5. WILLIAM COCK

William Cock: hero or villain?

by Jacklyn Cock
Professor Emeritus
Sociology Department
University of the Witwatersrand

The answer to this question lies in whether the reader believes that the present social order in South Africa is just and sustainable, and how the colonialism contributed to that order. The question that follows is whether the 1820 settlers warrant our contempt or admiration? An honest answer involves discarding the conventional view of them as a homogenous social category. Instead, we need to recognize that they included very different people, some of whom brought indentured servants with them, some were professional people, but the majority of the settlers were the victims of a heartless colonial project.

The 1820 settlers

The colonial official plan was for the 1820 settlers to constitute a buffer to secure and stabilise the frontier for the British against the Xhosa who had occupied the area for some two hundred years. (Wells) The other purpose was to relieve the social tensions after the Napoleonic wars and the social dislocation of the industrial revolution. There was not only much unemployment, poverty and hardship in Britain at the time, there were also rising levels of protest and civil disobedience. Within this context the historian Timothy Keegan portrays the emigration as a strategy of political containment. There was certainly a level of heartlessness in the scheme which is captured by Mostert in his comment that, "The operation was probably the most callous act of mass settlement in the entire history of empire. It is at any rate hard to think of any other occasion when some 4,000 people were at one go dumped in such an alien environment, wholly ignorant in most cases even

The Honourable Wiliam Cock, M.L.C. (1793 - 1876)

of how to plant a potato, largely innocent of any real knowledge of the historic background of the region they occupied, and certainly ignorant of how to cope with the natural dangers of their surroundings" (Mostert, 1992:533).

It will be shown below that while members of the 'settler elite' have been described as "strangers to honour", the majority of the 1820 settlers deserve our sympathy. Many of the extant settler diaries reflect lives of acute anxiety and deprivation. Some made hats out of wild date-palm leaves, sewed clothes from sheep skins and lived on pumpkin and maize. Thomas Adams for example, had to collect mussels and seasnails (sic) on the shore. (Morse-Jones, 1968). They experienced blight on their wheat, locusts and drought. Many had to leave their locations and search for work in the few towns later established in the area.

The extent of the fear that suffused the settler lives is illustrated by an account from the missionary Stephen Kay who described how "A settler party agitated one evening as they thought that the Kaffirs were coming, because their fires had been discovered on the adjacent hills, between the Kowie and the Kasouga rivers, but the formidable and much-dreaded host turned out to be a swarm of fireflies" (Kay, 1833:11). One of those who left his location was my great-great grandfather, William Cock.

William Cock

Born in 1793 in Penzance, Cornwall, William Cock led a party of 1820 settlers to South Africa in 1820 at the age of 26. He became deeply involved in the colonial project, mainly through his role in procuring supplies, especially of beef, for the British military establishment. He took up the settler allotment at

Greenfountain farm in June 1820 and soon began the trading activities which would make him one of the founders of settler capitalism.

He described himself as “a young man capable of great endurance.” “On my arrival I erected a temporary house, enclosed a large piece of land, but firstly the crops failed. I at once saw that I must look to some other means of providing for my family.” He bought a wagon and 100 oxen and with the help of “two or three good Hottentot servants” broke in a span. “In 1823 the Government Establishment for supplying the troops was broken up and tenders were called for supplies. Ours (he was then in partnership with Mr. Lee) was accepted, and for years we were the contractors.” In 1826 he visited Cape Town and learning the high price of provisions at the British colony of St Helena he purchased a “very smart, fast sailing schooner about 135 tons,” a vessel that had been a slaver. “Then I proceeded to Algoa Bay, took in a cargo of beef, butter and about 200 sheep and 18 oxen. Reaching St Helena, the oxen were sold at 33 pounds each (having cost one pound 10 shillings), the sheep for forty shillings (having cost four shillings and sixpence).” At a public auction Cock “pulled off my jacket, turned up my sleeves and exhibited the beef for which I obtained 8d per lb, at that time about 3/4d per lb in Grahamstown.” “The company sent several shipments of beef to Mauritius cured under my supervision.” “Beef was delivered at Mauritius at two and a half pence per lb, while Irish beef costed about six pence in England.” Cock subsequently won tenders to supply beef to government troops locally as well as to supply military settlements on Mauritius and St Helena, the latter for a three year period. (William Cock’s Journal 1819 – 49) MS 14,262, Cory Library, Rhodes). Through these activities “He made a considerable fortune, much of which he spent on developing the mouth of the Kowie River as a harbour” (Rivett-Carnac, 1961:127).

Clearly Cock was deeply involved in the colonial-settler-capitalist project, but his reputation is mainly linked to the harbour development and having 'changed the course of the Kowie River' to aid his trading activities. Once confronted by his granddaughter, Letitia Harriet Cock with the accusation that he had altered the course of the river, he replied, "My dear child, I am not an engineer, I am only a commercial man and just supplied the money."(Cock, MS14, 247 Cory Library).

Cock is certainly a controversial figure. In a rather vituperative account Eric Turpin writes, "Over the years the legend has been created that all the Kowie harbour-works and all the ships, whose home port was Port Alfred, were the outcome of one man's genius and one man's vast wealth, that man being W. Cock. This is unfounded fiction based on Cock's earliest attempts to make a harbour with sand and bushes, but in later years all the permanent works were carried out with company funds, loans secured by the colonial government and finally, by the government itself" (Turpin, 1983: 33). Turpin is clearly unappreciative of the river, as well as Cock. He quotes approvingly the editor of The Lantern who wrote, "The Kowie is a dangerous sluit, deep enough to drown a man, but not big enough for anything else" (Turpin, 1983:87). He is dismissive of the harbour development, referring to "this port of forlorn hopes" and very contemptuous of Cock himself (Turpin, 1983:39). He wrote, "In retrospect one wonders what possessed a novice like William Cock to risk the lives of men on what can only be considered a lamentable imitation of a harbour" (Turpin, 1983:20). Writing 150 years later perhaps Turpin fails to appreciate the grit of our forebears and their perseverance in the face of what are by modern standards intolerable dangers. In contrast, according to Bond (1971) Cock revived the harbour scheme "with all the vigour and independence of his remarkable personality." (Bond, 1971:34)

Family Memories

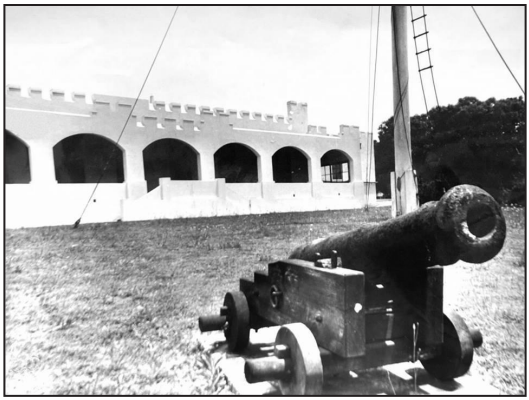
Letitia Harriet Cock with the author. Despite the 90-year age gap, Harriet and the author had an extraordinarily close relationship. (1940s) (Cock family archive)

William Cock had three surviving sons, (William Frederick, Cornelius, and Nathaniel) and six daughters. Cornelius had 12 children of whom Charles was the only one who married. His only surviving son Harold had one daughter, Jacklyn, making me "the last and only descendant of Cornelius Cock." My great-great grandfather was described to me as: "a gentle and kindly man" and one of a devoted couple. In an image of colonial domesticity, I remember being told that his wife, Elizabeth Cock watered her roses with the water left over from the many baptisms that took place in the house. Talk of pirate attacks on the voyage out, helping to load the cannon in the face of hostile cattle raiders, viewing shipping traffic from the 'crow's nest' at the castle all intrigued me. My source for much of this highly coloured view of the past was a rather forbidding figure, Cock's eldest granddaughter, Harriet.

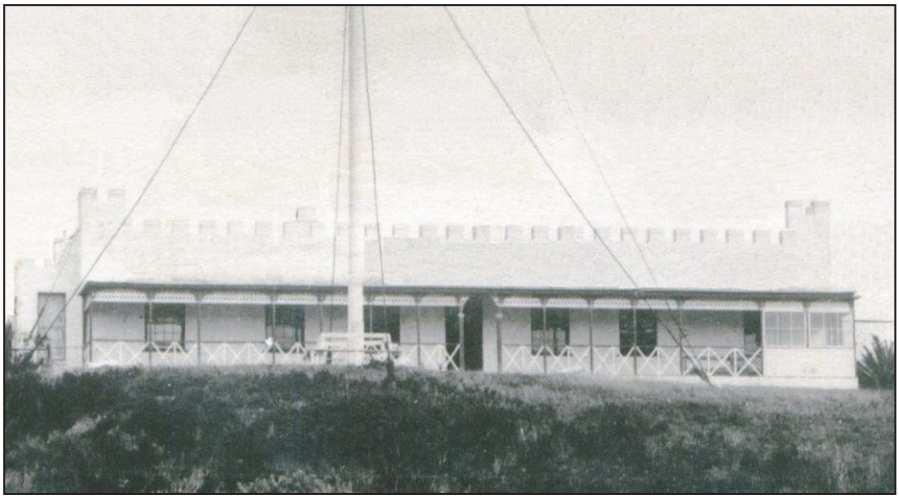
With 90 years separating us, we had an extraordinarily close relationship. She lived with my parents and me in Kimberley until she died aged 99 and 8 months. Three personal qualities are most vivid in my memory – firstly a strange, musty smell about her person which was not unpleasant but which I associated with her long skirts and dark clothes. The second is going for walks with her in the grasslands across the road

of our Kimberley home to collect different varieties of grass, which I subsequently dried and pasted into a notebook. I was impressed with her knowledge of their botanical names. Thirdly I remember fragments of her reminiscences of frontier life. She was born at Hope Farm on 5 May 1852 and spent many years with her grandparents at the Castle. I was most enthralled by her stories of the Kowie, and especially of Xhosa cattle raids.

Aged eight years Harriet Cock christened Port Alfred. My mother persuaded her to write her memoirs and she provided the following very flat account, "The Duke of Edinburgh landed at Port Elizabeth on the 6 August, 1860. He was a cadet and it was his birthday and was to come to Port Frances to change the name to Port Alfred. He came as far as Grahamstown and wanted to shoot an elephant, but Captain Talton and Sir George Grey, the Governor, said he could n't do both things, so Captain Talton, Sir George Grey and staff and all the notable people belonging to the Government came to Port Frances as the guests of my grandfather. My grandmother was lying dangerously ill at the time and so she was unable to do the christening. I was the only other female by the name of Cock and so I had to christen Port Alfred. I remember two piles being driven into the river before the work commenced. Someone broke a bottle of champagne and I had to say 'Port Alfred'. All the staff stayed at the castle (Richmond House was so named for its crenelations) and they had dinner there and slept there that night and next morning at breakfast they sent for me to say goodbye." (Cock, 1946:3)



Cannon on the front lawn of Cock's Castle, Port Alfred.



Original front elevation of Cock's Castle showing crenellated parapet wall and timber verandah.

Of her grandfather she wrote that he "married Elizabeth Mary Toy to whom he was married for 64 years, and had 11 children, 9 of whom survived to adulthood....He built the Castle in 1840 and the foundations are 10 feet deep. The woodwork, which was all made of oak, was brought from Cape Town to Port Frances in one of William Cock's own little ships. Before they came to South Africa Cock was on the verge of emigrating to Canada when he was approached by the British Government through Lord Grenfell who was a friend of my grandmother, Mrs. William Cock, nee Elizabeth Toy and a member of the British cabinet to 'take charge' of a group of 1820 settlers. Later he returned to England and settled at Richmond, near London but he was one of those men who must be doing something, so it wasn't very difficult for his partners to persuade him to come out again in 1836 with the idea of making the Kowie into a watering place after the style of Brighton. The partners started but when they saw it was going to be a failure backed out and left my grandfather to hold the baby alone... The plans were drawn up by John Coode and the harbour works supervised

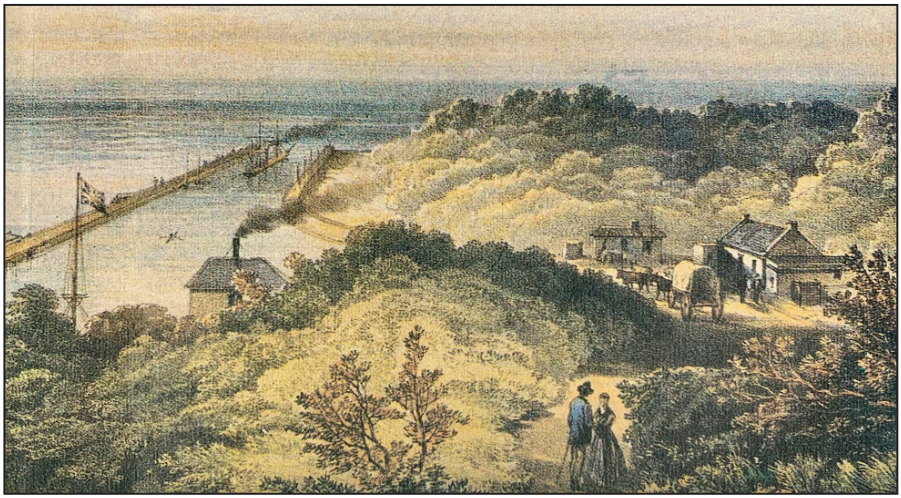
by the resident civil engineer, Edward Irving..... Some time after my grandfather's death, Coode visited Port Alfred and said, 'If they had carried out my instructions all this failure would never have happened' (In the original plan the piers were a further 70 feet, 250 feet apart.) .....My grandfather spent 75,000 pounds on the works at Port Alfred."

Cock has been "hailed as the man who put Port Alfred 'on the map'" (Neethling, 2007:12).

According to Cory he was a man of "great enterprise and indomitable perseverance" (Cory, 1965:89). Tucker described him as "Port Alfred's most distinguished son...a pioneer in the development of South Africa's export business...one of the earliest to extend the coastal trade and at one time owned 12 vessels.....Though reputed to be stern, he was a man of outstanding character, unshakeable determination, great integrity and a deep-rooted sense of justice. His descendants have it that his philosophy of life was based on Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and it is said that his wife often read a portion from the book to him in the evenings. He was a deeply religious man who gave not only to his own church, the Wesley Church opposite his home, but also to the Anglicans" (Tucker, 1970:4). According to Gledhill, few could "match him in ability and energy or match all he accomplished for the development of the country" (Gledhill, 1960:84). While Gledhill's view of him as an enterprising pioneer is shared by others such as Butler and Rivett-Carnac, others portray him as self interested (Turpin, Le Cordeur) or as a war profiteer (Peires and Keegan). Probably with a mix of motives deriving from his identities as a loyal British subject and as a businessman he was certainly very determined and devoted much energy to his vision of a harbour at the mouth of the Kowie River.

The development of a harbour

Today it is hard to imagine that for forty years the mouth of the Kowie River was the site of a successful harbour from which small boats sailed as far afield as Mauritius and St Helena, important staging posts on the Cape and Indian trading routes. The highpoint was probably in 1884 when a total of 86 ships entered the harbor, including 30 steamers and 12 sailing ships. In 1838 Cock started creating the embankment which changed the course of the river and moved the river mouth from the east to the west bank. After much work and many setbacks, a new mouth was cut for the river through the sandhills of the west bank. The new channel meant a navigable stretch of about three–quarters of a mile inland and was opened in February 1841. In March a small schooner, the Africaine, was the first vessel ever to enter the Kowie harbour through the new entrance. Writing in the Graham's Town Journal in early 1841, the editor Robert Godlonton declared that "Practical men, who have been spectators of the war carried on against the sand and surf by our enterprising fellow-colonist, Mr. Cock, are of the



View of the Kowie River by Thomas Bowler showing the dredger at work in the river, 1864.
Cory Library

opinion that victory will declare on his side.... We are informed that the result of straightening the course of the river has been such an increase of water power to act on the sand and surf, as to supercede the necessity for flood gates. We congratulate our fellow-colonist on the success of this enterprise. We cannot anticipate too highly the advantages likely to result from it. We rejoice in the success of the persevering and indomitable energy of a British emigrant..." (Graham's Town Journal, 2.3.1841.) In June 1873 a letter in the journal wrote at length on Cock's generosity and likened him to Ferdinand de Lesseps of Suez Canal fame. This was a somewhat hyperbolic comment given that two months later the Africaine was wrecked when she sailed out.

However, defending Cock against a letter in the Graham's Town Journal which referred to him as a speculator who is "monarch of all he surveys.... Cock of the whole walk", the land surveyor William Smith pointed out that in the three years since the river had been open 37 entrances had been made by 7 ships from 50 to 160 tons, and with all this only 2 ships had been lost, with no loss of life and the cargo was salvaged... "It could hardly be supposed that anyone would endeavour to damp the exertions of a person, who, if he ultimately succeeds, will have conferred a most important benefit upon a very large district of the country, the prosperity of which so much depends upon the advantages of a sea port" (Graham's Town Journal, 25.3. 1843).

Smith praised Cock's achievement as follows, "(This plan) has now been carried into complete effect by Mr. Cock, who after more than a year's arduous labour and perseverance, through many difficulties and discouragement, and at considerable outlay of capital, has affected the desired object." (Ibid) But the 'arduous labour' was largely that of Khoikhoi, the descendants of the original inhabitants of the area, now dispossessed and

reduced to the status of labourers. After 1859 labour was also provided by convicts who worked on quarrying and construction, and during 1840 a small detachment of 30 men from the 27th Regiment were sent by the colonial authorities to assist.

An important moment in the history of the river was the formation of the Kowie Harbour Improvement Company under a board of directors which included William Cock and Henry Wood in 1853. He wrote in his journal, "to detail the trouble, difficulties, scorn and ridicule I was subject to, would exceed my power." In August 1851 Cock had written to his son William Frederick 'Could I see the improvement of the Cowie undertaken by the government, I think I should be warranted in leaving the cares of business to younger hands'. (W. Cock to W.F. Cock 2 August 1851. MS, 14,263 Cory Library)

In 1849 proposals for improvements to the harbours at Port Elizabeth, Mossel Bay and the Kowie had been proposed but no action taken by the government. However, in 1852 the Kowie Harbour Bill was approved and in January the prospectus of the Kowie Harbour Improvement Company was published; half of the capital of 50,000 pounds was to be a loan guaranteed by the colonial government. Cock wrote to his son, 'I am quite sick of politics and shall be glad when I can be free.' (W. Cock to W.F. Cock 15 March 1852 MS 14,263 Cory library). Even when the ordinance 'for improving the Kowie Harbour' was finally passed it was a disappointment to Cock. He complained that "there was a great want of liberality on the part of the government". He himself was obliged to take nearly 4,500 pounds in shares. (William Cock's Journal, MS 14,262, Cory Library.) His concerns with costs are understandable. Overall, the development of the harbour was a very expensive undertaking and over time much capital was spent in shifting the mouth of the river to the west, on the construction of concrete piers, wharves, machinery, railways and warehouses.

The intervention of the colonial government gradually brought in the required technical expertise. In 1870 the Kowie Harbour Improvement Company was dissolved and henceforth the government took full control of the development of the harbour. There were some celebratory moments. On 10th October 1848 Governor Sir Harry Smith went to the confluence of the Mansfield and Kowie rivers and then by boat to Port Francis. He received a gun-salute from Richmond Station and inspected the bar. He stayed the night at Richmond House.

While the little harbour was important in establishing settler capitalism and maintaining the British military establishment during the period 1824-1888, it ultimately failed. While Turpin attributes the failure of the harbour to Cock's hubris and a local historian to his greed, Cory points to technical incompetence. He dismissed attempts to build a harbour at the river mouth in the following terms, "Whether success and prosperity in connection with that river, regardless of the untiring energy and capital which maybe spent upon it, has been forbidden by some over-ruling destiny, or whether it has been the misfortunate of the Kowie always to have had its development undertaken by those who were incompetent for the task, it is difficult to decide. But certain it is that from the time of these early efforts up to the present, the history of this river has been one of failure." (Cory, 1965:85.)

Whether the failure was due to sedimentation, technical incompetence, greed, 'some over-ruling destiny' or whatever, it is clear that William Cock was largely responsible for the 'domestication' of the river through a radical process of blocking the natural river mouth and canalizing the estuary. This represented an assault on the ecological integrity of the river, but obviously Cock would not have seen it that way.

He seems to have died from a broken heart, not from the failure of the harbor development, but according to his obituary he

"never rallied from his wife's death". "His nerves were utterly shattered and though he strove with heroic fortitude to bear up, the shock was so great that he rapidly sunk from the effects of it". The obituary, (almost certainly written by Godlonton), calls him 'intuitively a man of business' and goes on to refer to his "unflinching courage and indominitable perseverance" with regard to the Kowie which involved "the expense of immense personal labour and an almost ruinous outlay of capital". "In the Legislative Council he 'showed a sturdy independence, integrity and was an ardent lover of his country.' " (Graham's Town Journal 11.2.1876).

What kind of a man was Cock?

The question is a difficult one. The sources on William Cock are scattered and fragmented; his journal is illuminating but incomplete. It is said by some of his descendants to have been deliberately destroyed by interests that envied his success. Clearly, he was a man of his time, and I am conscious of William Dalrymple warning in a fascinating lecture on biographical writing "not to sit in judgement" and of the difficulties of "negotiating between empathy and critical distance." (Seminar on Biography, University of the Witwatersrand, 16.9.2008). In a similar vein, in his brilliant biography of John Philip, Tim Keegan warns of historical figures being "yanked out of his place in history and judged by standards that were simply not available at the time in which he lived." (Keegan, 2016.) In Cock's time and place notions of liberal humanitarian ideas were articulated, but whether he read any of the publications or interacted with any of the individuals articulating these ideas is unknown.

William Cock had his complexities, his admirers and detractors. Like all of us, he seems to have had many facets: he was a devout Wesleyan who contributed towards the cost of building

a Wesleyan chapel in Port Frances in 1827 and was chair of the Wesleyan Missionary Society for a time but does not appear to have understood the myriad forms of cruelty and injustice to the Xhosa as a violation of Christian teaching. He inspired faith and affection but also a deep enmity. His family life seems to have been warm and affectionate. According to Aunt Harriet he was a kindly and devoted father and grandfather, vigorous in promoting the interests of his four sons and extremely devoted to his wife Elizabeth. He was a hospitable man, probably something of a snob, who entertained many leading Eastern Cape figures at his home, Richmond House in Port Alfred.

He was indefatigable and relentless in his pursuit of the Kowie harbour project and of the separatist cause which argued for the seat of colonial authority to be moved to the Eastern Cape. Both were related to his business interests as a banker and merchant supplying beef to the British garrisons in South Africa, Mauritius and St Helena. Cock played a leading role in Eastern Cape affairs but was notoriously self-interested. In 1839 he had drawn up a private bill for the development of the harbour at the mouth of the Kowie to present to the Legislative Council. After his appointment in 1847 he pushed the scheme vigorously. However, in this capacity he demonstrated "little skill as a speaker, and was commended by the chief justice for the negative virtue of being an 'excellent quiet' member." (Sir John Wylde to Sir Benjamin D'Urban, 24 Jan 1843.MS 6305, D'Urban papers, Cory library). Another comment described him as" ill-tempered and when he did speak his directness of manner alienated rather than converted his fellow councillors." (See: Cock to ? 22 Oct. 1847 Ms 14263 Cory Library; Le Cordeur, 1980:197). He was notoriously self-promotional in relation to his Kowie harbour scheme: as Paterson pointed out, "as soon as he had obtained a promise of a 'grant' for the improvement of the Kowie harbour, he had taken his departure (from Cape Town) for the east" (Le Cordeur, 1980: 197).

Cock, Godlonton and the politics of Cape Separatism

Not only did Cock evoke controversy, but the Kowie scheme evoked bitter antagonism on both political and economic grounds. "It seemed to the rest of the eastern districts – indeed to all the colony – that the Godlonton-Cock clique was truckling to Smith (governor of the Cape) merely in order to secure approval for the harbour project. By doing so they were assisting in propping up, instead of bringing about the downfall of the legislative council and accelerating progress towards the introduction of representative institutions. The Kowie scheme was also feared by Grahamstown's rivals for its economic implications. While the interests centred upon the Cock-Godlonton clique looked to the construction of a port at the Kowie to arrest the relative economic decline of Grahamstown, Port Elizabeth businessmen were determined that with completion of the Zuurberg Pass (in 1849), the bulk of the trade from all the interior districts... should be drawn via Algoa Bay" (Le Cordeur, 1980: 219).

Cock was certainly an expansionist. In 1837 he convened a public meeting in which resolutions were unanimously passed expressing heartfelt approval of Governor D'Urban's annexation of Xhosa territory, what the colonial authorities termed the Province of Queen Adelaide. He was apparently oblivious to the widespread suffering the appropriation of these Xhosa lands caused. He was also a keen supporter of the separatist 'movement' which wanted to move the seat of government from Cape Town to the frontier. Le Cordeur points out that "The demands for separation came in the main from certain frontier areas – particularly Grahamstown and other 1820 Settler centres. In this case the impulses were not only the need for security (against what Cory called 'barbrous and predatory neighbours') but also the desire of a dynamic group of business leaders for an influence in the formulation of policy which would promote trade and allow them free rein for their

vigorous expansionist thrust beyond the colonial borders" (Le Cordeur, 1980:281). Cock was certainly one of those 1820 'business leaders', but Le Cordeur finds it difficult to say to what extent separatism was manipulated by its leaders, particularly the heads of the large Grahamstown mercantile houses – in order to promote their interests at the expense of the shopkeepers, traders and farmers (Le Cordeur, 1980: 284).

Le Cordeur refers to the 'Cock-Godlonton clique', and Keegan refers to Cock as 'a Godlontonian' but there were differences between the two men despite being close associates and supporters of the separatist movement. Cock may or may not have shared Robert Godlonton's extreme racism which viewed the Xhosa as "savages sunk into the lowest abyss of moral degradation" but they were colleagues and Godlonton supported Cock's vision of developing the Kowie River. Godlonton was described by the London Missionary Society agent Wiliam Thompson as a man "who for years availed himself of his position as the editor of a public journal, to misrepresent facts to promote the circulation of falsehood, and by the most cringing servility to men in power, and by the very excess of insolence to men out of power. He was the representative of a class, alas both numerous and influential in the eastern province, who appear to be strangers to every principle of integrity and honour, who know no law but that of selfishness." Mostert comments, "No one ever offered a better or more stinging summation of Godlonton's character and role." (Mostert, 1992:1105).

It is significant that Godlonton who became "the chief propagandist of the settler bourgeoise" supported the Kowie harbour scheme (Keegan, 1996:73). The Graham's Town Journal was launched in 1831 and defined the settler elite socially and politically. Godlonton was the man who most energetically represented settler interests in his role as editor from 1834. Writing in the Grahams Town Journal on 27 July 1880 Godlonton

envisaged the Kowie not just as a port but as "Merseyside in miniature" and a "South African Brighton". Furthermore, he does seem to have cared about the Kowie River in environmental terms. In a letter to W.F. Cock of 8 June 1876 he wrote, "As to the river, it is in a dreadful state, the spit on the West side principally caused by the rubbish deposited on the West Pier end Bank has almost shut up the entrance. The dredger is the most important thing to be kept employed and yet this is neglected." (Collection of letters to Robert Godlonton: 1830 – 1884. Collection no A43 Godlonton Papers. 1605. Historical Papers. Wits University Library.) But an entry in Godlonton's journal dated Friday 30 August 1850 and written from Port Elizabeth when Cock and Godlonton were travelling together to Cape Town, as members of the Legislative Council, suggests that their personal relationship was complex. Godlonton wrote "Cock very talkative and insufferably dogmatic in the maintenance of his opinions." However, on this occasion they were lodging at the same place and he accompanied Cock to services at St George's Church and dinners at Government House with Sir Harry Smith. Accompanying Cock to purchase his ticket to return to the Eastern Cape from the Steam Co. office in Cape Town, Godlonton wrote, "Cock then hurried off and I parted not without regret from my companion in travel and associate in all my worry during the past trying month" (Robert Godlonton, Journal of 30 August, August – October 1850 A655, Historical Papers, Wits University Library).

I hoped that studying the part Cock played in 'the convict incident' could help me understand his character. Did it show him to be a courageous humanist who demonstrated both his compassion and independence in the 1847 anti-convict agitation? Or was his action self-seeking, concerned to curry favour with the colonial authorities from whom he wanted support for his Kowie harbour scheme and continuing lucrative contracts? Le Cordeur (1980) refers to him "being exceedingly grateful for the extensive patronage the governor (Somerset)

dispensed". He might have been, as claimed of the settler elite, a 'stranger to honour,' but the convict incident suggests that possibly Cock was no 'stranger' to compassion.

Cock's role in the convict incident

In 1848 Britain declared the Cape a penal station. If realised this would have made it part of an intricate web of penal settlements, "a pan-imperial traffic in convicts" through the 19th century British empire (Anderson, 2012:2). Sentencing offenders to transportation was widespread (for example some 150,000 people were sent from Britain to Australia between 1788 and 1867, for crimes such as stealing a loaf of bread. According to Hattersley, "In the years of Queen Victoria's accession, there were more than 200 offences for which a man might be transported... including: poaching and even for defacing marks on government property" (Hattersley, 1965:5). The conditions on these ships were appalling. They were "crammed to suffocation" and many died (Hattersley, 1965). In 1848 the governor, Sir Harry Smith announced that Grey proposed sending a shipload of transported Irish convicts to the Cape. The response was one of immediate dismay and outrage. There was unanimous agreement throughout the colony's white inhabitants that they should not be landed. An Anti-Convict Association was formed and when the convict ship, the Neptune arrived in Cape Town, the convicts endured an appalling ordeal. As part of the substantial convict flows between British colonies at the time, the Neptune had taken five months to reach the Cape where it lay at anchor for another five months." Two hundred of the 300 convicts on board were Irish, convicted of agrarian offences during the brief rebellion that accompanied the great famine of the mid 1840's...," (Mostert, 1992:975). Sir Harry Smith requested that the ship be provisioned, as there was insufficient food on board for the

rest of her journey. However, the Neptune was boycotted and anyone who had anything to do with the ship was ostracized (Hattersley, 1965).

One of Cock's vessels, The British Settler, an iron-built schooner capable of carrying about 100 tons of cargo, was loading at the Kowie for Mauritius and Cock had her turn around and sail for Table Bay. The vessel entered the bay with a leg of mutton hanging from the yard arm and provisioned the convict ship. For this he was boycotted, and Cock noted in his diary that "every conceivable annoyance was resorted to." However, the governor gratefully acknowledged Cock's support. When Cock was refused accommodation by all lodging houses in Cape Town, he was given hospitality at Government House, and when no washerwoman could be 'found to do the needful' he was loaned underclothes by his host. (Hattersley 1965:55)

This is the conventional view of the 'convict incident', but according to the recollections of Harriet Cock, William Cock was opposed to the landing of the convicts and only supplied provisions (flour and salted meat) to the soldiers stationed at Salt River to prevent the convicts from landing. However, there are a number of positive accounts of his motives in this action, if it occurred. For example, according to Rivett-Carnac, Cock supplied the Neptune from The British Settler and "flew the leg of mutton to indicate his contempt for the inhumanity of those who, in stopping all service to the Neptune, hoped to prevent the Cape becoming a penal settlement" (Rivett-Carnac, 1961:127). Another positive account of his motives is provided by Guy Butler who wrote," Cock's enterprise, competence, public spirit and independence of mind were typical of several of the merchants of this period" (Butler, 1974:223). According to him Cock considered it "unchristian to leave the convicts without food" (Butler, 1974:225). Gledhill maintained that Cock "will be remembered for his courage during the Anti-Convict

Agitation at the Cape in 1849.....his humanity could not tolerate the idea of starving the unfortunate convicts and he refused to agree with merchants who would allow no provisions of any kind to be sold to the ship"(Gledhill,1960:2). At the time Godlonton applauded Cock's humanity and courage. In his view Cock should adopt the motto, 'While I live I'll crow'. In Cape Town by contrast, Cock's obstinacy was explained in terms of self interest in one of the Observer's lampoons:

Cock in council backs Smith with the weight of his talk
Of Kowie-funds Smith is the giver-
So the Hero shall be the Cock of the walk
And the Senator, Cock of the river (Le Cordeur, 1980:219),

Cock's motives could have been to ingratiate himself with the colonial authorities, to show loyalty both to maintain lucrative military contracts and support for his Kowie river scheme. This is Keegan's view. He writes, "Behind the single issue of convict transportation, was discontent with colonial power among the emerging local bourgeoise. The Legislative Council became the butt of popular agitation. Matters came to a head in July 1849 and the Council effectively collapsed as local officials resigned. Only William Cock, a Godlontonian from the eastern Cape, refused to resign from the council – not surprisingly, as Smith's patronage was indispensable to his pet project, the development of a harbour at the Kowie River mouth near Graham's Town" (Keegan, 1996:227). On the other hand, Cock might have felt some sympathy for the convicts given his reliance on convict labour at the Kowie mouth.

Cock does seem to have been very independent minded. But the question is whether his motives were humanitarian or commercial? And behind this is the question of how one constructs motive and maintains a balance between empathy and a critical distance. As Liz Stanley has pointed out, "individual lives can never be wholly represented... there are

always multiple ways of reading and presenting them, so any biographer's view is socially located and necessarily partial" (Cited by Anderson, 2012:17). But if Cock felt any compassion for the Irish convicts suffocating and starving in the Neptune, he clearly felt none for the indigenous inhabitants of the country, not even when the cattle killing of 1857 brought the Xhosa to the point of starvation. He was at war with them.

'War' in Albany

The Kowie landscape was the scene of many violent encounters in the wars of dispossession and William Cock was directly involved as a soldier, as a source of supplies to the British forces and as a member of the colonial administration. Most of the direct engagements in the Zuurveld (now called Albany) took place during the Sixth Frontier War (or Sixth War of Dispossession). This began in December 1834 when some 12,000 to 15,000 Xhosa fought to regain their land, forcing the British settlers to abandon virtually the whole country east of Algoa Bay, saving only the towns of Grahamstown and Fort Beaufort. The Xhosa now carried guns as well as their assegais and shields. Farmhouses were burnt, their occupants killed, and thousands of cattle carried off.

But in 1835 the colonial forces went on the offensive and the Xhosa were cleared out of the area including "the woody valleys of the Fish and the Kowie Rivers." (Peires.1981:145). The Xhosa suffered severely when the British applied the same strategy as in 1811, a scorched earth policy which destroyed their economic base. This was a guerrilla war fought by innumerable small detachments which were familiar with the forested terrain of the river valleys. Peires writes, "Their houses burnt, their crops destroyed, their cattle dead, many of the Xhosa who succeeded in surviving the war were utterly ruined" (Peires, 1981:159). As a result, many were reduced to eating herbs and roots and forced to seek employment in the Colony by the people who

had destroyed them. Peires points out that "an even greater desolation followed the later War of the Axe" (Peires 1981:160).

But for the "British settlers in the Eastern Cape the war of 1851 -3 represented the definitive and irrevocable triumph of civilization over barbarism," (Crais 1992:191). But 'barbarism' is best described by an incident he relates, "A mob, which included prominent members of the colonial elite and assisted by a few Mfengu, burned down parts of the black locations in Grahamstown, while a group of 'gentlemen' destroyed virtually all of the Theopolis mission station and a large section of the Kat River settlement. Setting fire to the huts and houses, the 'Gentlemen' carried with them flags which had been produced by their wives and daughters inside the safety of their homes. The flags had a single word embroidered on them: 'Extermination'" (Crais, 1992:191, citing Southey to Godlonton 11.12.1850). This differs somewhat from the account given by the missionary, William Thompson. Commenting on the impact of the Kat River Rebellion on the Grahamstown settlers, he wrote, "A torchlight and tar-barrel procession with banners was held and such sentiments as... 'Extermination to the Rebels' were paraded." (Williams, 1967: 182, citing Cory, 1965:360-361). I have not been able to establish which version was correct and whether William Cock was one of the 'gentlemen' participating.

Cock and war mongering and profiteering

Cock and his sons clearly played a direct part in these wars, but his most important role in supporting the British colonial state was in providing supplies to their military forces. Cock wrote in his journal, "In December 1834 the Kaffir War broke out and the commission experienced great difficulty in procuring supplies...I was fortunately in a position to render considerable service to the Government in procuring supplies" (William Cock's Journal 1819 – 49 MS 14,262, Cory Library). Such services continued and were highly significant.

The power of the British colonial state rested on its military technology and numbers which were considerable. "There were some 4000 – 5000 British troops until the end of the Napoleonic wars, declining thereafter to 1500 in 1834, but increasing again to some 6200 after the 1846 - 47 war. In 1850 after Sir Harry Smith had reduced the garrison, there were 4068, but this had doubled to 8660 by the end of 1851" (Legassick, 2010:5). Maintaining this military presence and conducting the frontier wars were expensive for the British taxpayer "British expenditure for the defense at the Cape... was at no time less than 100,000 pounds per year, and during the numerous Kaffir wars it rose sharply. In 1834 the total imperial expenditure at the Cape for military purposes was 114,875 pounds and the war that erupted at the end of that year cost the British Treasury an additional 154,000 pounds" (Galbraith, 1963:36).

However, war was profitable for colonial merchants. According to the 1820 settler Thomas Stubbs the wealthy Grahamstown merchant class, of which Cock was a member, were war profiteers as well as warmongers. Stubbs headed a home defence unit covering Albany and often patrolled in the 'Kowie bush' in pursuit of stolen cattle. A compassionate man, he wrote "I have heard people talk very lightly about shooting Caffers, but I believe it is by those who have never experienced it. For I have always felt grieved that my duty compelled me to it" (Stubbs 1876 in Maxwell and McGeogh, 1978:155). He viewed the settler elite as greedy and wrote, "I could if I wished, enumerate a great many who owe their present positions to the Caffer wars. They are all men who never ran any risk by going out to assist in the wars, but who had their eyes fixed on the Commissariat Chest or any other place where money was to be had. In 1844 a lot of men that had come out as settlers with but very scanty means had somehow or other managed to fill their coffers" (Stubbs 1876 in Maxwell and McGeogh, 1978:136). Small fortunes were made by the settler merchant elite. Thomas Stubbs wrote, "I have never seen money wasted as it was

then...the general feeling was to rob the government as much as possible... it was carried on from the man who swept the Commissariat store to the General...In England it was believed that the people on this frontier like a Caffer war better than peace, I must say I believe so too." (Stubbs, 1876, in: Maxwell and McGeogh, 1978.135). Nor was Stubbs alone in voicing this view. Peires writes, "Unfortunately few contemporaries were prepared to risk libel suits by mentioning names, but certainly these included William Cock, James Howse and George Wood, all Methodists and members of the circle around the Graham's Town Journal." (Peires, 1981:124)

During the seventh frontier war the settlers formed numerous volunteer citizen forces, which proved very expensive for the British military establishment. The monthly outlay in Grahamstown was estimated at three thousand pounds although most of the 'volunteers' were "following their usual occupations and only did duty by drawing their pay". The consequence was that merchants, shop-keepers, editors of newspapers, hotel-keepers etc. were living at home and enjoying equal pay with the officers of Her Majesty's regular service. Those implicated in such profiteering included a number of leading settler entrepreneurs – H. Blaine, William Cock, T.H. Bowker, the former military commander Colonel H.Somserset and Godlonton's early partner, L.H. Meurant (Keegan, 1996: 218).

The colonial official, Lennox Stretch maintained that the settler elite engaged in war mongering so as to profit from the British military presence. On the 8 June 1836 Stretch wrote in his journal, "From the impositions of the Graham's Town people during the panic many enriched themselves at the public expense. The most notorious was the clothing of the Provisional Colonial Infantry by a person named 'Wood' (this was George Wood who was one of Cock's partners) who reaped the sum of seven thousand pounds for this job... This person soon afterwards

purchased Mr. Cock's house for two thousand pounds who also had not been indolent in filling his pockets. It is therefore not surprising these Graham's Town worthies were desirous the war should proceed." (Stretch, 1876, 1988:196)

An imperial commitment to the militarization of the frontier meant expanded markets, war profits for the settler elite and the ultimate promise of accumulation through dispossession of the indigenous Xhosa people. But the imperial authorities themselves were sceptical. The merchants of Grahamstown, British officials alleged, were warmongers because they reaped huge profits from the sale of supplies to the army, and an irresponsible press magnified every incident into a threat of a Kaffir invasion. Racist panics meant escalating British military expenditure which meant profits for the settler merchant class. On this basis, in his private correspondence Sir Benjamin D'Urban was vehement in his denunciation of the 'firebrands' of Grahamstown. He considered the Graham's Town Journal "a purveyor of rumors that poisoned the atmosphere and made peace difficult." (D'Urban to Thomas, March 24, 1835 D'Urban Papers, Private Letters Book 1, Cape Archives)

Clearly Cock benefitted from the large and profitable military force on the frontier. In that sense he was a 'war profiteer' and at least a tacit supporter of war mongering. But was he also an illicit arms dealer? Keegan maintains that, "The settler merchants of Grahamstown continued throughout the 1840s to be a major source of armaments for the Xhosa. It may seem paradoxical that the settler bourgeois, who dedicated their public lives to urging the dispossession and subjugation of the African chiefdoms, should simultaneously be involved in providing them with the means of armed resistance. But profits spoke volumes to these men, and guns and powder fetched incomparable profits after the collapse of the buttons and beads market" (Keegan, 1996:136). Lieutenant–Governor John Hare was certain that the Grahamstown merchants were

'deeply implicated' in the arms trade. "I have not the slightest doubt that every merchant of the town is deeply concerned in this unlawful traffic", he wrote to Governor Napier "and that all are equally culpable". These were, as Napier wrote, "the very persons most clamorous against the Kafir nation." (Keegan, 1996:157).

According to Keegan, "William Cock, the 'army butcher'... was a 'made man' after the (sixth frontier) war as a result of his meat contracts... War thus was not a calamity but an opportunity for these accumulating men (such as Cock, Southey, and Godlonton). They acquired a reputation as warmongers, a reputation that was to spread and increase as the years went by" (Keegan, 1996:145). However, there is no evidence that I could find that Cock was involved in the arms trade. But there is also no evidence (that I found) of him speaking out against it, as men like Philip and Fairbairn did. Nor did Cock ever express any compassion or indignation about the plight of the Xhosa, the atrocities of the military or make any comments that could indicate elements of a liberal humanitarian worldview.

The radical interventions on the Kowie River, the shifting of the river mouth and the canalisation, occurred in a highly militarised moment in our history. William Cock was a principal actor in this story who is still revered in the Kowie area, especially by the many descendants of the 1820 settlers still living there. But as Keegan (1996) has shown William Cock was part of the self-aggrandising settler elite who promoted the militarisation of the frontier, benefited from it, and wanted a long-term, large-scale military commitment to the frontier as the basis for economic development and accumulation. Revisiting this ancestor has meant acknowledging that the revered great-great grandfather was a warmonger and a profiteer. This is a far cry from the dominant view of William Cock which has focused on the development of a harbour at the mouth of the Kowie River. That view is best captured in the obituary by Lydia Wood, his

youngest daughter in a torn, yellowing, and faded newspaper cutting saved by my mother, "The story of Mr. Cock and the Kowie is that of a life's work in vain. By his foresight, private enterprise and indomitable perseverance, he endeavoured to serve South Africa, the country of his adoption, but the gods were ungracious." (Undated and unnamed).

The failure of the Kowie harbour scheme brings into question the historical significance of Cock's life. This lies in the part played by Cock in the development of a new mode of accumulation, settler capitalism.

Settler capitalism

In the thirty-year period between the British settlers' arrival in 1820 and 1850 a new mode of accumulation emerged which was consolidated on the Eastern frontier, 'Settler capitalism'. This built upon settler colonialism in the Zuurveld, the area where the colonial authorities first encountered the indigenous peoples, particularly the amaXhosa, and incorporated them into a new political order. This means that long before industrialisation and the discovery of gold and diamonds, and imperialist expansion after 1870, the process of primitive accumulation was occurring, first in the Eastern Cape, being driven by the local settler elite who were consolidating their position at the expense of the indigenous people. By transforming what had been Xhosa land into a commodity and concentrating this fundamental means of production in fewer and fewer hands, they were laying the foundation for the development of agrarian capitalism. In this sense 'settler capitalism' could be important to understanding subsequent forms of capitalist development in South Africa.

Capitalism broadly rests on the dispossession of the means of production (initially of land through the process of 'primitive accumulation' or 'accumulation by dispossession') and the creation of 'free' labour, in the sense of the dispossessed having

to sell their labour power to survive. In other words, it involves the process whereby both the means of production and labour become commodities. While in this case the dispossession was driven by colonialism, this process of commoditisation was driven by settler capitalism. As Keegan writes," The consequences of processes of primitive accumulation as they developed in pre-industrial South Africa was the rise of accumulating settler elites..." (Keegan 1989:616). These elites did not initiate the process of dispossession of the Xhosa but built upon the militarised colonial project which originated in the 1811/12 expulsion and continued in the '100 years war.' They promoted their own economic interests, rather than those of the metropole, based in London. They did so initially through the occupation and commoditisation of Xhosa land on which they farmed sheep or cattle, and through establishing and extending lucrative trading networks. Land speculation was extensive and involved buying up conquered lands and establishing sheep and cattle farms. Cattle sales and wool exports became the basis of many settler fortunes. Particularly between 1837 and 1845 property prices in the Eastern Cape quadrupled. (Keegan, 2016:248). Keegan cites Stockenstrom on the case of a farm bought for 600 pounds in 1834, for which a few years later an offer was made for three thousand, three hundred pounds. Settler capitalism also involved the incorporation and exploitation of the amaXhosa as wage labourers, though there were many forms of 'unfree' labour at the time, particularly slavery, indenture and the widespread use of convict labour in the Cape Colony (as was the case with the Kowie harbour development). It also involved the establishment of the financial institutions and infrastructure to promote speculation and trade.

In summary, the notion of 'settler capitalism' built on settler colonialism to describe a mode of accumulation based on the militarised violence of colonial dispossession.

Deeply embedded in British colonialism these settler elites articulated and perpetuated a virulent racism. This is a key feature of the settler colonialism which originated in Albany and which spread as it was linked to accumulation. "... a political economy of racial supremacy could only be secured, extended and elaborated in an economy that was generating profits and wealth and privilege on an ever expanding scale" (Keegan, 1989:683).

This too built upon settler colonialism. The key elements of 'settler-colonial modernity' have been defined as "violent domination, cultural contempt for native culture and the development of subject identities that are deeply antagonistic, relational and incomplete without the other" (Reddy, 2016:189).

The mouthpiece of this new settler capitalism was the Graham's Town Journal. It linked the discourse of racial supremacy to accumulation. Mostert writes, "It was in British Grahamstown, specifically through its newspaper, the Graham's Town Journal, and the voice of its editor, Robert Godlonton, that white South Africa first became powerfully vocal in defence of itself, and of its outlook, and its attitudes and policies towards the country's indigenous inhabitants" (Mostert, 1992:335). Furthermore, the journal "represented typical entrepreneurial interests vigorously and persistently over a number of decades. Attracting immigration and capital investment was at the top of the agenda for the settlers ... Godlonton and his colleagues sought to promote a booming settler economy in which fortunes could be made by commerce, speculation and productive investment" (Keegan, 1996:73).

The deep-seated racism of settler capitalism was linked to war. In 19th century South Africa, the processes of dispossession and significant proletarianisation were the outcome of protracted war, particularly that of 1834-5. As Mostert writes, "the intense hatred of blacks that the war (of 1834–5) had

invoked remained, after it had settled, as deeply embedded prejudice and contempt" (Mostert, 1992:776). Africans were conceptualised as innately inferior and backward; in the words of one member of the settler elite, Mitford Bowker, the Xhosa were "ruthless, worthless savages". In all these wars the 'scorched earth' policy of the British imperialist forces, which involved the destruction of crops, the basis of economic subsistence, meant that the process of primitive accumulation involved a genocidal violence.

This pre-industrial accumulation was initially based on trade. According to Crais, "The frontier trade (with the Xhosa) became the single most important avenue by which settlers accumulated the capital upon which commercial agriculture would develop, the so-called 'merchant road to capitalism" (Crais, 1992:106). Crais documents how the profits involved were considerable and involved "coercive practices by and large from the British settler elite" (Crais, 1992:111). Trade centered initially at various mission stations which, as Crais observes, were "a colonialist institution par excellence" (Crais, 1992:104). The settler elite later established extensive trading networks which came to involve Britain and its Indian Ocean colonies (particularly Mauritius) as an export market and for the transfer of technology and capital.

The new social order that emerged was defined by racism, primitive accumulation and 'free' labour. It involved a continual displacement and transformation of social relations. What Crais calls 'racial capitalism', "tore up communally based societies and began to replace them with a single colonial order" (Crais, 1992:188). This was a completely different order which involved new forms of production and consumption and was acquisitive, competitive and individualist, values alien to Xhosa society. While the amaXhosa understood land as a productive, communal resource, jointly administered, settler capitalism redefined it as private property and the

object of speculative activities. Cattle became objects of trade rather than of reverence. The new order also involved the establishment of financial institutions to acquire capital and promote investment with the support of British merchant capital, extensive trading operations which undermined the self-sufficiency of Xhosa society, the spread of free trade ideas and practices, the commodification of natural resources which meant the reduction of nature to a store of resources for productive activity, as well as an ideology of acquisitiveness and the exploitation of Africans reduced to selling their labour power in the colonial labour market.

Cock as an exemplar of settler capitalism

Many of these features of settler capitalism were exemplified by Cock's career, starting with his pursuit of the initial route to accumulation in local trade, for him trade with the ama Xhosa was a launching pad for accumulation. Cock's entry into trade illustrates Crais's observation that, "The collapse of the 1820 settlement scheme and successive crop failures encouraged many colonists to look elsewhere for their economic livelihoods. Indeed, during the first three decades of the century the frontier trade supplanted agrarian production as the basis of the colonial economy" (Crais, 1992:106). Trading as Messrs Cock and Co of Graham's Town, William Cock operated a trading store at Wesleyville, the mission station established by William Shaw in 1827 (Keegan, 1996) Trading did not seem to contradict the 'civilizing mission' of the missionaries and "five strings of beads were the daily wages of a man" (Beck, 1989:223). Cock subsequently extended that trade and established a wholesale business in Grahamstown. His speculative investment in the Kowie harbour development and the acquisition of a fleet of 12 ships enabled him to extend his trading networks and export goods to Cape Town and as far afield as Mauritius, St Helena and London. In 1850 his ship, the Sir John St Aubyn was sent to London with a cargo of colonial produce, (chiefly wool).

According to the Graham's Town Journal it was "the first direct export from Port Frances to the Parent country." (Graham's Town Journal 2.3.1850). Cock acquired lucrative contracts to supply the British military establishments, in addition to the Eastern frontier. The increasing militarisation of the Eastern Cape frontier meant a large market for many different goods and services, a sense of security for potential investors and rising land values. Cock kept connections to Britain which was becoming the leading trading nation of the world, so in a small way he was part of the emerging British empire of 'free trade.' He was involved in establishing the infrastructure to promote investment, trade and profit. This promoted the development of merchant, financial and speculative capital. His establishment of a bank in Grahamstown promoted credit and commerce and was extremely successful in speculative terms. The original shares of 16.13s.4d. pounds rose to 42 pounds. (South African History online 30.5.2014).

Cock, with the rest of the settler elite invested heavily in grazing farms along the Eastern Cape coast, land from which the Xhosa had been driven. With his sons he farmed cattle on his extensive land holdings and exported wool and beef from Port Alfred. As Godlonton wrote in Cock's obituary, in Grahamstown "elbowing his way and joining with others (he laid) those commercial foundations on which subsequent generations have built." (Graham's Town Journal 11.2.1876). Cock was a foremost representative of merchant capital in his trading activities. Grahamstown and Cock, along with a small group of merchants, became the centre of this settler capitalism. For the settler elite living there "territorial acquisition and conquest were directly concerned with speculative profit and capital accumulation" (Keegan, 1996:285). Cock clearly played a part in the dispossession of the Xhosa, especially as a source of supplies to the British military establishment and as a member of the colonial administration. There was an element of conspicuous consumption and social display in the 'castle',

the crenelated home Cock built, in Port Alfred. Dominating the little town at the mouth of the Kowie River, it signalled his wealth and privilege.

Conclusion

The Kowie river area at the centre of the Zuurveld was the crucible of South African history in the sense of being the area where our diverse peoples first encountered each other. It was also the crucible of settler capitalism, meaning a system of both accumulation and domination. In this sense the 1820 settlers had a "disproportionately large impact on SA history... for they set in motion new social forces that were to play a fundamentally shaping role in nineteenth century South Africa... it was not that the settlers planted British culture and British institutions on South African shores that is of significance. Rather their significance lies in the fact that they carried with them an ideology conducive to the development of productive capitalism... They developed an ideology of accumulation and dispossession that was a new force in colonial society." (Keegan. 1996: 62). William Cock played a part in this process which "gradually gave rise to a fully fledged settler capitalism that was to spread well beyond the original settler nucleus in Albany district..." (Keegan 1996: 68).

So, was William Cock a hero or a villain? No doubt among the readers of this article there will be different answers.

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