day Port Elizabeth.

449 Flowerbeds with plants and shrubs.

450 This could be the SE extremity of the Van Stadensberg, about twenty kilometres NE of the mouth of the Gamtoos River.

451 St Croix, Jahleel and Brenton Islands are NE of Port Elizabeth, in Algoa Bay.

numerous flamingos. Water is scarce and very brackish in this entire region. The Cougha also becomes brackish in the dry season except for a spring close to the wagon ford. At sunset I found myself beside a natural saltpan<sup>452</sup> – which in some years gives a little salt – close to a low mountain with two little peaks, the only ones which are close by here. Back at the wagon – [I had returned] since it had been very hot among the dunes today – I saw a large herd of quagga, of which I wounded one, and six eland, one which received a serious wound but escaped in the dense undergrowth.

16 [January 1778] Overcast sky; SW breeze; hot weather. I left, first a quarter of an hour SW, then SSW and S; after an hour and a half came to a large saltpan which formed an oval with a longitudinal diameter of a quarter of an hour, SE and NW. In the WNW it has a narrow throat. It is surrounded on all sides by undergrowth and presents a fine sight, even when there are people on it, like a field of ice on which snow has fallen and after thawing a little, had frozen again. I went across it and in the middle found about a foot of water on the salt which was so hard that I could not penetrate it by sticking a pointed iron [stake into it]. Towards the edges the salt crust was as thick as the breadth of [a man's] hand, under which was muddy clay mixed with sand. Here very white fine and coarse salt can always be collected, the former nevertheless best in summer. This pan provides salt even to the farmers of [the distant] Camdebo and Sneeuwberg; every year they come riding into the pan with their wagons and break the salt up with iron [stakes]. After going S for another hour and a half, I came down to the lowland, and reached the Great Swartkops River, which is very small, with low banks. It is called 'Gouw' in Hottentot, which means 'milk tree river'.<sup>453</sup> It comes from five or six hours NE of here, out of a fairly high mountain range there called the 'Winterberg',<sup>454</sup> and flows SE and E into the sea. Here I found the village of the Gonnaqua chief Nouka, who had ten huts with servants with him, among whom were several real Kaffirs. I asked for some milk, in return for which I gave them beads and tobacco. Nouka complained that he had at all times served the Hollanders well, fetching runaway slaves<sup>455</sup> from among the Kaffirs, and that they had now driven him from the Van Staden's River, where he had always resided. I promised him that I would speak to the governor about it.

When I had been over the river for a while I came to a small stream where a flock of flamingos was to be seen. I stalked them and with my double-barrelled gun shot three while they were still on the ground, and six as they flew off. A number of Gounas<sup>456</sup> and Kaffirs who witnessed this, were really astonished. After riding for half an hour we passed several more villages of Gonnaas among whom there was also a Kaffir chief, Seiqua. Also situated at the river was the Gonna chief Sonqua.<sup>457</sup> While passing some small pools of water, I shot a few ducks, and came to a very large saltpan. It was full of

452 There are several in this region.

453 It is known today as the Swartkops River; its original name would now be written as 'Gui'.

454 The river rises in the Great Winterhoek range and is known as the 'KwaZunga' in its upper reaches.

455 Co-operation with the authorities over runaway slaves was often Khoikhoi policy though designed not to compromise their independent status: Ross, *Cape of Torments*, p. 44.

456 Gona (Gonaqua).

457 This was also a tribal name: Moodie, comp. and ed., *The Record*, part 3, p. 3, n. 1. The Xhosa chief was perhaps Rharhabe's son Sigcawu, killed by a commando in 1830: Peires, *The House of Phalo*, pp. 49, 93.

water, and the little salt that was dry here and there, was mixed with mud. It extended E and W and was three times as large as the others. After continuing S for almost another hour we came to the farm on which a farmer named 'Nouman'<sup>458</sup> lived, who was busy building a house, about half an hour from the sea. Today I progressed about five hours S. The landscape was the same, but near Nouman's farm we crossed the Little Swartkops River which flows into the Great [Swartkops River] a quarter of an hour from the coast. Occasionally we also encountered some sand and, towards the sea, low grassy veld. In the afternoon a storm began to come up from the SW, with strong winds and showers of rain.

17 [January 1778] Last night there was heavy rain and gusts of wind from the SW. This morning the wind blew SSW, still violently, with showers of rain. Lion live here, so we tethered the oxen last night. A Gonnaqua came to complain to me here that a certain Pieter Buis<sup>459</sup> had almost beaten him to death. He looked very bad and could hardly walk. I promised him that I would speak to the governor about it. The rain abated towards noon and I [went] over low, grassy ridges and level grassy veld to the sea. Here I found almost no dunes along the coast except at the projecting W corner of the bay, and those not high. The shore here was often low and rocky, with oyster-banks [from which came oysters] the size and flavour of Tessel oysters, but the shape of the shell was very irregular; and although it was very similar inside to abalone<sup>460</sup> I found no pearls. The tide was not low enough to obtain many, but at spring tide wagonloads full [of oysters] can be broken off the rocks. This projecting side of the inlet, for it couldn't be called a 'bay', is three hours in length, with no high dunes close to the sea, covered with undergrowth, [and] extending SSE, with oyster-banks here and there, though the sandy inlets are hardly indented. At the extremity of this region is a large reef of rocks over which the surf breaks violently for a quarter of an hour. The coast then extends, with heavy surf, W by S½S, towards Kragga Kamma,<sup>461</sup> this side being called 'Dommeri' in Hottentot. In calm weather it is possible, once one has passed inside the swell of the reef, to get in on the W side of an inlet with a boat; but the slightest rough sea causes a heavy surf all along the entire coast, probably because the sea is so exposed and the Anguillas reef<sup>462</sup> is hereabouts. Towards the middle of the western side a small river debouches. It is called the 'Bakens River', because a beacon or emblem of the Company was erected here.<sup>463</sup> A little further towards the point another similar beacon

458 Probably this was Nicolaas Niemand (b. c. 1717), who fled from the area beyond the Swartkops River in 1779 because of Xhosa incursions: Moodie, comp. and ed., *The Record*, part 3, p. 91.

459 He was probably Pieter du Buis (baptized 1741) who kept cattle on the Swartkops River SE of modern-day Despatch and farmed at Leeuwefontein on the Little Swartkops, now the Chatty River on the north-western outskirts of Port Elizabeth: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 74.

460 Tessel oysters come from Texel, off the Dutch coast; abalone, or perlemoen, is an edible mollusc of the genus *Haliotis*.

461 'Kraggakamma' probably means 'fresh water' or 'cool water': Nienaber and Raper, *Toponymica*, A, pp. 785–786. The name is used to describe an area of varying size to the W of modern-day Port Elizabeth, and seems to indicate here a part of the coast at Chelsea Point beyond Cape Recife. See Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 12. Gordon's preceding description covers the Port Elizabeth foreshore of today and onwards to Cape Recife, as well as the coast beyond to Chelsea Point.

462 This is the offshore Agulhas Bank which extends to the SW.

463 The Baakens River flows through Port Elizabeth. On the beacons, see Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, pp. 12–13.

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### THREE

#### A JOURNEY WITH GOVERNOR VAN PLETTENBERG TO THE EASTERN FRONTIER AND TOWARDS THE ORANGE RIVER, RETURNING ALONE ACROSS THE ROGGEVELD: AUGUST 1778 TO JANUARY 1779

28 August 1778 Fresh NW wind; rainy sky. Thermometer 56° [to] 76°, [dropping to] 60°. Left the Cape<sup>1</sup> through the dunes and arrived as darkness fell at the De Waal farm Vergelegen in Hottentots Holland.

18 September [1778]<sup>2</sup> Went to sleep at four o'clock. Coerikei, my young Hottentot, was to have woken me at five, but could not rouse me. I was therefore awakened at one o'clock by the noise of the oxen, caused by a hyena [nearby]. We left at seven o'clock and rode along a better route, not as stony, and with more flowers – mesembryanthemums, arctotises, and *channa* bushes – as well as more plains, having the Swartberg, which now and then seemed to disappear, at a distance of a mile to our right, and the low Tygerberg to our left. All *caro* veld, namely yellow clayey soil, yet not as stony as before. Here we saw our first game, namely in the morning a wolf or hyena and many of their tracks, as well as a lion spoor, several eland, gemsbok or *pasans*, quagga, hartebeest or *bubalissen*,<sup>3</sup> and many ostrich, of which we shot a hen. For the most part we had to our left the little river Traka,<sup>4</sup> which in this season was almost dry, and also crossed various completely dry rivers, all going SE. After riding for ten hours with the ox-wagons, we unyoked at a farm belonging to a man named 'Erasmus',<sup>5</sup> abandoned because of the drought. Two members of the escort had fallen behind because their horses had run away. Fair weather throughout the day; slightly cloudy. The thermometer was 54° at sunrise, 65° at noon, and 70° at two o'clock, dropping to 54° after

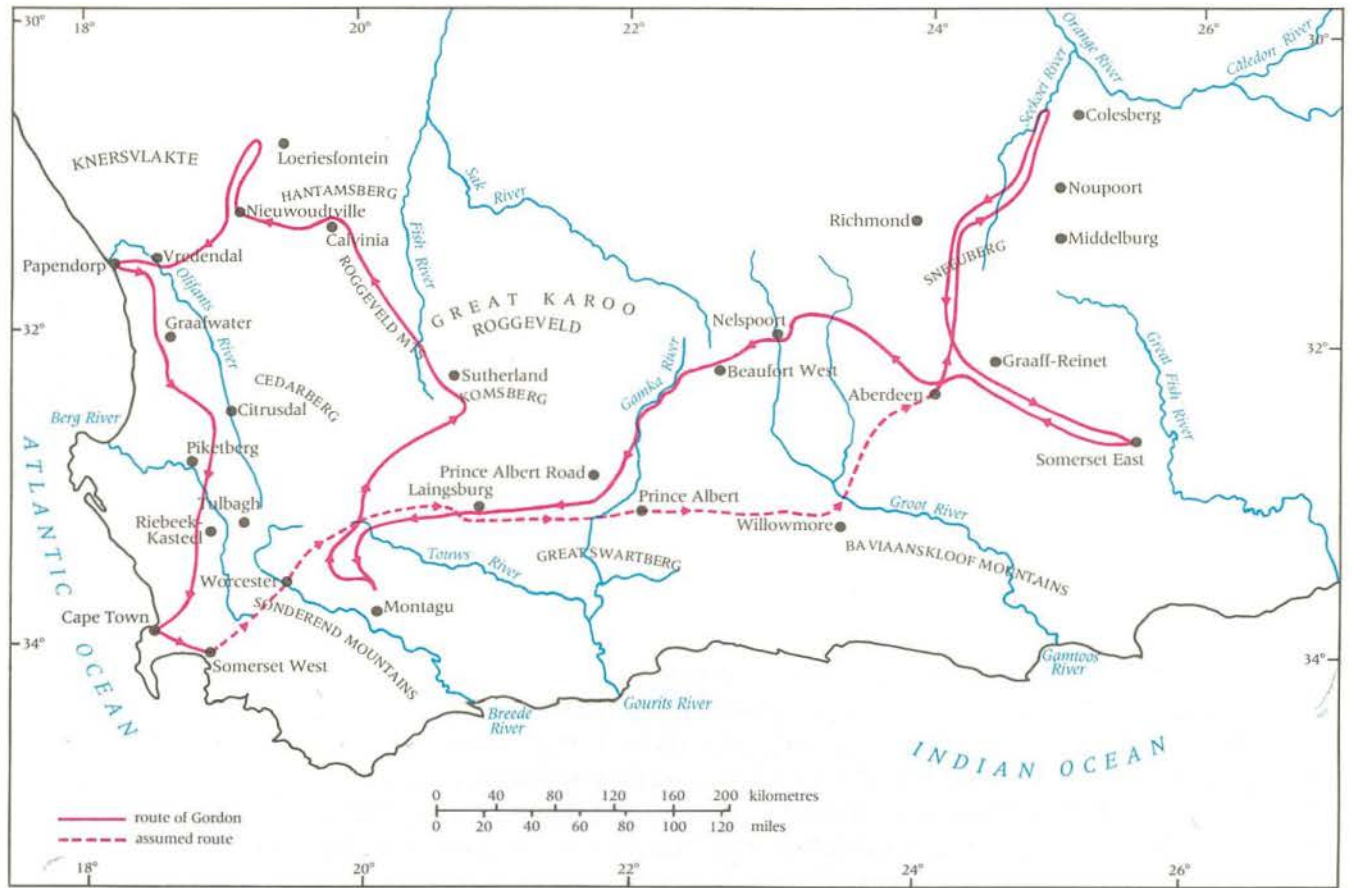
1 On part of this journey, between 6 September and 19 October 1778, Gordon accompanied the governor of the Cape, Van Plettenberg, and his party into the interior. Gordon set off in advance of the governor's party which left the Cape on 3 September having been preceded on the previous day by a provision train. For the journal of the Van Plettenberg expedition, see Godée Molsbergen, ed., *Reizen*, vol. 2, pp. 61–78, vol. 4, pp. 39–62; George McCall Theal, comp., 'Reis van den gouverneur Joachim van Plettenberg, 1778', in *Belangrijke Historische Dokumenten Verzameld in de Kaap Kolonie en Elders*, vol. 1 (Cape Town, 1896).

2 There are no journal entries for the period 29 August to 17 September. The initial entry of 28 August is followed by seven blank pages. Van Plettenberg and his party caught up with Gordon at the farm of Willem van der Vyver (baptized 1727) near the Hex River, about ten kilometres NE of present-day Worcester. The two groups then continued as one, NE and E through the Hex River Pass and Valley, over the Touws River and the Buffels River near modern-day Laingsburg and across the Dwyka and Gamka Rivers, reaching the Tierberg, twenty kilometres E of present-day Prince Albert, on 17 September: Godée Molsbergen, ed., *Reizen*, vol. 2, pp. 63–69. The route taken was the same as the one followed by Swellengrebel in 1776: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, Maps 8, 11.

3 'Bubal' is the name given to the North African and Arabian antelope of the same family. The word has its origin in the Greek '*bubalos*' – an antelope resembling an ox.

4 Their course took them between the Traka and the Droëkloof range.

5 Situated on the Traka River, the farm had been that of Pieter Erasmus: Godée Molsbergen, ed., *Reizen*, vol. 2, p. 70. Since 10 September the expedition had passed a number of abandoned farms.



Map 2 A journey with Governor van Plettenberg to the eastern frontier and towards the Orange River, returning along the Roggeveld: August 1778 to January 1779

28 [October 1778] Tonight there were some showers of rain from the SE, accompanied by wind. Since dawn, clear sky; fine weather; SE [breeze]. Rode westwards and went around the NW extremity of the Camdebo Mountain. After a four-and-a-half hour ride by ox-wagon [we arrived] at Lottering's; from him two-and-a-half [hours] to [the farm of] Piet Meintjes where we unyoked.<sup>54</sup> Fresh SE [breeze]; cool weather; cloudy sky. Thermometer 62° [to] 72°, [dropping] to 59° at sunset. Fresh, cold E wind through a gap in the mountains. Clear weather. From the ridge before Lottering's I took a bearing on the southern tip of Soute River Mountain, W.<sup>55</sup> Bearing at Meintjes: Charles Marais's, NW by W; Tys de Beer's at the northern tip of Zout River Mountain, W by N½N;<sup>56</sup> De Clerq's, ESE; Lottering's, SE by S½S; Bere Vlei, SSW 4°S.

29 [October 1778] Last night it was cold: the phenomenon of the SE [wind], the same here as on Table Mountain.<sup>57</sup> Calm after midnight as also this morning; clear – no cloud in the sky, but heavy evaporation, condensation. The barometer gave a corrected reading of 26 [inches] 8 [tenths], thus 3 030 English feet above sea-level. Thermometer at sunrise 41°, [rising] to 80°, dropping to 75°. The wind followed the sun and blew most strongly at noon. I first travelled W and NW after a short deviation, as in most places, through a little river. (All the water from Meintjes's flows through the Carika or Bere Vlei River into the Gamtous River.) Travelled N and NE through a ridge of the Sneeuwberg range and arrived after twelve hours to the NW at Pretorius's,<sup>58</sup> four hours of riding by ox-wagon. After two-and-a-quarter [hours] NNW I reached Marais's [farm]. Thus far stony *caro*; few flowers, some arctotises and mesembryanthemums; low bushes; thorn-trees in the streams. Found the barometer to read 26 [inches] 5 [tenths], corrected, at Marais's. Still the same Sneeuwberg range and at this stage one is two-thirds of the way up to the plateau. The Zout River Mountain is also the same, except that the subsidence or erosion in it is greater.

30 [October 1778] Fine weather; calm. W wind at sunrise which became strong SE towards evening. Thermometer 52° to 80°, dropping to . . .<sup>59</sup> Set off westwards to Tys de Beer's, first SW up a ravine half an hour in length, so that I almost emerged from the mountains into which I had gone at Pretorius's, then W by S to [the farm of] Esterhuis, three hours' ride by ox-wagon. Here I found the latitude to be 32° 9'. Travelled up westward to Tys's, four hours by ox-wagon. All *caro*, stony; mesembryanthemums; many large *Euphorbia spinosa*. Bearing from Tys de Beer's, Meintjes's, ESE 3°S, five-and-a-half miles. Meintjes had shown me a small mountain but De Beer was living a little further to the N. Charles Marais's, E by N 5°E; Esterhuis's, E; Piet Pretorius's, E by S 2°E; the

54 Gordon's route took him round the Camdebo Mountain past Lottering on the Kraai River, to one of the tributaries of the Kariëga from the NE – perhaps the Ouplaas River. The farmer there is given as 'W. Meintjes' on Gordon's Map 3, but is probably Pieter Meintjes (baptized 1729): De Villiers, *Genealogies*, vol. 1, p. 548.

55 This would seem to indicate Oorlogspoort, a range about thirty kilometres W of the Camdebo Mountain.

56 The farms of both Matthys de Beer and Charles Marais are marked on Gordon's Map 3: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, Map 15. Evidently Marais lived 'along the foot of the Sneeuwbergen' in 1774: Moodie, comp. and ed., *The Record*, part 3, p. 26.

57 Table Mountain, above Cape Town.

58 Perhaps this was Gerrit Pieter Pretorius (baptized 1743). When the Dutch governor Jan Willem Janssens (1762–1838) visited these parts in 1803 the reception by Piet Pretorius left something to be desired: Godée Molsbergen, ed., *Reizen*, vol. 4, pp. 184–186.

59 The temperature is not given in the manuscript.

end of the mountain past which our journey continues, W by S 4°S; where the Buffel River rises, E by N, then it flows W to near Hop's place, one mile N by E of here. The barometer gave a corrected reading here of 26° 9', 2 840 [feet]. Saw a few springbok. At De Beer's the Buffel River flows below the Carika.<sup>60</sup> The large lizards which also go into the water are plentiful here: *cam jaro*.<sup>61</sup>

31 [October 1778] I set off W by S through a ravine. Last night a strong, cold SE [wind] blew, with some dew. Still SE; overcast, rainy sky. Thermometer at sunrise 49°, [rising] to 78°, dropping to 56°. Found the latitude to be 32° 8'. At sunset the SE [wind] became violent. Clear [and] cold, at nine o'clock in the morning; clearing; SE [wind]; fine weather. Towards noon the wind veered to the SW. Clear [though] some mistiness; a large *caro* plain [lies] between Lotering's and De Beer's in a half-moon through the Zout River Mountain. The Carika or Buffel River flows through a defile in this mountain at De Beer's. We rode westwards, slightly N, across an uphill *caro* plain for one mile, to an elevation four hundred [feet] higher than De Beer's. All the same Sneberg. A mile and a quarter further I calculated the latitude at the dry Bosduive River which flows into the Karika and the other half into the Zout River.<sup>62</sup> [In] three-quarters of a mile we reached the Zout River. It comes from the N and flows S into the Brevlei down at the Swartberg. We rode for two hours and a quarter to where I took bearings, along a good road with no stones, and from there, two-and-a-half hours to the Zoute River which at this point also flows through a defile in the Zout River Mountain. The water was brackish and flowed sluggishly. The Care Pos [is] a half-mile NNE of T. de Beer's. The Soute River rises two miles N by E behind T. de Beer's and then flows westwards with bends.<sup>63</sup> Rode to the Rhinoster Kop in four-and-a-half hours, [to] the first tributary of the Gamka. Water fresh but in pools. At the half-way point we made a detour to the NW around a ridge.<sup>64</sup> Direction W; the same veld, so that we saw no horizon to the S. At the Sout River [there was] an abandoned farm.

1 November [1778] Overcast, clearing at eight o'clock. Thermometer 56°. We departed. Our route today, WSW. The Sak River rises three miles from De Clerq's, in the NW.<sup>65</sup> According to the reading we had the widow De Beer's SW by S 3°S, [with] the Little Roggevelt to the W but our route in the morning was SW by S. Barometer at Jacob de

60 De Beer's farm was situated across the Buffels River, probably a few kilometres N of present-day Stellenboschvlei, SE of the village of Nelspoort. The Buffels rises in the Sneeberg range about twenty kilometres E of modern-day Murraysburg and turns S above Karreebosch which is marked on Gordon's Map 3 as 'Caree Bos'. The farmer here was probably Christiaan Frederik Hop (1726–1790), brother of Hendrik. Esterhuyzen's farm lay about half-way between those of Marais and De Beer. This sentence, as well as the one preceding it and the one following it, form a marginal note in the manuscript.

61 Water leguaan.

62 Gordon's 'bush dove river' seems to be the stream between the Pienaars Rante and Blinkfontein Mountain, SE of today's Nelspoort; it does not appear to have a connection with the Kariega River. Gordon does not give the latitude calculated.

63 This would be true of the river that is now considered to be a tributary of the Salt River. Gordon's earlier comment about the source of the Salt is more accurate: it rises more than forty-five kilometres SW of modern-day Victoria West.

64 The route to Renosterkop, about thirty kilometres NE of present-day Beaufort West, was evidently N of the isolated mountains SE of Nelspoort. The Renosterkop stream does not appear to be a tributary of the Gamka.

65 The Sak River, *Haŵaap*, or 'sinking river', rises in the Nuweveld range NW of present-day Beaufort West: Nienaber and Raper, *Toponymica*, A, p. 536. The farmer on the Renosterkop was Jacob de Clercq.

Clerq's Twe Fontein at the foot of the Groene Berg (N.B. all Sneeuwberg) in the Hooy Vlake, 27 [inches] 2 [tenths], thus 2 550 [feet]. Start of the Coup or 'vlak velt' [is] to the S and SW of De Clerq's. At Rhinoster Kop I saw the Swartberg across a plain to the right. The Coup starts at the Rhinoster Kop and the Nieuwe Velt behind De Clerq's.<sup>66</sup>

2 [November 1778] The astrolabe read  $32^{\circ} 18'$ .<sup>67</sup> Thermometer from  $60^{\circ}$  to  $84^{\circ}$ , [dropping to]  $70^{\circ}$ . Gentle SE [breeze]; clear. The wind came up again in the evening. The flies are starting to pester us badly. They are just like the swallows which are the first in the places where it is warmest. In the morning while I was setting up my instruments a rhinoceros came walking close by our wagon, but as soon as it caught our scent it turned away. Two of my Hottentots wanted to shoot it, but it trotted on swiftly, sniffing at the ground twice. We saw that three hunters set out after it. It ran upwind and they rode after it, slightly to the side, without its seeing them. At last I saw some powder-smoke from a rise onto which I had gone, and shortly afterwards J. Hend. Viljoen, J. Jacob Kruger and Dolf Bronkhorst came to tell us that they had shot a rhinoceros bull.<sup>68</sup> Viljoen had fired the mortal shot at a hundred-and-eighteen paces, but after it had fallen after running a short distance, they did not trust it – for they regard this as one of the most dangerous animals – and shot it four times more. I rode there, and drew, measured and described this wonderful creature.<sup>69</sup> Returned late in the evening and left my Hottentots with the animal to cut it up in the morning. It had already begun to swell; was of medium size but an adult animal.

3 [November 1778] I again rode to the rhinoceros. Found it to be very swollen and with a strong stench. The weather was overcast, but two hours after sunrise it cleared. SE [wind]; calm and hot; thermometer  $64^{\circ}$  to  $87^{\circ}$ , dropping to  $75\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ ;  $65^{\circ}$  at half-past one in the night. I was not at all well. Eviscerated the animal to preserve the hide as a specimen; the meat was already spoilt. We departed SW with numerous turns, crossing the Gamka which here was now small and after six-and-a-half hours of hard travel by ox-wagon, unyoked at half-past one at night next to it. Beautiful moonlight; good road; full of thorn-trees at the river; all downward-sloping *caro*; stony. SW breeze; soft coolness.

4 [November 1778] Latitude  $32^{\circ} 24'$ , deviation  $25\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  NW. Partly cloudy sky – thunder-clouds; NW breeze, freshening now and then. Thermometer  $73^{\circ}$  to  $86^{\circ}$ , dropping

66 The Nuweveld is the high plain to the NW behind the mountains of that name, the plain, as Gordon indicates, continuing the Sneeuwberg to the W of those mountains beyond his Hoogvlakte, NW of present-day Beaufort West. The Goup is that part of the Karoo to the SW of Beaufort West, and derives its name from a Khoi word meaning 'flat country': P.E. Raper, *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names* (Johannesburg, 1987), p. 128. This is Gordon's 'vlak velt', as opposed to the more mountainous regions. The Little Roggeveld range N of present-day Laingsburg is rather to the SW; Gordon's distant view of the Great Swartberg range must, facing W, have been to his left. Dina Margaretha van Dyk (baptized 1741), then the widow of Zacharias de Beer, farmed at Kweekvlei, now Prince Albert. Gordon had been there with Van Plettenberg from 14 to 17 September 1778 on their outward journey: Godée Molsbergen, ed., *Reizen*, vol. 2, p. 69.

67 As with this and other readings given elsewhere in Gordon's manuscript, the full calculations are not reproduced here.

68 The hunters were evidently Johannes Hendricus Viljoen, Johannes Jacob Kruger and Rudolph Johannes Bronkhorst.

69 Gordon Collection, Drawing 205. The animal was clearly not, as has been suggested, shot by Gordon: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 103.



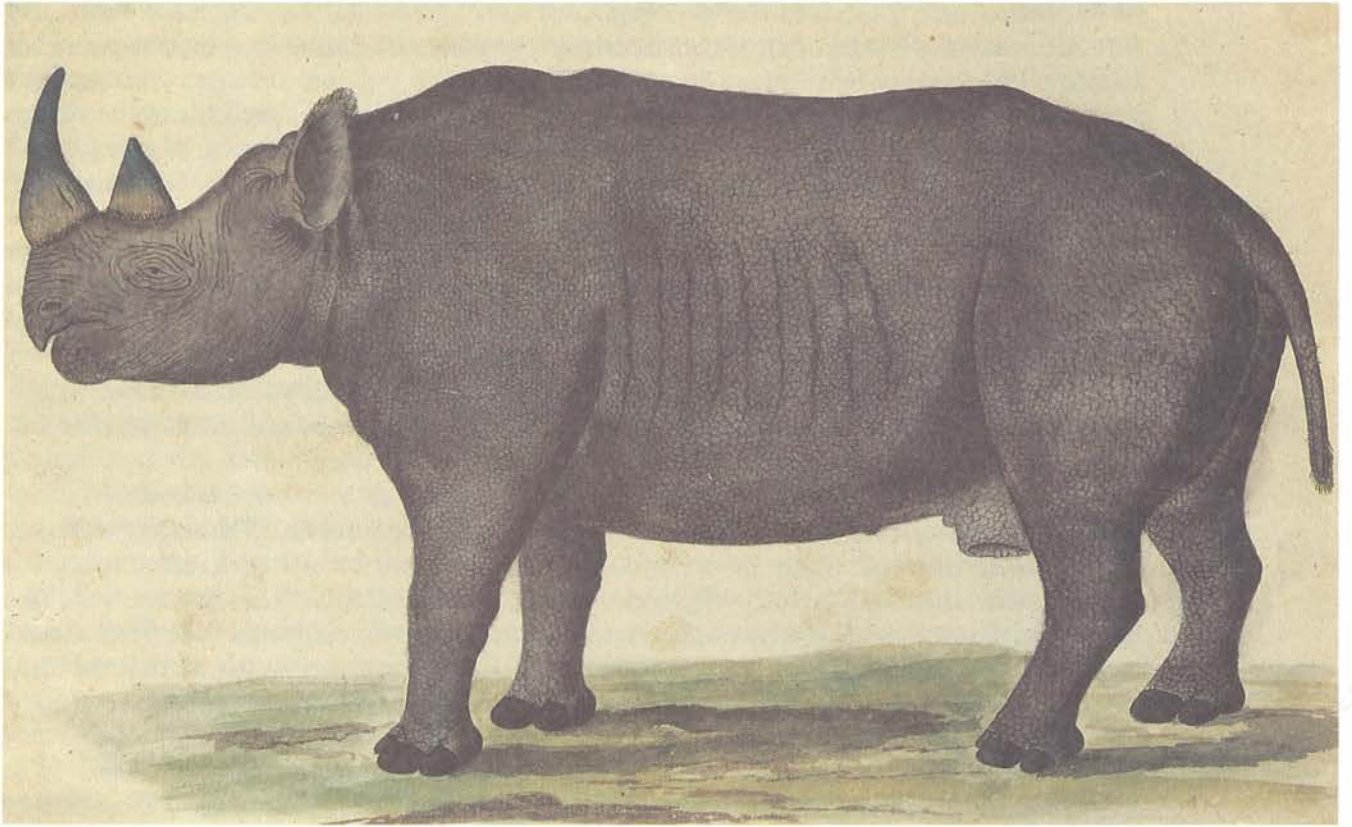


Plate 36 Male hook-lipped or black rhinoceros

to 75°; about ten o'clock in the evening, cool – 57°. Fresh SE [wind]; from far in the NW some sounds of thunder. Here I found a few pieces of quartz in which were small crystals. The Sneeuwberg range, here called the 'Nieuwe Velt Mountains', continues to stretch E and W, but it can't be seen at this point, since we are in the hills of the Coup. Still unwell today. Barometer reading of 27 [inches] 8 [tenths], corrected, gives 1 985 English feet above sea-level. Just after we had left the place where we had outspanned, a black and a yellow snake<sup>70</sup> crossed our path, the black one being three-and-a-half feet and the yellow one four feet two inches long. The wagon-leader got a fright. I shot them both with my double-barrelled gun and they died soon afterwards. The black [one] is said to be slightly poisonous but the yellow one, deadly [so]. A snake has scaly rings under the body, the opening side facing the rear. These it opens and closes, which makes it move forward rapidly, using the ground. All still *caro* Coup. At the river which we crossed two or three times, almost dry; still thorn-trees, *ganna* and other bushes. See almost no game. Many turns but mainly WSW; five-and-a-half hours' ride by wagon.

5 [November 1778] Thermometer 57° to 72°, dropping to 55°. Cool E breeze; a few drops of rain. Travelled SW and crossed the dry Gamka several times more, as well as a few dry streams which came from the N, and unyoked at the river again after riding for seven hours. Strong SE [wind] with some rain at noon, and the whole day we were still crossing the same veld. We saw a kudu cow in the thorn-trees; it had no horns. Could not get it. In the night we were busy trying to catch my runaway horse, which we only caught this morning, the 6th. People say there are many lion here; we saw none. Today we found two abandoned farms next to the river. I shot a large hawk.

6 [November 1778] A strong SE [wind] blew; cool weather; calmed down a little. Took a bearing on the widow De Beer's, five miles S by E, and the Gamka River, S by W five miles. Thermometer from 55° to 72°, dropping to 59°. At noon the wind turned NW. It blew hard the entire day and night. The NE [wind] brought back the SE clouds. Three of my Hottentots remained behind to look for an ox. We saw a large lion spoor.

7 [November 1778] Latitude 32° 43'; barometer 28 [inches] 3 [tenths]. This morning I heard a lion roar. Fine, calm weather; hot. Thermometer from 62° to 88°, dropping to 80°; at half-past two in the night, 57°. Slight SE [wind]. The Swartberg range is a haphazard mass, also jagged, and without a horizontal appearance. It seems to be without vegetation or grass, but it has a little. In addition, the land approaching it goes down more steeply, completely different from that towards the Sneeuwberg range, which also consists of plateaus, sharp peaks and a few round hillocks. The Swartberg range is undulating everywhere, like the Hottentots [Holland] and Swellendam Mountains, but all sandstone, and not in steps, but lower in front than in the middle, and then lower down at the back, with perpendicular strata. The sills between this range and the Sneeuwberg also generally extend SE and NW. From the Sneeuwberg to here I have not yet seen any schist. We set off down along the Gamka and crossed it frequently. After riding for three hours, arrived at the *legplaats* of a certain Letig.<sup>71</sup> We again had a

70 Both are difficult to identify with certainty.

71 This outspan is evidently near the present-day Luttig station, fifty-five kilometres SW of Beaufort West; it takes its name from one of the Lüttigs, a family of German origin, who had a grazing farm, or *legplaats*, there.

great deal of trouble with the oxen, and this vehicle [the ox-wagon] which is so essential here is most uncomfortable to those not accustomed to it. [It took] seven hours of riding to our outspan place of the 5th. Very dusty; many blind flies plagued us. Reeds and grass next to the river. At our outspan I plotted the point of the hill which had De Beer's at its W point, NW by N 3°N; the middle of the plateau, NW by N 5°N.

8 [November 1778] I saw storks. They differ in character from the European ones, since I have never seen their nest. It is said that they live on cliffs in the mountains, and never near houses and people.<sup>72</sup> There are almost always crows and hawks when one leaves an outspan. Some *langbenen* or *cousies*<sup>73</sup> along the rivers, but did not bother us much. The Swarte River flows into the Gamka here. The Little Gamka comes from the Platte Mountains E of the Tafelberg, and enters the Great Gamka where Wy Claasen lives to the S of the confluence.<sup>74</sup> The river flows in some places and not at others, and then disappears into the sand and again oozes out at other places further along, from grey, fine stony sand. In all rivers, wherever one digs, one finds water. Many thorn-trees. My Hottentots have not yet arrived. All the same veld. Pleasant, clear weather; hot but with a SW coolness. Thermometer 65° to 86°, dropping to 70°. The Gamka River here has a wide, flat bed. There was water in it in June and July with a NW [wind], but mainly [in] December and January with thunder[storms]. In the afternoon, fresh SW [wind]. The entire Swartberg region had clouds as if presaging thunderstorms. All day long, fresh SW [wind]. Latitude 32° 56'. Plotted the widow De Beer's, SE½S; Gamka Kloof, SW five miles. Distinguished the Tygerberg ridges and the Coup ridges.<sup>75</sup> I shot various rare birds, among others one of these storks which differ from the European ones. With great joy I saw my five Hottentots returning in the evening. They had not eaten for two days. The ox had run away; they therefore returned unexpectedly.

9 [November 1778] Till now there has been little or no dew in this region. Slightly cloudy sky; fresh WSW wind. Cold during the night and in the morning; coldest an hour before sunrise. Last night the thermometer was 57°; at sunrise it was 60°, [rising] to 72° [and] dropping to 57° [and in the] night at two, 53°. Deviation 25° NW; barometer 28 [inches] 7 [tenths], giving 1 150 [feet]. No latitude today. We departed SW; first a SSW [wind] blew, then towards evening a cold SE. After riding for seven hours we unyoked at the Dwinka, or 'the drift'. After riding S by W down the Gamka for almost an hour, we crossed the Katte River an hour further [on], which also comes out

72 The yellow-billed stork, *Mycteria ibis*, and the black stork, *Ciconia nigra*, both frequent cliffs and precipices where they nest: Maclean, *Roberts' Birds*, 5 ed., pp. 65–66, 70–71.

73 Bushman-grass, possibly *Aristida brevifolia*, and prickly grass; the latter's name is also 'kousgras'.

74 Gordon is looking ahead on his route at this point. The Swart River joins the Gamka some sixty kilometres downstream from the Lüttig farm. It was near here that Mijndert Claasen (baptized 1726) had his farm. Gordon's Little Gamka is a tributary of the main stream to the NW, although it is tributaries of the Dwyka which rise on the Platberg E of the Tafelberg, a mountain to the S of the Moordenaar's Karoo: see the section of Gordon's Map 3 in E.E. Mossop, ed., *The Journals of Brink and Rhenius* . . . (Cape Town, 1947), facing p. 18.

75 Gordon's 'Coup ridges' are either hills on the E bank of the Gamka to the SSW of present-day Beaufort West, or what he called (on 20 January 1786) 'Trakas Hoogte Coups ridges', these being E of present-day Prince Albert; his 'Tygerberg ridges' are the Tierberg ridges about twenty kilometres NE of Prince Albert; the Gamka-poort opens up to the S from the present-day Gamkapaort Dam and extends through the Swartberg range.

Kloof, another farm – Hou den Bek<sup>163</sup> of the widow Smit. Many large slabs of stone [occur] as though formed by the sea. A fine farm of Coetse,<sup>164</sup> De Koorn Lands Cloof: here I again saw some cultivated trees, vegetables and garden fruit. Barometer 25 [inches] 9 [tenths].

24 [December 1778] Stormy sky; fresh NW wind; some thunder around us, especially in the Caro. Remained here. Thermometer 65° [to] 80°, [dropping to] 75°. Further route NW to the Lower Roggeveld.

25 [December 1778] Thunderclouds [in] sky; fine weather; W breeze. Thermometer 70° [to] 82°, [dropping to] 73°. Set off for Nel's<sup>165</sup> farm, Brak Fontein in the Lower Roggeveld: all hilly, with the most stones I have yet seen, so that a wheel came loose. We fastened it with thongs. We passed two farms and after two miles the Apenberg – N.B., without monkeys. This is a large ridge which forms the boundary between the two Roggevelds.<sup>166</sup> We unyoked for a while at Klip Fontein – bad water, a *legplaats* of one Visage<sup>167</sup> – and reached Nel's after riding for eleven hours with several detours and five miles NW. People here live mainly from sheep; eight families in this veld, but more *legplaatsen*. They also trek down for the most part. The water on this side of the Apenberg flows into the Tanquaas River, that on the other side to the Lower Roggeveld [and] to the Fish River. I found the *capok* or tinder tree, the same type as at the Cogmans Kloof bath,<sup>168</sup> [and] many amaryllis or *bokke gift* bulbs,<sup>169</sup> which these animals [goats or buck] die from if they eat them. We looked after our oxen very well. Still many more edible fleshy roots in these velds which, although high, have soil and bushes like the Caro. The length of this Lower Roggeveld: six miles SE and NW; three miles wide. The Great Roggeveld has twenty families; [length] ten or twelve miles NW and SE; widest part five miles. We repaired the wheel as best we could with a hoop from a half-aum.<sup>170</sup> Saw no game anywhere here. At two o'clock we had a little thundershower from the SE.

26 [December 1778] Found the barometer to read 26 [inches] 2 [tenths] at Nel's, thus have descended about three hundred feet. Fine weather; easterly breeze. Thermometer 70° [to] 95°, [dropping to] 80°. Latitude 31° 47'. Very hot [and] sultry in the morning. Route from Coetse's to here, and further to the Hantam, NW by W. I reached, after a

163 The farm Houdenbek, or 'hold your tongue', was on the Fish, twenty-nine kilometres NW of present-day Sutherland.

164 Cornelis Jacobus Coetsee (1773–1801) was murdered on his farm by servants: M.H.D. Smith, *Boerepioniers van die Sandveld*, edited by R.T.J. Lombard (Pretoria, 1985), p. 24.

165 Perhaps this was the Nel who farmed in 1774 on the Muiskraal; probably he was Jan, not Thomas: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 42.

166 The Droëberg range, almost at right angles to the Roggeveld mountains, NW of present-day Sutherland, separates the Lower Roggeveld from the Middle Roggeveld.

167 Visage's grazing place was on the open veld across the Droëberg range; Klipfontein appears on modern-day maps near the upper reaches of the Renoster River, a tributary of the Tanqua.

168 Named after a Khoi group known as the 'Cochoqua' or 'Ogoqua', Cogmans Kloof, between modern-day Ashton and Montagu, at the SE extremity of the Koo and in an area of hot springs, had been visited earlier by Gordon: Nienaber, *Stamname*, pp. 275–277. The tree mentioned may be the *tontelblaar*, *Hermas gigantea*.

169 Paterson named this plant the '*vergift bol*'. It is the widespread *Boophane disticha*, which is also known as the 'sore-eye flower': Forbes and Rourke, eds, *Paterson's Cape Travels*, p. 93; Moriarty, *Outeniqua*, p. 46.

170 A wine cask containing approximately twenty English gallons, or almost ninety-one litres.

distance of a mile and a half over a large ridge, uphill, [the farm of] Jacob Louw, Hartebeest Fontein; half-way I passed the Klaver Vlei.<sup>171</sup>

27 [December 1778] Thunderclouds in the sky; northerly breeze; thunderstorms here and there. Barome[ter] 25 [inches] 3 [tenths]. Thermometer 70° [to] 86°, [dropping to] 65° after a thunderstorm, and a fresh W wind which always cools the air here, coming off the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>172</sup> Four miles N of here is the Fish River. N behind the Fish River [is] the Sak River. Five miles N of Coetse's, the Riet River flows entirely into the Rinoster River [which] receives the Riet River N of Coetse's.<sup>173</sup>

Lo[u]w has seen rhinoceros with the horn curved forward three feet long and a protuberant skin point.<sup>174</sup> Bearings from the mountain, SW by S a quarter of an hour from Louw's, the farm of Nel, NW 3°N; Hantams Berg, NNW 2°N four miles. The farm of Van Zyl,<sup>175</sup> NW by N 4°N. Three high peaks [in] the Roggeveld; the middle one, WNW two-and-a-half miles; the Toorn,<sup>176</sup> two-and-a-half miles NNE; Piet van Zyl, Oliphants River,<sup>177</sup> at a guess WNW; Neus River, a quarter NW, flows into the Doorn River and then into the Oliphants River at Gerret Nieuwhout's Compagnies Drift.<sup>178</sup> The bend of the Sak River up to the Orange or Hartebees River<sup>179</sup>: N by E from here. The harvests in these regions are often killed by frost and the inhabitants can seldom cultivate fruit trees. Fine weather; SW breeze; thermometer 65° [to] 82°, [dropping to] 73°.

28 [December 1778] We set off over some hills NW for two-and-a-half miles until we came to Steenkamp's farm Elands Fontein where the Downits River<sup>180</sup> rises and flows NW. I found a Bushman woman N by E of here, formed the same as the others. My Koerikei understood her perfectly. From Steenkamp we went over a mountain where, going downhill steeply, we found a good road. Here the mountains looked just the same as in the Camdebo Reusen Casteel, [with] the same cliffs. Here the Hantam region begins. I saw several *bubalissen* here. One of these mountains on my right I named the 'Redoubt'.<sup>181</sup> Saw an isolated mountain<sup>182</sup> behind which [is] Hantam Berg, two-and-a-

171 Klavervlei is near the head of the Muiskraal River, and the Louw farm Hartebeestfontein, now Hartbeesfontein, lies a few kilometres to its N. Thunberg and Masson record an Adriaan Louw as being at this farm and a Jacob Louw at Knegsbank some five kilometres further N: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 42.

172 The cold Benguela current flows to the N, off the Atlantic coast.

173 The Riet is a small stream joining the Renoster some forty kilometres SW of present-day Williston; the Fish is rather to the NE, although there is a Little Fish about sixty kilometres to the N; the position of the Sak is approximately correct.

174 Louw's description could apply to both the hook-lipped and square-lipped rhinoceros.

175 Possibly Adriaan van Zyl (baptized 1735).

176 Perhaps Elandssoog se Berg, between the Fish and Riet Rivers.

177 Pieter van Zyl (1706–1782) of Ouplaas, WNW of Klawer, was a famous lion hunter in his time: Forbes and Rourke, eds, *Paterson's Cape Travels*, p. 115, n. 175. See also Vernon S. Forbes, 'The site of Van Zyl's ferry by the Olifant's River, 1783', *Africana Notes and News*, 21(5)1975, pp. 194–199.

178 Gordon's 'Neusrivier' would seem to be the Bos, which joins the Doring and ultimately the Olifants. Gerrit Nieuwoudt (baptized c. 1722) farmed at the confluence of the Doring and Olifants Rivers, his farm marking the site of the wagon crossing.

179 Gordon here elaborates on his comment of 1 December on the course of the Sak River.

180 Gordon's river is now the Droë River which joins the Oorlogskloof River SSE of present-day Calvinia. The farmer at Elandsfontein was Wilhelm Steenkamp (baptized 1732): Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 42.

181 The mountains to Gordon's right were the northernmost in the Roggeveld range, including the Kapgat peaks.

182 Evidently this was the Soutpansberg, to the E of the Hantamsberg.

half miles S and N, also on its own, flat on top like Reusen Casteel. After two miles I crossed the dry Douwnits River and a quarter of a mile [further], one of Schalkwyk's farms which is named after this river. I turned more to the WNW on the S side of the Hantams Berg. After half a mile [is] Gows's farm and after [another] half-mile [came to] Adriaan van Zyl's at Akkerendam.<sup>183</sup> [There are] fourteen farms, of which twelve are inhabited, in the Hantam, situated around the mountain. The flies are horribly bothersome, flying in swarms from one farm to another, even plaguing one at night.

29 [December 1778] Fine weather; easterly breeze. Latitude 31° 28'. Barometer 26 [inches] 6 [tenths]. The end of the mountain over which I must proceed, WNW; Spitse Toren, NNW; Spioen Berg, Pramberg, Buffelkops Fontein Mountains, Oliphants River bath, SSW½S; Hexe River, SE½E; the Oliphants River mouth into the sea, WSW.<sup>184</sup> Barometer at the summit of Hantams Berg 24 [inches] 8 [tenths]. Bleskops Berg,<sup>185</sup> NW by W; Koebieskows Berg, NW. My compass, when placed upon a stone, showed SE½E, whereas it showed S without the stone.

30 [December 1778] Remained resting. There are no anthills or thorn-trees from the start of the Roggevelt. Many willows at the dry and small rivers, and *capoc* or *wol-boomen*.<sup>186</sup>

31 [December 1778] The sun sets in the WSW.<sup>187</sup> Barometer at Soetwater Fontein<sup>188</sup> 27 [inches] 4 [tenths]. Thermometer 65° [to] 82°, [dropping to] 71°; last night at twelve, 62°. Fair weather; fresh W by NNW [wind] at the Pramberg, half a mile. Route to Soetwater Fontein, W by S 3°W three-and-a-half miles; first a detour through the SW around the Hantams Berg. Point of Kerete or 'Roep Niet Berg'<sup>189</sup> also three-and-a-half miles E by S 4°S. At first we had a lot of flats, then hilly at the Pramberg, after which we descended rapidly. All the previous shrubby veld; few stones – a good road.

1 January 1779 Showers of rain; fresh W wind; cold. Thermometer 62° [to] 63°, [dropping to] 60°. I set off westwards along this Downas River<sup>190</sup> which was brackish and had little water, over various slow, low elevations until after riding for three hours and then [going] through it, we left the river and [with it] lying to our left, we came after riding

183 Adriaan van Zyl's farm Akkerendam lay at the foot of the Hantamsberg, three kilometres N of modern-day Calvinia; Gous farmed at Onder Downes to the SSE, and Van Schalkwyk was not far distant.

184 Gordon omits certain of the compass bearings here. Spitse Toren is Toringskop, W of the Hantamsberg; Spioenberg, now Groot Spioenkop, is SE of the Kubiskou range to the NW; the Buffelskops Fontein Mountains are perhaps to the SSW. Pramberg, according to the account of the commissioner-general of the Batavian Republic, Jacob de Mist (1749–1823), who travelled in the region in 1803, lay to the SW of Akkerendam: Godée Molsbergen, ed., *Reizen*, vol. 2, p. 180. Of the remaining bearings, the baths on the Olifants River are S of present-day Citrusdal and the mouth of the river on the Atlantic coast is thirty kilometres W of modern-day Vredendal.

185 Probably Bleskoeberg, N of modern-day Kamassies.

186 Literally, the name means 'wool trees'; possibly the trees were the *Tarchonanthus camphoratus*.

187 This sentence is a marginal note in the manuscript.

188 Now called 'Soetwater' the farm is on the Oorlogskloof River, thirty-four kilometres W of Calvinia.

189 The Reunieberg lies S of present-day Calvinia. The name is said to be an adaptation of the Dutch 'roep niet' which comes from the Khoi, 'Kerete', or 'do not call mountain': Nienaber and Raper, *Toponymica*, A, pp. 694–695.

190 The Oorlogskloof River.

for four hours into a large grassy plain. Here the Bokkeveld begins.<sup>191</sup> We saw several springbok and many quagga, as well as an ostrich and some small land tortoises today. I reached the farm of Losper,<sup>192</sup> Groen Rivier, after seven hours of riding by ox-wagon. We came into this veld by travelling WSW with a detour through the NNW.

2 [January 1779] Bearings at Groen Rivier in the Bokkeveld; barometer 27 [inches] 7 [tenths]. At the start of this veld the soil, although the base is clay, begins to become sandy. The flat stones at the farm, brittle and sandy, and some quartz cobbles. Latitude 31° 24'. Here are again some small anthills.<sup>193</sup> Bearing on the farm of Adriaan van Zyl at the southern tip of Hantam, E by S, gives our route to here, W by N seven miles. The farm from which we came yesterday, ESE, gives WNW. Fine weather; southerly cool breeze. Thermometer 65° [to] 82°, [dropping to] 70°. We left after midday for the farm of Mistress Ryk,<sup>194</sup> which I gauged to be to the N by W 2°N; Rietfontein Berg in the N½W, one mile; northern extremity of Hantams Berg in the E½N; De Toorn in the E 3°N.<sup>195</sup> West wind [in the] afternoon. The dry summer afternoon wind in this region [is] W, sometimes strong; [the soil] sandy on top. From Groenrivier to Mostert,<sup>196</sup> three-and-a-half hours' ride by ox-wagon. Bearing on Adriaan van Zyl's in the ESE; Roep Niet Berg, SE by E 3°S; Mistress Ryk's, NW½N; Koebieskow Berg where Táan-éiquas or Grasveld Volk, Captain Schonevelt or Doeroep are situated, NE by N 3°E, five-and-a-half miles. Captain Klaas or Cannoep is of the Kónatoe or so-called 'Chinese' tribe. Captain Vredevelt or Groinám [is of the] Cämmaghaqua [that is, the] Hartebeest River tribe.<sup>197</sup>

3 [January 1779] - Fine weather; E breeze which followed the sun. I set off to the NE. The Cãmdeni comes from the Coebiskow; [it] flows into the other Doorn River which flows from the Hantams Berg into the Oliphants River, below Piet van Zyl's.<sup>198</sup> The Willem River also flows into the Doorn River a quarter of an hour S of Grasberg, Van Renen's farm.<sup>199</sup> Rhinoceros bushes; much hard ground. Thermometer 65° [to] 92°, [dropping to] 78°. We crossed the two Doorn Rivers, the Little and Great,<sup>200</sup> where

191 The Lower Bokkeveld lies between the Hantamsberg and the Keiskieberg range to the E, and the main Bokkeveld range to the W.

192 He was probably Nicolaas Loubser; his farm Groenrivier was on the present-day site of Nieuwoudtville, on the road from Calvinia to Vanrhynsdorp, shortly before it turns from a westerly and north-westerly direction to the SW: Forbes, *Pioneer Travellers*, p. 41.

193 This sentence is a marginal note in the manuscript.

194 Maria Koekemoer (baptized 1718), widow of Nicolaas Rudolph Ryk, farmed at Swellengrebel's Fontein, twenty-three kilometres NNW of present-day Nieuwoudtville. Paterson visited here on more than one occasion: Forbes and Rourke, eds, *Paterson's Cape Travels*, p. 96.

195 Rietfonteinberg is in the northern region of the Bokkeveld range; De Toorn is today's Toringskop.

196 Mostert's farm was Bokkefontein, in the northern Bokkeveld range.

197 These were Khoikhoi peoples, doubtless with some San intermixture, consisting of Einiqua and Nama groups from the lower Orange and probably Kora from the river's upper reaches. See further, J.A. Engelbrecht, 'The tribes of Wikar's journal', in Mossop, ed., *Journal of Hendrik Jacob Wikar*, pp. 221–237.

198 The river from the Kubiskou, or 'bald-headed spring', range is the Kamdanie which joins the Krom thirty-three kilometres WNW of present-day Loeriesfontein. The Krom flows into the Doring NNW of Nieuwoudtville, though the source of the Doring, as given by Gordon, is now considered to be that of the Hantams River. This Doring River reaches the Olifants by way of the Sout and Hol Rivers.

199 The Willem River is perhaps the Rondekop River. Grasberg lay N of present-day Nieuwoudtville and perhaps belonged to Sebastiaan Valentyn van Reenen: Forbes and Rourke, eds, *Paterson's Cape Travels*, p. 96, n. 77.

200 The Doring River and one of its tributaries.