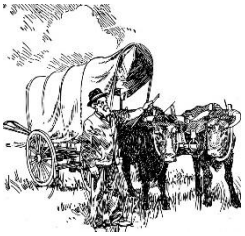

The Forgotten Highway Express

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THE MEN WHO MADE THE MAPS

If we were meant to stay in one place we would have roots instead of feet – Rachel Wolchin

There is still no direct route from Port Elizabeth to Kuruman. The distance by road today is around 1 076 km and driving time is just over 13 hours. Alternatively you could fly to Sishen and take a taxi from there – this fly/taxi option would require just over 5 hours. Cycling would take about 25 hours, if you decided to run you should set aside about 95 hours and if you opted to walk it would take towards 200 hours, states distance calculator.co.za. All of these are a far cry from the three months that it took David Livingston to travel by ox wagon from Port Elizabeth to the Moffat's Mission at Kuruman in April 1841. Cape Town is just over 1090 away– about 12 hours' drive.

When Britain took control at the Cape in 1795, they knew virtually nothing of the land, nor the expeditions which the Dutch had undertaken into the interior. They considered the country unmapped and this worried them because frontier farmers were steadily moving beyond Colonial borders. Almost all maps of the day had been compiled by explorers, hunters and missionaries for their travelogues. Very few had been drawn by professional cartographers.

When Lord Macartney became Governor in 1797, he asked John Barrow, one of his private secretaries, to journey into the interior. Barrow undertook three journeys between 1797 and 1799 and produced a map, unquestionably the best of its kind until then. It was published in his *Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa*. When his father-in-law P J Truter, a member of the Cape Court of Justice, undertook a journey into the interior in 1801-02 with William Somerville, Barrow also produced a map showing the route that they had taken. Barrow's maps were frequently copied by other cartographers.

RELIABLE MAPS NEEDED

An authoritative map of the Colony was only produced in 1834 by Arrowsmiths, a leading British map publishing company founded by Aaron Arrowsmith in 1790. However, the route leading to this map was a long one.

In July 1819 Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, commissioned Captain W C Holloway, officer commanding the Royal Engineers at the Cape, to supervise a general trigonometrical survey of the Colony. He emphasized that such a survey was essential to assist the government with the registration of land grants in the interior. Holloway's brief was "to lay the foundation of a map…so that the limits of this colony…shall be known". Work on this project started in the district of Graaff-Reinet in August 1819 but was abandoned in 1825 due to a lack of funds. Holloway's maps were never published. They exist only in manuscript form. They were of such little use that on June 14, 1824, Colonial Secretary, Lord Bathurst, wrote to the governor complaining of "the inconvenience caused by the want of good maps". He regularly followed up without success.

The German naturalist Hinrich Lichtenstein, also produced maps of the routes he had taken on his several expeditions into the interior as far as Botswana, so did Scottish missionary, John Campbell, who was sent to the Cape and Botswana by the London Missionary Society (LMS). Campbell's maps, however, were not very detailed. In 1822 the traveller and naturalist William Burchell compiled a large and detailed map to illustrate his journeys into the interior as far east as the Keiskamma River and as far north as the "Maadji Mountain" north of Kuruman.

FOLLOWED BURCHELL'S LEAD

Burchell's map was published in London in 1824. Maps showing the routes taken by the merchant George Thompson between 1821 and 1830, were of poor quality. Then there were those made by Sidney Hall, who was the engraver of Burchell's maps, so his own maps closely followed those. His map of the main route to the North via Lattakoo (Kuruman), is almost identical to Burchell's, but it gives a multitude of tribal names.

In 1825 various problems caused the British Parliament to appoint a Commission of Enquiry into the administration and finances of the Cape Government. One of the recommendations made by this commission was that a surveyor-general be appointed to, amongst other duties, "prepare a map of the Colony". The first Surveyor-General, Colonel Charles Cornwallis Michell, was appointed in 1828. However, by 1829 he had still not produced a map, so the Colonial Office presented him with a skeleton map, requesting him to "mark thereupon the divisions of the several districts and the boundaries of the Colony as much inconvenience has been felt from the want of a correct map…" Michell acceded, but said: "I see many inaccuracies thro'out this map, and I regret that I cannot rectify them." So, on February 28, 1831, he returned the skeleton map to the Government who forwarded it to London.

Another man commissioned to compile an official map was L Hebert who, from 1827 to 1838, worked as cartographer and lithographer for the British Government. Copies of maps drawn by him in 1830 can be found today British in the National Archives and British Library. Most of the place names and the delineation of rivers and roads, plus many notations and inscriptions on Hebert's map also occur verbatim on some Arrowsmith maps. "When compiling his reference map of South Africa for the Colonial Office, Hebert almost certainly consulted the maps of Barrow, Lichtenstein, Campbell, Burchell, Thompson, and Sidney Hall, as well as the published narratives of several other travellers," says Elri Liebenberg, of Department of Geography, University of South Africa in an article entitled *Shifting Boundaries in Southern Africa*. Of the maps at his disposal, he found those of Barrow, Lichtenstein and Burchell by far the most superior because of the personal observations they yielded and the important topographical information. This was constantly updated as new expeditions were undertaken.

THE MOST UP TO DATE

Because Campbell and Burchell traveled far beyond Lattakoo during the 1820s, their maps were considered to be the most up-to-date as far as place names and features were concerned. This applied particularly to Campbell's 1820 route from Lattakoo to the Marico district. Burchell's northwards journey from Worcester via Klaarwater to Lattakoo, and beyond to Lake Chue, was meticulously copied from his map by both Hebert and Arrowsmith, and the same is true of Burchell's southwards route from Lattakoo via the LMS station Klaarwater to Graaff-Reinet. Hebert and Arrowsmith also used maps made by several notable military and civilian land surveyors.

Military engineers were important collectors of topographical data in the 19th century. The trigonometrical survey undertaken under the supervision of Captain Holloway between 1819 until 1823, while unpublished, found its way onto Hebert's and Arrowsmith's maps. In 1875 the Surveyor General of the Cape, Abraham de Smidt, confirmed that the materials from which Arrowsmith, and prior to him, Hebert, constructed their maps, consisted of, amongst others, the survey results of Holloway and the coastal charts of Owen.

Of course, there were many early travelers and explorers who did not produce maps, but nevertheless collected topographical information which was very important to the map makers. Among these are author, politician and lay cartographer, James Centlivres Chase and James Collis who, in 1825, visited Klaarwater. Chase compiled a map of Southern Africa which he, on 24 February 1831, forwarded to the Colonial Secretary in London. According to him, his map "filled up at least 100 000 square miles hitherto a perfect blank in the maps of Africa". Andrew Geddes Bain and James B. Biddulph in 1826, travelled via Kuruman as far as Dithabaruba near present-day Molepolole in Botswana; Robert Scoon and William McLuckie were among the first white men to reach the Magaliesberg in 1829; Alexander Cowie and Benjamin Green in 1829 travelled all along the coast to Delagoa Bay, but died of malaria on their return trip.

PUBLISHED IN POPULAR JOURNALS

Extracts from Bain Cowie and Green's journals were published in the *South African Commercial Advertiser* of November and December 1826 and again in September 1829. *The South African Almanack and Directory* and the *Asiatic Journal* of 1830 also published pieces written by these travelers. Extracts from the journals of Scoon and McLuckie were read to the South African Literary and Scientific Institution in Cape Town in 1830 and published in the *South African Quarterly Journal of July-September* that year. The journeys of the natural scientist Andrew Smith also yielded valuable information as did the diaries of the missionaries. During the first three decades of the 19th century many English-speaking LMS and the Wesleyan Missionaries came to South Africa, settled in lesser-known parts of the country, travelled widely, and accumulated a great deal of geographical information that was of interest to map makers.

THE BIG GAME HUNTER'S SHOP

Then, there was the renowned big game hunter, explorer, pioneer trader and Kuruman shop owner, David Hume. He established a most viable trading post at Kuruman in 1829. Born in Berwick, Scotland, in 1796, he came to South Africa with Benjamin Moodie's settlers in 1817. He lived part of his life in the Grahamstown area. In 1829 he accompanied Robert Moffat on a trip to visit Mzilikazi's (Moselekatse), chief of the Matabele (later called the Rhodesian Ndebele). David was one of the first Europeans to meet Mzilikazi when he explored the area north of the Limpopo River in 1830 in search of gold. He was also one of the first European to enter the country of the Bamangwato (Botswana) in 1833. In 1836 he heard reports of the existence of Lake Ngami, a huge 130 km x 20 km endorheic body of water – vast basin with no outlet – but he lacked the funds to mount an expedition and was not able to raise any. Livingstone later called this body of water "a shimmering lake".

David married Margaret Pirie on December 12, 1829, in Grahamstown. Born in England in about 1807 she immigrated to South Africa with her father in 1820, at the age of 11. David settled in Kuruman with his family but continued to travel widely. He annually sold products from his hunting expeditions on the market square in Grahamstown. On April 2, 1851, he sold 5,594 kg of ivory for £5,260 and karosses as well as ostrich plumes to the value of £5,802. In 1854 he was elected as one of eight municipal commissioners of Grahamstown. David died in Grahamstown on February 1, 1864, and Margaret died there on August 20, 1897.

ACCURATE AND RELIABLE

The Arrowsmith map, published on the eve of the Great Trek, was considered accurate and reliable. According to its annotations it was based on information obtained from "original 1820 MS drawings in the Colonial Office". Updates were published in 1835, 1836 and 1842. John Arrowsmith, Aaron's great nephew, took charge of the family business in 1839. He was a founder member of the Royal Geographical Society and a confidant of some government bodies such as the Colonial Office and the Hydrographic Office of the Admiralty. John compiled numerous maps for Hansard and also for some professional journals. The firm was active until 1874 when it was taken over by Edward Stanford, a contemporary and also a member of the Royal Geographical Society.

Edward was more of an entrepreneur than a mapmaker. He purchased Arrowsmith's stock, plates and copyright because he saw a future in revising the London Atlas by using newly researched and updated material. He also planned to bring the "Arrowsmith colonial material" up to date. The first copies "'For Private Circulation" appeared in 1884, a decade after the purchase of the material. Edward retired in 1882 due to ill health and his son Edward *Jr* took over. The first proper edition of his colonial maps appeared in 1887. The firm was absorbed into George Philip & Son in 1947 where it remained until 2001 when Stanford's once more became independent.

The stone obelisk erected on the spot where the famous astronomer Sir John Herschel, erected his reflecting telescope, hides a secret. Under the foundation of this obelisk is buried a "time capsule", consisting of a bottle containing "various items of interest to later generations". H.M. Astronomer at the Cape, Sir Thomas Maclear, insisted that Arrowsmith's map should be one of these items, "being a better representation of the present boundary and extent of the Colony than any description…"

STANDARD MAP OF THE COLONY

That Arrowsmith's map was accepted as the standard map of the Colony by the mid-1830s' It was used as a base map by English military engineer, artist, hunter and writer, Major Sir William Cornwallis Harris who received helpful advice on ivory trading from David Hume and Robert Schoon, and also visited Robert Moffat at Kuruman In 1857 Thomas Maclear again referred to the merits of Arrowsmith's map and the 1835 issue of Arrowsmith's map was also included in the autobiography of the influential Sir Andries Stockenström, Magistrate of Graaff-Reinet from 1815 to 1827 and later Lieutenant Governor for the Eastern Districts in 1871. The Surveyor-General, Abraham de Smidt, commended it as late as 1875.

SOURCES

Peter Ball - Heritage Portal - February 4, 2018; Elri Liebenberg Department of Geography, University of South Africa - Shifting boundaries in Southern Africa: John Arrowsmith's map of the Cape of Good Hope of 1834 - ICA Commission on the History of Cartography International Cartographic Association W Burchell appears in Volume I of his Travels in the Interior of South Africa; Biographical entry Stanford's Maps; Kingsley Holgate - Africa in the Footsteps of the Great Explorers

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A LAND OF SAND AND STONES

When the London Missionary Society decided to establish a mission in Great Namaqualand, north of the Orange River, one man who had lived in the area for many years said: "Sir, you will find plenty of sand and stones, a thinly scattered population, always suffering from want of water, on plains and hills roasted like a burnt leaf, under the scorching rays of a cloudless sun." This did not discourage the missionaries. They set off and after a journey of great difficulty and suffering, reached the land of the Namaquas.

When Robert Moffat and James Kitchingman received permission to travel out of the Colony, they bought wagons and oxen, took leave of friends, and on September 22, 1817, departed with a man named Ebner, who soon parted company with them. Kitchingman and Moffat then travelled on in "in perils oft," wrote Moffat describing their journey across mile after mile, "of dreary wastes of burning sand, famished with hunger, parched with thirst, with the howl of the hyena and the roar of the lion disturbing our slumbers at night, and with Bushmen, more savage than either, hovering near, ever ready to attack the weak and defenceless."

MONTH WITH A PIONEER MISSIONARY

After a toilsome march, during which Kitchingman and Moffat took it in turn to drive the cattle, losing some to the hyenas on the way, they reached Bysondermeid, the station to which Kitchingman had been appointed. There Moffat stayed for one month, receiving much useful information from Johann Heinrich Schmelen, the pioneer German missionary whom Kitchingman had come to replace.

Then Moffat set off on his own, but it was not plain sailing. The farmers, who offered hospitality as he passed the boundaries of the Colony made gloomy predictions as to the fate of this youthful missionary venturing into the territory of Africaner, a powerful the outlaw chief. One predicted he would be shot while another said his skin would be stripped off to make a drum and a third prophesied that his skull would become a drinking-cup.

One evening, when it was time to yoke the oxen to the wagon, Robert found that most of them had run off back towards Bysondermeid. He had no idea how to find them, so he sent two men to solicit assistance from Mr. Bartlett at Pella, while he remained behind with his goods.

"Three days," he said, "I remained with my wagon-driver on this burning plain, with scarcely a breath of wind, and what there was felt as if coming from the mouth of an oven. We had only tufts of dry grass to make a small fire or rather flame; and little was needed as we had scarcely any food to prepare. We saw no human being, not a single antelope or beast of prey made its appearance, but in the dead of night we sometimes heard the roar of the lion on the mountain. At last, when we were beginning to fear that the men had either perished or wandered, Mr. Bartlett arrived on horseback, with two men who were carrying a quantity of mutton tied to their saddles." A total epicurean delight followed, he said.

INVIGORATED IN MIND AND BODY

Fresh oxen, accustomed to deep sand, then conveyed the weary travellers to Pella, where Moffat remained for a few days. Then, “greatly invigorated in mind and body” he started out again. He came to the Orange River, where the waggon and its contents were swum over on a fragile raft of dry willow logs. It was laborious and tedious operation, as the raft had to be taken to pieces after each journey, and the separate logs conveyed back again by swimmers. Once all the goods were on the other bank Moffat was asked to step aboard the raft. Not altogether liking its appearance, and also wishing to save the men trouble, he took off his clothes, put them on the raft and plunged into the stream. The natives were afraid as he approached the middle where there was a strong current. Their most expert swimmers dived in and tried in vain to overtake him. When he emerged on the northern bank, one of them came up, out of breath and asked: "Were you born in the great sea?"

Moffat reached Africaner's kraal on January 26, 1818, and was kindly received by Ebner and there he lived for nearly six months, being scorched by the sun, drenched by the rain, exposed to the wind, and obliged often to decamp through the clouds of dust. In addition, any dog wishing for a night's lodging would force its way into his hut and often eat up his dinner, he said. A serpent was occasionally found coiled in a corner, and he had sometimes to leap up in the middle of the night, to save himself from being crushed be roving cattle. He said he lived principally upon milk and dried meat.

A STRANGE PLACE AND STRANGE PEOPLE

Shortly after Moffat's arrival, Ebner departed, leaving him entirely alone in a strange place among strange people. He undertook itinerating visits on a more extensive scale than he had previously done and for these he acquired Titus’s only horse. Previously Moffat had ridden upon a bullock with horns - a dangerous practice, because, if the bullock stumbles, the rider may be thrown forward and impaled on them.

He experienced many privations and dangers on these journeys. He wrote: "After tying my Bible and hymnbook in a blanket to the back of my saddle, and taking a good draught of milk, I started with my interpreter, who rode an ox. We had our guns, but nothing else save a pipe, some tobacco, and a tinderbox. His wardrobe displayed the same poverty as his larder. The London clothes soon went to pieces, and the knowledge of sewing and knitting, which he had so unwillingly learnt from his mother, now often stood him in good stead.

His stay in Namaqualand extended to a little over twelve months. He wrote: “I do a little work in the garden, daily and I am also doing things for the people like mending guns. I am carpenter, smith, cooper, shoemaker, miller, baker, and housekeeper—the last is the most burdensome. While house is always clean, there is a confusion among my linen."

Later on the journey to the Griqua country, he had a terrible experience. He suffered from hunger, thirst, heat, and from drinking poisoned water. When he reached Griekwastad he entered the house of local missionary, William Anderson, speechless, haggard, emaciated, and covered in perspiration, making signs that he needed water, because he could not speak.

Source: David J Deane - Robert Moffat - The Missionary Hero of Kuruman.

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LONG WALK WITH NEWS FROM HOME

There is a story of two young African men who were asked by Reverend Robert Moffat’s wife, Mary, in 1859 to take a letter to their son John Smith Moffat, who lived in Matabeleland. These young men set off from Kuruman and walked steadily to Bulawayo, once there they rested for two weeks before setting out on the return journey with a reply. This was a round trip of almost 3 000 km and through some pretty wild country. However, in those early day’s letters took a long time to get anywhere. They had to be taken from mission stations, farms and settlements to central postal points and from there travelled further by post cart or mail coach until they got to Cape Town. From there the mail steamers took about 42 days to reach England. Once there they were sorted and carried again by coach, cart or post riders to different destinations.

AN AVID CORRESPONDENT

John, who was born in 1835, was the Moffat's eighth child and fourth son. He married Emily Unwin in 1858. He was an independent missionary engaged by David Livingstone, later became an LMS missionary, and later in 1881 was appointed Native Commissioner at Zeerust. After that he became the British Resident in Matabeleland and later still, in 1890, was employed by the British South Africa Company (Rhodes's Chartered Company).

Emily was an avid correspondent. She wrote frequently to her father, Jonah Stephen Unwin, a tea merchant in Brighton. She attempted to write a journal and actually made four attempts at this, but each endeavour broke down under the stress of work and ill health. Her father frequently transcribe her letters, along with a few from her husband, into exercise books, and circulated these among his friends. Selections from Emily Moffat's Journals were printed in Nos. 1168, 1169 and 1170 editions of *Sunday at Home* in 1876.

STATION WAS OFTEN ABANDONED

The tenure of the London Missionary Society (LMS) at Pella was intermittent. The mission station was abandoned on numerous occasions, largely because of the extremely harsh desert conditions. The station was, however, once abandoned after one of the priests was murdered. In 1824 the explorer George Thompson arrived in a distressed state at Pella in 1824. His party had run out of food and water, but he found the mission deserted. Bartlett, the resident missionary, had moved the station to t'Kams, 32 kilometres away. Hearin his Thompson struggled on and received help.

Thompson reported that when the full congregation was collected at Pella, they amounted to about 400 souls; but the severe droughts, and consequent failure of pasturage, often forced them occasionally to disperse to wherever they could find water and grass for their flocks. As soon as rain fell the pastures at Pella instantly sprang up and the scattered people reassembled, he said.

In 1855 a surveyor named Moffat (not to be confused with Robert Moffatt's clan) reported finding a Frenchman named Francois Gabriel, who was married to a Baster woman, living in the abandoned mission buildings. The geologist, Edward John Dunn, found Pella abandoned again in September 1871. He reported the charred remains of fires and the bleaching bones around the oasis. These were from the cattle raided by the San from the Hantam.

INSPIRED BY THE SAN

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Dr Johannes Strauss, a lecturer in history, education and professional studies at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Wellington, began a research programme after being was inspired by the early people of the Gordonia Area. Soon after he started teaching in Namaqualand and the Northern Cape. There the area inspired him to research the history of the Khoi, San and Korhanna people of this region and, because teaching was his passion, he included some of this research in his everyday lesson material.

Aware that most learners were reluctant to study "a boring old subject such as history, so he decided to use cartoons to encourage an interest. He furthered their fascination by encouraging his pupils to investigate their own family histories and write essays on their research. The end-of-year exams proved the value of this project as his classes achieved a 100% pass. Dr Strauss enjoys assisting and guiding students and genealogical researchers. He shared some details of his research during an address to the Western Cape Genealogical Society on June 10. More from straussj@cput.ac.za.

NOTE: *Gordonia borders on South-West Africa and Botswana. It is crossed from east to west by the Orange River, whose banks and islands are farmed under irrigation along the 225-km stretch from the Boegoeberg Dam to the Augrabies Falls, and from north to south by the Molopo, which joins the Orange River north of Augrabies.*

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All who wander are not lost – J R R Tolken