



# Harties History

## Hartbeespoort

Any article on the history of the area should begin with one of the most prominent features of the area namely the majestic Magaliesberg Mountains, which are said to have formed some 2.3 billion years ago, making them 1000 times older than the Alps.

There is conclusive evidence that early man originated in this area, and flourished, later to populate the rest of the world.

It is believed that the first Iron Age people arrived in the area as long ago as 300 A D, and evidence of their presence can be seen at the Broederstroom Archaeological Site (Toppieshoek). It appears that they co-existed with the late Stone Age inhabitants that were in the area at the time.

### 1800

By the 1800s, a Tswana offshoot named the Kwena Mmatau had moved into the area from the North and constructed settlements along the slopes of the Magaliesberg, which were originally called "Cashan" after a powerful chief of the Mkwena Mmatau named Ngwashwane.

In those days the passes in the area were used by the Griqua and Korana to transport Ivory from the North to the Cape Colony.

### 1827

In 1827, Mzilikazi, a powerful Ndebele leader who had fled from Shaka and built up an army during his travels through Mpumalanga, invaded the area. After conquering all the local tribes in the vicinity he established a kingdom extending from the Limpopo River in the North to the Vaal River in the South.

A few years later the first white hunters/traders Mcluckie Robert Schoon and David Hume reached the area. Mzilikazi learned of the work that Robert Moffat was doing at Kuuruman, from them and promptly sent a deputation to persuade him to travel to the area.

Moffat built up a rapport with Mzilikazi which lasted until the end of their lives.

### 1832

In 1832 a Zulu raiding party travelled on foot from Kwa Zulu Natal, and although their battle with Mzilikazi's army, in Silkaatsnek was inconclusive, they managed to make off with a large number of cattle.

As a result Mzilikazi decided that he was too close to the Zulu Kingdom for comfort and decided to move his headquarters further North.

### 1836

From 1836 parties of Boers started leaving the Cape Colony trekking north.

The subsequent arrival of the Voortrekkers in the area made Mzilikazi uneasy and so in August 1836, when a Voortrekker hunting party entered the area they were ambushed by the Ndebele.



The widely dispersed Voortrekkers soon rallied and fought off a 3000 strong Impi at the battle of Vegkop, and later went on to destroy Mosega a large Ndebele settlement at Marico.

This battle encouraged Mzilikazi's traditional enemy the Zulus, who swept through the area four months later capturing cattle and destroying the last remnants of Mzilikazi's occupation of the mountains, thus allowing many former inhabitants and the Voortrekkers to occupy the area.

### 1877

Following the British annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 and until the end of the Boer War in 1902, many major battles were fought between the Boers and the British in the area, and the most significant of the historic sites and battlefields have been well documented.

### 1896

In 1896 General Hendrik Schoeman, started to build a dam wall in the Crocodile river, at the kloof, in Meerhof. It was originally called Sophia Dam after his wife, and cost a massive £10, 000 to build.

### 1905

Around 1905 there was an another attempt to build a dam – this time on the present site at Schoemansville. Due to financial constraints, building was terminated.

### 1913 – 1923

Official investigations into the possibility of building a dam on the Crocodile River at Hartbeespoort began in 1913, when the first the first Geological tests were carried out, but building was delayed during the rebellion and work only started in 1916.

Two years later floods swept through the construction site destroying much of the work that had been done, and setting the project back for years.



It was only after a young engineer F.W. Scott was employed that significant progress was made and the dam was finally completed in 1923.

A little known fact is that the dam incorporates a hydro-electric power plant that operated for about forty years.



## Harties DAM

Many years ago, a man by the name of General Hendrik Schoeman, owned a farm called Hartbeespoort. He had the idea of building a dam, in which the community could gain from (Little did he know of the struggle to come).

During 1896 building of the dam wall began in the Crocodile River, near the railway line that today runs to Meerhof. It was the largest dam in the southern hemisphere. He named this dam "Sophia dam", after his wife, but was later changed to the name that stands today. Hartbeespoort dam.

The dam wall cost a staggering R10 000 to build... Back then. It was decided 1905 to relocate the location of the dam wall. It would be positioned between two mountains. The same position still remains today. A Swedish man by the name of August Karlson was hired to engineer the build. However, due to financial problems and the onset of war, construction came to a halt soon after. Building commenced again in 1918.

Unfortunately, during 1921, torrential rain washed the temporary dam away. Again construction came to a standstill. Out of sheer frustration, August Karlson resigned from his position. The council was left with no one to finish the build, so they hired a young, but talented engineer named F.W.Scott. With the dam finally built, the first road over the bridge was tarred. This became the new road between Pretoria and Rustenburg.

We take our hats off to the men who gave the Hartbeespoort community something to be proud of.

Short facts: -Shape of the dam wall is found nowhere else in South Africa.

-250 000 bags of cement were used for the dam wall.

-At full capacity, the dam fills to 205 million cubic meters of water.

