

A Brief History of Colesberg
with reference to
the Arnots and their family home, now The Barracks

Much of the contents of this brief and specific history of Colesberg comes from the excellent book “The Microcosm” written by Dr. Thelma Gutsche and published by Howard Timmins in 1968. Millions of years ago, the present landmark of Colesberg – Coleskop (originally known as Toverberg and Toorenberg) - was level with the surrounding landscape. Floods and gales gradually wore away the surrounding areas so that, today, Coleskop stands proud and can be seen from great distances as travelers approach.

The earliest inhabitants were the Bushmen (Khoisan) followed by the Hottentots and later by the Ama-Xhosa moving down the eastern seaboard to escape the dangers from the marauding Zulus. From the south-west came the Griquas – a race born out of the inter-breeding of Hottentots with Whites and Bushmen. Whites first came to the area in the middle of the 18th Century when farmers brought their cattle over the Sneeuwbergen from the Camdeboo for winter grazing and hunting of the teeming herds of game with their long-barreled heavy muzzle-loaders. These same guns were also used in attempts to exterminate the Bushmen and Hottentots.

To the Bushmen, a gariiep was a river and they were seldom far from water, albeit a spring such as was found in Colesberg. The rivers in the vicinity – now known as the Zeekoerivier, Van der Walt’s Rivier and Oorlogspoortrivier - provided, besides the precious water, food in the form of mussels, fish and hippos. However, with the hunting equipment available to them, the numerous species of game that roamed the plains provided a much easier supply of meat than the dangerous hippos. Funnel shaped traps made from grass and thin reeds were used to catch fish whilst the mussels were fairly easy to harvest. The larger rivers in the area were the Nu-Gariep (Orange River) and the Ky-Gariep (Vaal River) and the area of Colesberg was known as the Cis-Gariep whilst the land to the North of the Nu-Gariep was known as the Trans-Gariep.

In October 1778 a cavalcade of horsemen, kitted out in uniforms and the plumed hats of the Dutch Dragoons and led by Captain Robert Jacob Gordon (who had visited the area the previous year), proceeded along the Seekoerivier ahead of an imposing coach conveying the Governor of the Cape Colony, Baron van Plettenberg, with a number of ox-wagons bearing supplies behind. Captain Gordon, whilst being a Scot, was fiercely loyal to the House of Orange. He had reached the Nu-Gariep near Bethulie the previous year but, apparently worried that the Governor might wish that the great river be named after him and not the Royal House of Orange, decided not to proceed that far north and they outspanned near the present town of Colesberg on land that is now on the farm Quaggasfontein. The Governor ordered that a flat rock be fetched and this was

chiselled with his coat-of-arms and inscribed with the date of 1778. This stone was erected as a memorial to record the northernmost point of his journey. This memorial stone was later to be used as a beacon signifying the northern boundary of the Cape Colony but, over time, the local Bushmen and Hottentots desecrated the stone and it was subsequently moved to the National Museum in Cape Town.

Toward the end of 1814 Erasmus Smit, then aged 36, and his young wife together with ten Hottentot servants arrived at the Toornberg (Mountain of Wrath) from Graaff Reinet to start a mission station on behalf of the LMS (London Missionary Society) who called the mission Grace Hill or Genadeberg. The intention was to evangelise and demonstrate the benefits of industry on the land to the local Bushmen and despite considerable effort and bribes of tobacco and food, they failed miserably and after being threatened with their lives, were forced to abandon the mission in January 1815. Smit, accompanied by a Negro missionary, William Forglar Corner who had trained in Scotland, returned in the winter of 1815. The Bushmen appeared to have had a change of heart during the intervening six months and (possibly due to the cold weather and the hope of gifts) greeted the missionaries with surprise and pleasure. The mission attracted a number of Bushmen (reports vary between 500 and 1,600) and pressure mounted as a result of the ranchers losing their labour. In March 1817 the Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, ordered the closure of the station but permitted Smit and Corner to become travelling missionaries within the Colony. Corner returned to Bethelsdorp but was dismissed by the LMS under a cloud in 1821. Smit was dismissed in 1822 and became a school teacher. Subsequently he joined his brother-in-law, Gerrit Maritz, in the Great Trek. At the end of 1817 two hundred Scottish artisans landed at the Cape under indenture to Benjamin Moodie. Those who were to influence the history of the Colesberg area were David Arnot, a blacksmith from Cupar in Fifeshire and the Norvals – Archibald, William and John (together with his son). David Arnot worked for Frederick Korsten, a Hollander who started an industrial empire at Cradock Place near the Bethelsdorp Mission outside Uitenhage (which was the only village in the Eastern Cape). Korsten's empire consisted of a tannery, a cooperage, a sawmill and other ventures whilst at the coast he had a whale fishery, a fish-curing factory and several ships. David Arnot befriended the missionary Barker who was endeavouring to teach industry to his charges including metal-work at a smithy operated by John Bartlett, a fellow Moodie Settler. For companionship, Arnot became attached to a baptised Hottentot, Kaatje der Jeugd (also known as Catherine van Wyk). In May 1819 David Arnot applied for permission to marry her and Lord Charles Somerset agreed subject to the approval of Benjamin Moodie under whom Arnot was still indentured. Moodie had no objection and the marriage took place on the 2nd October 1819 in Uitenhage.

In June 1821 a boy was born and named after his father. He was destined to transform the Trans-Gariep and influence the whole of South African history. In 1823 a daughter, Minnie Lucy, was born and two years later another boy, James Cornelius, was delivered. Within a few weeks of Arnot arriving with the Moodie Settlers, Henry Somerset, aged 24, the eldest son of the Governor arrived at the Cape with his wife Frances Sarah Heathcote, the daughter of Sir Henry Heathcote of Hurseley – Admiral of the Blue. Some 50 years later, Arnot's granddaughter, the

daughter of his eldest son David, Helena Amelia Arnot married the son of Henry Somerset – Fitzroy McLean Henry Somerset – in Colesberg thus mixing the blood of Plantagent, Hottentot, Heathcote and Arnot. David Arnot in his smithy at Uitenhage where he had independently established himself, had once been ruined and had gone insolvent in 1827. Now he was ruined again. In March 1833 he had married a second time, his new wife being the widow Mary Nelson, née Turvey, her father having led the 1820 Settler party of that name. Things had looked well for them when Arnot received the blacksmithing work for the bergher Commandos but no payment had been made. Without money, he could not pay the transfer dues on a building he had bought in Uitenhage for smithy and shop purposes, and was fined for defection. If the Army had settled his account, he would not have been fined and he pleaded for both payment and remission. Life went hardly for him and there seemed no future for his 14-year old son, still at Mr. Rose-Innes' Academy (in Uitenhage where his fellow pupils included, amongst others, Charles Henry Somerset, James Murray and William Guybon Atherstone who landed as a 5-year old with his Settler family). Unlike many of his eastern frontier friends and their colleagues on the northern border, Arnot decided against migration.

As much as they prospered in trade by the great exodus from the Cape Colony and the needs of the trekkers Trans-Oranje, others suffered. The merchants and tradesmen of the Eastern Cape lost hundreds of customers. David Arnot in Uitenhage hovered again on the edge of insolvency. He now had the extra expense of his son's further education as a Governor's free scholar at the newly founded South African College in Cape Town. In September 1836, Sir Benjamin D'Urban had nominated young David as one of the five boys whom the Governor could annually send to College and during 1837 and 1838, David Arnot Junior attended classes far from home in the company of James Rose-Innes (son of his former schoolmaster), Johannes Henricus Brand (later an advocate known as "firebrand" and destined for the highest office in the Trans-Gariep), Jan H. Hofmeyer (father of Onze Jan), the Marquard brothers and other subsequently eminent citizens. He was a bright boy, greatly interested in natural history, and took full advantage of his opportunity but fortune did not similarly smile on his father. Soon after his son's return to Uitenhage, David Arnot was finally bankrupted. By 1841, he had come to the Toverberg where business boomed. In 1841 the first Circuit Judge came to Colesberg. He was an unprepossessing little man in the image of an English country gentleman whose stocky appearance gave only the slightest credence to the scurrilous statement published 50 years later and republished since, that the young David Arnot "was a mulatto reputed to be an illegitimate son of a former Chief Justice named William Menzies by a sable dam". David Arnot was born in 1821 and William Menzies came to the Cape from Scotland only in 1827.

The Judge whose circuit had previously ended in Graaff Reinet, was a most distinguished jurist famed among his fellows for elucidating Colonial law. In Court, he was the terror of the Hottentots who knew him as "die kwaai ouw met die rooi bakkies wat hulle zeg Menzies – hij geef ons twee jaren in de bandiet" whereas his colleagues routinely meted out "Six Months Hard Labour". He was fair but irascible and spoke with a heavy Scots accent. A man of intense integrity and character, he was ruled by his conscience and by an individualistic concept of

justice. He came to administer the law in Colesberg and in due course, to make history shortly before his corpse was laid in its graveyard. The drunken Hottentots Hottentots in the dorp and not a few roistering whites constantly disrupted the peace and there was still no “goal” to confine them. Difficulties and frustrations reflected in lengthy correspondence with his Graham’s Town headquarters beset the harassed Rawstone but in 1842, the building of the Goal was at last begun by a Settler son, Wentworth. Timmerman Waldek, now in trade, later supplied the doors and David Arnot (Snr) was paid 15/- and L. Rouvière 16/- for fitting iron bars to the windows and doors. The gallows were erected by Mr. Holmes in 1843.

The “mechanics” were many – saddlers, harness-makers, carpenters, farriers, masons, journeymen generally – so that it was now possible to build fine houses. There was only one blacksmith, David Arnot, whose wife Mary was an original 1820 Settler whose artist-father Edward Turvey made notable journeys through unknown Africa. The widow of George Nelson with two children, Mrs. Arnot produced three sons and a daughter in Uitenhage and Colesberg, half-brothers and sister to the swarthy stocky David, her husband’s eldest child, then 24. Young David was musical and intellectual and had no part in the smithy, establishing himself in 1845 as a General Agent with an office in Colesberg. His father’s forge was indispensable to the Toverberg people and to the ceaseless traffic to the hinterland. David Arnot mended wagons and guns and contrived the odd ironmongery required by the ranchers for their various purposes. In bars and hinges, bolts and locks, he had his part in the new buildings in Colesberg. Holle Rivier, adjoining the gigantic Colesberg commonage to the east (beyond the present railway line) now belonged to the Norfolk Englishman John Grimmer who had married Ellen Gibbon, Edward’s sister. Their daughter, Anne Grimmer, in 1845 married young David Arnot and set about producing a brood of twelve children. Dark intelligent David Arnot, personable despite his stocky stature, was a devoted husband and father whose enormous preoccupations as a General Agent never prevented his promoting the welfare of his family. The Grimmers and Arnots with a Plantagenet for good measure drew together in one of the great dramas of South African history. At the time of David’s marriage, there was born to Rawstone in Colesberg a second son whom he christened by his own name, Fleetwood. With a Colesberg Hottentot, the drunken Damon then a little boy attached to the Rawstone household, Fleetwood was to precipitate David’s drama.

In 1848, Thomas Baines, the great chronicler and painter, wrote: “...the blacksmith’s forge was in full activity, the glittering sparks flying from the metal and the anvil ringing merrily till long after dark .” David Arnot was an industrious man. Roualeyn Gordon Cumming (the well-known hunter and trader) always had his wagons repaired by him. David Arnot Junior having established himself in Colesberg as a General Agent or one who transacted all kinds of business for his clients, including appearing for them in Court. He was neither a lawyer nor a Law Agent nor, as he sometimes repined, did he have a University education. He was however an ardent student and read omnivorously, having a particular interest in the natural sciences. Known all his life as “clever”, he was most eloquently and easily spoken. He was also famous for writing a beautiful italic hand suitable for engrossing official documents. His efficiency and organisational

ability became a bye-word in Colesberg where no new enterprise was started without his having an active hand in it. At this time, with the beginnings of a large family, he was making his way in very varied business. David Livingston (as he then spelt his name) naturally placed his affairs in his hands and his circle of friends grew steadily. He forwarded all letters and communications from missionaries and others in the interior where there were no postal facilities whatever. Any passing trader's wagon was used to take mail to Colesberg and, there being no postage stamps, coins were sometimes sewn to the letters (there were no envelopes – sheets were simply folded and sealed). At Colesberg, Arnot paid 8d a sheet for Livingston's letters to travel to Cape Town and thence to England. Swarthy and with noticeable kroes-haar, he was known to everybody for reliability and integrity. Moving in the best circles, he became a dorp institution. People forgot that he was a blacksmith's son. Even if they remembered, it brought him no discredit – David Arnot the elder was much esteemed as a God-fearing man devoted to uplifting his fellows of all races, a trait he had communicated to his son. In 1851 David Arnot Senior purchased two erven in D'Urban Row from the Dutch Reformed Church and set about building a home which is now "The Barracks". The original building was the present family unit but with his large brood of children, the main house was built immediately thereafter.

In the great heat of 1852 accompanied by locusts, a fever like typhus afflicted the whole district. All races suffered and many died. David Arnot Senior buried two daughters, Mary Louisa and Emily Ellen aged 15 and 10. In December 1853, concerned with Orpen and Rawstorne at the degradation of the Hottentots were David Arnot, father and son. David Junior transacted his infinitely varied affairs in the dorp, throughout the district of which he knew every inch (he spoke Dutch as well as the Boere themselves) and in Bloem Fontein, himself providing an example of moral rectitude. He was in addition an extremely ambitious man, desiring advancement not only for himself (his cultural and scientific interests were entirely genuine and brought him no profit) but also for his family. His wife, Anne Grimmer, presented him with six daughters before she had a son. Although in Victorian times, girls were held of little account, Arnot was determined to obtain the best possible education for his eldest daughter Ellen Amelia and sent her in 1853, at the age of five, to Miss Wilmot's Select School for Ladies at Wynberg at the Cape. She went by ox-wagon taking many weeks, stayed for five years, returned to Colesberg for a three-month holiday and then journeyed to the Cape again for another six years to complete her education. The little girl hardly knew her family and finally came back to Colesberg in 1864 as an accomplished musician and teacher. In 1852, Arnot welcomed as a brother-in-law Thomas Draper who married Mary Grimmer. Now a prestigious partner in Heugh & Fleming, Thomas established a household in Van Ryneveld Street in Colesberg and bought property. He built a country house at Palmietfontein and entertained liberally, being renowned for his hospitality, jovial disposition and predilection for practical jokes. Draper Senior had moved from the Cape Botanical Gardens to Graham's Town and in 1854, sent his 5-year old son David to his half-brother Thomas to be educated, possible at the new Government School that had been built but unsatisfactorily staffed. David did not like school and suffered it only shortly. Education remained a constant problem and most dorp parents sent their children to Graham's Town, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town (twenty years later, the future Lady Phillips was sent by her father Albert Ortlepp to Miss Wilmot's school). The affairs of Kok and his Griquas across the river had always been of close concern to Colesberg, which they frequently visited. Kok was an intelligent

man and in his visits to the dorp, dealt increasingly with David Arnot who transacted many of his affairs. Arnot was alleged to have special feelings for the Griquas and was later darkly described as having more than an affinity. He had no aversion to undertaking also the business of Nicholaas Waterboer and his tribe whose lands ran along both sides of the Vaal. From about 1856 onwards, Arnot was increasingly involved in the affairs of Waterboer and his Griquas, riding frequently to their country and in 1859 becoming a Justice of the Peace at its nearest centre in the Colony, Hopetown as well as at Colesberg. His office in the dorp became a clearing-house for matters far beyond the local range.

The Trans-Gariep migrants had from the outset attempted to obtain land by barter and purchase. Early in 1858 expansion in the east was blocked by Moshesh and they turned to the west where desirable ranching country was owned by the Griquas. Adam Kok threw in his hand and prepared to leave, negotiating the sale of his country through his agent Henry Harvey. Nicholaas Waterboer and his colleague to the north, Cornelis Kok, had refused to make their land available for sale. Pressure and the fear of being over-run continually haunted the Griquas. Waterboer consulted David Arnot. Exhibiting the cleverness for which he became notable, Arnot moved to reactivate the treaty made by Sir Benjamin D'Urban with Waterboer's father in 1834. He dealt with the Governor, Sir George Grey and succeeded in having the treaty's recognition of the Griquas territorial rights reaffirmed in 1859. A bloc against Free State expansion was now established in the west. It was to have worldwide repercussions. Arnot alleged that he was rewarded for this transaction by the grant of an enormous tract of land by Waterboer comprising 37 "farms" and known as "The Reserve" and later "The Southern Reserve". Colesberg was rewarded by an enormous increase in gun-running and gunpowder-supplying, the Griquas having little faith in the white man's integrity. Legend has it that the cavernous town spruit was used to conceal the contraband rifles. When David Arnot the elder died in 1859, some of the guns left with him for repair and advertised by his executors (his wife and Thomas Draper) had been brought in by natives of various tribes. The most active individual in the dorp at the time was David Arnot. In all public matters, he was the operative agent. When the barrier to trade and communication which the flooded Orange River annually became, goaded both Cis- and Trans-Gariep people into action, it was David Arnot who formed the stock company to provide the funds to build a bridge and in 1858, sent the plans and documents to the Cape Government which pigeonholed the. (The plan of the bridge had been designed by his friend Frank Orpen.) The number of organisations of which Arnot was secretary was legion.

His affairs with the Griquas on both sides of the Vaal sometimes took him away and during the long journeys on his spider or on horseback, he pursued his personal interests. They were mainly botanical. He had reason also to heed the behests of the Governor, Sir George Grey who in February 1858, had issued a Notice requesting contributions of plants from remote areas to assist William Harvey in preparing his *Flora Capensis*. Specimens were to be sent to Sir William Hooker, Director of the Royal Gardens at Kew. For the whole of 1859, David Arnot diligently collected aloes, euphorbias, stapelias, mesembryanthemums, cotyledons, bulbs and other indigenous plants. His attention may have been drawn to the matter by the Colonial Geologist,

Andrew Wyley who, on a tour of the Colony in 1858, travelled southwards from Hopetown through Colesberg to Port Elizabeth collecting for Harvey on the way. It is more than possible that Wyley met and inspired Arnot who in his turn directed him to the interesting points of the district such as Valschfontein where he was fascinated by the Bushman paintings in caves (depicting their battles with the “Kaffirs” and commandos of “Boers”) and Rietkuyl where old Cobus Pienaar and others “stiffly asserted that the unicorn was to be seen” in paintings which they failed to find. At Poortjie, now owned by Piet Pienaar, he found more paintings of Boers on horseback with guns and hardly wondered that the Oorlogspoortrivier was “so called from the frequent fights with Bushmen”. Wyley went on and Arnot continued his collecting while at the same time organising Colesberg’s most ambitious venture – an Agricultural Show. Led by Ludwig von Maltitz, an Agricultural and Horticultural Society had been formed on which he was the unpaid secretary and Adolph Ortlepp the treasurer. His knowledge of Colonial affairs enabled him to obtain for it a subvention of £100 from the far-seeing Governor, the great and good Sir George Grey. Before the pioneering Show could be held, the district was swept by smallpox. The epidemic continued for many months and killed 150 Hottentots in the dorp alone. The Bushmen were almost exterminated. Panic seized the people and when the advocate A.W. Cole came riding in his Cape cart through the Hantam in 1859 to attend the resumed Circuit Court at Colesberg, none of the famously-hospitable ranchers would let him or his wife in to spend the night. Fear of infection haunted the whole district and they had to break their way into a homestead to find its cowering owners. A combined service of Thanksgiving at the conclusion of the epidemic was not held until January 1861.

Before the business of the Show swept him off his feet in March 1860, Arnot wrote to Sir William Hooker telling him of the despatch via his London agents, Messrs. Sinclair Hamilton, of a case of 45 rare plants. He was, he said, “willing to do what I can do in so laudable an undertaking and the only recompense I expect from a great deal of trouble that I have been at in collecting these plants is to receive a catalogue of them in return and so gain further information on the beautiful subject of Botany. I have been a Government student at the South African College in Cape Town and whilst there, I had but little opportunity of attaining much information on the subject.” Thus began an association with Kew and its directors which indelibly inscribed Arnot’s name in the annals of Botany and contributed to Colesberg some of its more remarkable vegetation. Despite its difficulties, the First Colesberg Agricultural Show in 1860 was sufficiently successful to encourage its sponsors to continue and Arnot's office, soon removed to 149 Church Street next to James Murray’s store and opposite the English Church, hummed with varied affairs. Apart from his general agency business, he had been appointed secretary and official appraiser of the Divisional Council and worked so hard to set its affairs in order that an extra £15 was voted him. He joined the Ortlepps in musical performances, took part in politics, was secretary / treasurer of the Turf Club and was active in every sphere of dorp life. As a Justice of the Peace and a considerable property owner, he was a man of standing but times were hard and with his increasing family, he sought the security of Civil Service employment, applying directly to Sir George Grey for an appointment in the new British Kaffraria for which the routine examinations would not be necessary. Sir George replied kindly but Arnot’s need was dire and he wrote to the Colonial Secretary, Richard Southey, appealing to him as a family man to help. After 15 years, he said, his wife had begun to suffer from the Karroo's desiccation and he wished

to take her and his seven daughters to the coast. Even a minor appointment would do as he had a small income. There were hundreds in the same position. Excluded from regular remuneration adequate to supporting his tribe of girls, Arnot trafficked in farms and stock, buying lands and leasing flocks to farmers. He owned the farms Klipkop (bought from Frank Orpen) and Beestekraal, four erven in Colesberg and one in Cradock, and sheep, oxen and draught horses. As economic conditions deteriorated, his transactions became increasingly complicated. The absorbing issue of the moment was "Separation". Arnot was secretary of the Separation League, which supported the proposal to divide the country into eastern and western portions, each with its own Provincial Parliament. The subject was debated with great passion and local feelings ran high. Arnot himself was most vociferous at Colesberg gatherings and, at public meetings addressed by Port Elizabeth speakers, James Murray, Adolph Ortlepp, C.J. Kemper and other worthies supported him.

The dorp was now well supplied with educated and sophisticated men. The lawyers John R. Will and George Edington had joined the notary Dirk Sluiter. To the storekeepers had been added C.W. Mathews. John Shepherd of Aberdeen, Scotland, trained as a commercial clerk in a linen factory, came to Colesberg in 1860 and soon opened an "Academy" which he soon abandoned for trade. Charles F. Roos had also opened a store. There were several tailors, sail-makers and a boot and shoe maker, James McNally. A one-eyed English sailor, Joseph Bond had opened the Masonic Hotel and was followed by W.R. Bryant with the Sir George Grey Hotel. Neither were much more than grog shops but both were capable of staging the ceremonial dinners required by the dorp's proliferating public activities. David Arnot who had taken his family to the Kowie, returned (in December 1860) in time to take a determining part in the final discussions regarding the opening a Bank. (He was now in cordial correspondence with Hooker and constantly sending plants and seed-pods. He had sent his brother-in-law William Grimmer who was studying medicine in Edinbergh, a letter of introduction to Sir William and asked that Grimmer be shown over Kew so that he could tell Arnot of its wonders when he came to Colesberg to practice. Arnot's avidity for intellectual exercise had been indulged in Graham's Town where he had met "my old schoolfellow Dr. Guybon Atherstone – a noble fellow, such a fine public-spirited character" and other public figures with whom he was soon to deal.) A public meeting of bank proponents was finally held on 28 December 1860 and on young Bedford's proposal, seconded by Arnot, an action committee was elected consisting of the Honourable L. von Maltitz, the Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate Henry Green, James Murray, Adolph Ortlepp, Thomas Draper. R.A. (Dick) Green (a general agent and auctioneer), the merchant C.W. Mathews and one or two others. The Bank opened for business on 1 July 1861 in hired premises, having ordered bank notes to be printed in various denominations including the rare £4 (which arrived from England in January 1862 signed by Henry Green and appropriately featuring a horse, a foal, a sheep and agricultural implements) and set in train the building of a splendid Bank, now part of the Kemper Museum. Colesberg (whose example was copied in several other dorps) rejoiced in its Bank for only a short time. By June 1863, it had amalgamated with the Standard Bank, then pursuing a policy of absorption of the mushroom growth, and its board of directors became the board of the Standard Bank's Colesberg Branch.

The excitement of the race course (where only three or four horses at a time ran races in heats) were prodigious not only to the Hottentots who got drunk, but to the local inhabitants who in various carriages, curricles, carts, spiders, phaetons and other vehicles raced each other there and back – a local custom also followed at sales on farms – with frequent spills. It is recorded that a concert staged in 1861 by the Colesberg Amateur Musical Society of which Adolph Ortlepp was chairman and Arnot organising secretary, “was disappointing all as the performers had spent the whole day at the races”. Henry Green did his best to help Arnot make a success of the Second Agricultural Show held in March 1861. The ranchers, Dopper and otherwise, took kindly to it and flocked to town with “teams of noble horses accomplishing the Bolander’s draai to perfection” amid screams from a native population now so miscellaneous as to include Fingos, Basutos (who came to shear the sheep), Bushmen, Bastards and Hottentots. Arnot, entirely without fee, did the work of twenty men and was rewarded by the enthusiasm of his English and Africander rancher friends. The success of the Show also impressed the wholesalers at Port Elizabeth, who, collecting among themselves, sent Arnot a cheque for £80 to buy cups. The quality of Toverberg wool and meat was of major importance to them. The happy hopefulness of the early sixties was best reflected in the appearance of the dorp’s first newspaper – the Colesberg Advertiser and Northern Frontier Gazette – which appeared weekly from 1 January 1861 onwards. One of the very best of its kind, the Advertiser was launched by William Shaw Giddy, third son of the Wesleyan minister, the Rev. R.W. Giddy who frequently ministered in Colesberg and whose two elder sons, Orlando and Richard Henry would, within a decade, help to change its character. Willie ran a small shop as a Printer, Bookseller and Stationer but the Advertiser was his main concern and with the almost universal assistance of the community in paid advertising, he made an immediate success of it. One sheet at least was always printed in Dutch and its general tone was lively and informative even if its news was sometimes a little late. In February 1862 for instance, the whole paper came out with a deep black border for the death of Prince Albert on the 15th December 1861. Like most of the young men of his day, Giddy was variously accomplished. He was a dead shot and had a good bass voice. As a member of the local Musical Society, he sang with all the Ortlepp daughters (old Adolph played the violin), the widowed Mrs. Wilman, Miss Roos and others in duets and glees. When she returned from school at the Cape, Ellen Amelia Arnot accompanied them and sometimes sang herself. All the large stores in the dorp now sold pianos, cottages and uprights. Giddy printed the programmes of the concerts whose proceeds were devoted to public causes such as the provision of a Town Clock. The indefatigable Arnot organised them. One of Giddy’s first advertisements was for C.F. Roos’ new Pont below Botha’s Drift which, entering into competition with Norval higher up, promised free outspanning on both sides of the river. Dubbed “Adelaide Roos”, it was launched by the merchant Mosenthal of Port Elizabeth on 1 January 1861 at a large picnic given by the proprietor. In those happy days, there was water in the Orange River. Roos hoped to profit by the steady traffic to the Free State and a new influx of ranchers to occupy Kok’s territory and the growing dorp of Philippolis, now a suburb of Colesberg.

Kok had sold his land to the Free State Government for £4,000 and the missionary W. Phillips led the Griquas away to occupy what was long called “No-Man’s Land” given them by the British and later called Griqualand East. On his way to Colesberg in December 1861 to get permits to buy powder and lead for his people through the agency of David Arnot, Kok lost all of

his papers. For some time, Arnot kept in touch with an old and valued client. He was beginning now to be concerned about Waterboer whose lands lay in the path of the new drive westwards. William Grimmer at last came back with his Scots bride Jane Paterson and set up a practice in the dorp. His brother-in-law David Arnot became a Municipal Commissioner and tried to rouse the drought-stricken ranchers into supporting the Show. They stood by him but their animals, even the hand-fed horses, were in bad condition. The Show was not a success but at the usual ceremonial dinner, it was proposed to give Mr. Arnot a testimonial to his distinguished services. The drought went on. Thousands of sheep died. A strong west wind brought the seeds of steekgrass, which infested their wool. The American Civil War which had begun in 1861 went on and on and reduced the overseas wool market. It came to an end only in 1865 and by then, the demand for South African wool had greatly diminished. In May 1862, the price of fine washed wool in Colesberg was 1/1 ½ d a lb. Within weeks it had fallen to 4d a lb. And was still sinking. The dorp and its district faced ruin.

Universal distress conduced to crime and there was much thieving, housebreaking and disorderliness. At a higher level, there were suspicious fires. Ortlepp's insured store and house at Philippolis went up in flames. James Murray gave up the struggle in a dead town and, retiring from his business, went to live on his ranch. Later his brother George opened a store. Others tried new avenues. Giddy became a licensed auctioneer. The whole community was faced with bankruptcy. David Arnot resigned from every office that he held. Everyone knew that in common with the leading figures of the town, he was going insolvent. The Musical Society gave a farewell concert for him "owing to his impending departure". There was much unpleasantness because in his poverty and with a large family to support, he claimed £8.9.0d representing £6.15.0d spent on chairs and candles plus interest since 1861 when the Society was founded. Adolph Ortlepp offered to pay from his own pocket but the Society finally agreed. Ortlepp, doyen of the merchants, was going down too. In January 1863, he offered the whole of his property for sale or for hire owing to "the necessity of changing his residence in consequence of ill health". His was the best site in Colesberg – in Church Street facing the Market Square. One after the other, the dorp's storekeepers and tradesmen became insolvent. Most of the farmers were already bankrupt. In the middle of adversity and with typical British insouciance, Arnot's brother-in-law William Grimmer decided to revive the spirits of the depressed and listless community by organising a Cricket Club. The heat and dust were insufferable but with time on their hands and in no way deterred, the young men of the dorp went out for about a mile south west in the scorched veld and denuded still further a large enough space. There were Plewman, Rawstorne, Maeder (sons of a French missionary in Basutoland), Ortlepp and other boys including Braham Kisch's ne'er-do-well son Tiberius Benjamin, and Fred Paxton as well as several married men – Grimmer himself, Lorenzo Boyes, the fated Dr. Wilman, W.S. Giddy and the exceptionally enthusiastic Julius Ortlepp. They cleared a "field", prepared a dusty "pitch", appointed umpires and erected awnings to shelter their lady friends who duly appeared "in fashionable gowns"...The first cricket match was played in November 1862.

In the grim years that followed, there was little to distract the Toverbergers from the overwhelming desolation afflicting the entire country. The dreadful droughts were broken by ruinous rains flooding the rivers and swelling the town spruit to a mighty torrent which swept through the houses and stores, destroying property of every kind. The Orange River pons were swept away or wrecked high above the normal water level and the drifts remained impassable for weeks on end with wagons and carts accumulating on either side and the townspeople coming to see 'the grand sight' of the river in full flood. Even the Zeekoerivier ran so deep that Green could not cross to hold his periodic court at Hanover and the Cape mail would have been stranded on the bank had not an ingenious arrangement of baskets and pulleys hauled it across to the waiting Colesberg post cart.... Inevitably the locusts came, sometimes in swarms five miles long, and after the locusts, Bushman depredations and stock thefts. Ranchers lost thousand of animals and N.J. Theunissen alone reported the theft of 430 sheep from Oorlogspoort within ten months in numbers ranging from 8 to 64 at a time. The insolvencies continued and carried no stigma, the very men appointed to administer insolvent estates themselves going bankrupt without loss of social or commercial face. R.A. (Dicks) Green was even nominated for the Legislative Council in the middle of his financial tribulations. The dispirited ennui of the dorp was providentially and regularly interrupted. Every quarter a watcher went out to warn of the arrival of the Circuit Court and, riding furiously back to streets already decorated and shops and offices closed, signaled the start of the waiting procession of carts and horsemen led by the magistrate, the attorneys and law agents including David Arnot J.P. in their spiders and phaetons and the leading citizens of the district which immediately set out to welcome the visiting Judge with traditional feu de joie, trumpet blasts, cheers and other welcoming noises. The hectic happiness of isolated events including the Races which Harry Green enthusiastically supported, could not conceal the district's slow decline into total bankruptcy. Its best barometer was the Annual Show, now held without the guiding hand of David Arnot. Thomas Bedford Junior had taken his place as secretary while Arnot, assiduously available for all enquiry, watched the dissolution of his life and home. His traffickings in stock and property and his debt to the dorp's merchants rendered him insolvent in an amount of £20,000, an unprecedented sum far surpassing the most dramatic bankruptcies of the day. He owed Frank Orpen £2,269 for the farm Klipkop, the Griqua Government £922, the merchant C.W. Mathews nearly £3,000 and varying sums to more than 30 creditors. No one held him in disrepute but of his extensive possessions, he was left with one wardrobe, music and books, two pictures, a portable clock, an old silver watch and an antique single-barreled fowling piece. The official trustee, Dick Green (soon to go insolvent himself) suggested an allowance of £50 to keep Arnot afloat and put all his properties on sale, his creditors realising that in depressed times, they would lose heavily. Similar farms and stock were then being sold for the proverbial song. Frank Orpen took Klipkop back and Beestekraal which Arnot had bought for £3,000 in 1860, was withdrawn at £1,700 at the sale. Money was so scarce that his Colesberg erven went for farcical sums. No one was in a position to speculate and the Free State being in worse straits, a wholesale emigration to the Trans-Vaal was mooted. The fourth Agricultural Show was nonetheless held in March 1863 and despite a savage drought, the Hantam horses were a fine sight. N.H. Theunissen won silver cups for the best imported ram and the best imported Friesland bull but, like other trophy winners, in name only. A new Governor, Sir Philip Wodehouse, had increased the Society's grant from £100 to £150 but it still lacked the funds to send to England for its advertised prizes. At the Show Dinner, the president Ludwig von Maltitz proposed the health of the former secretary and Arnot (still secretary/treasurer of the Turf Club) thanked the company for the honour shown him.

He had lost little stature and continued to be elected chairman of political and other meetings. Within weeks, he had resumed all his previous offices and more. In his extremity, he had seen in the menace to Waterboer and his Griquas by the land-hungry Free State ranchers an opportunity both to rehabilitate himself and to provide for his huge family. He still owned the vast arid area given to him by Waterboer beyond the Orange outside the Colony which he occasionally visited, staying at the principal "farm", Loskop but he maintained his base in Colesberg. During his insolvency, he had convinced Waterboer and his Councilors of the necessity of investing him with the authority appropriate to combating the threatened occupation of Griqualand and in October 1863, they formally advertised his appointment as their Secretary, Agent and Representative with an office in Colesberg, the Advertiser being their official means of communicating notices. The Free State, Transvaal and Cape Colonial Governments formally acknowledged the appointment and Arnot began to treat with them. Colesberg now became the centre of machinations that would shortly shake the world. Arnot acquired additional stature and, resuming all his previous activities, rejoined the hunt among his contemporaries for cash-producing occupations. There was no official appointment so lowly, provided it were paid, for him to hold and before long, he was Valuer and Appraiser of the Divisional Council at considerable fees and, after a stiff examination, talk (interpreter) to the Court. In the course of his widely-travelled duties, he solicited subscriptions to the Colesberg Advertiser and, typically, to Layard's pioneering *Birds of South Africa* to be sold at 7/6d a copy. He was a friend of Layard and had himself contributed to the work. It was characteristic of Arnot to set provision for his family first and natural history next. To Hooker at Kew, he continued to send specimens and to the Municipal Commissioners of Colesberg who first began planting trees in Stockenström Street in 1864, he gave every assistance in improving the dorp. It was David Arnot who obtained from Kew, Germany, Australia, the Colonial Botanist at the Cape and other sources, the seeds of many exotic trees which may still be seen in Colesberg and on distant farms.

It was largely through Arnot's exceptional efforts and his constant journeys throughout the district on valuation and other duty that the fifth Annual Show could be held in March 1864. Lack of money and confidence was beginning to strangle a country now importing far more than it was exporting. Its wool was no longer wanted on world markets and in Colesberg itself, the enterprising von Maltitz brothers were trying to compensate for it by ostrich-feather production. Ludwig had 17 birds, which he refrained from showing, but he offered a prize to the farmer with the largest number and his example stimulated the venture. After heavy rains and record floods, the Show opened in fine weather amid much local excitement and with a handful of visitors from Cradock, Hanover and the Free State. The cattle were in good condition and the Hantam horses in fine fettle. John O'Reilly, back from one of his innumerable safaris to parts as distant as Makololand, Zambesia and Lake Nyasa, won a prize for the best riding horse. Once again cups were awarded without presentation. The funds of the Society went no further than the cash prizes. In an unprecedented gesture of confidence and appreciation, David Arnot was presented with a silver tea set valued at £28. No one knew whether, on a clouded horizon, he would be able to stage the Show again. There was little to encourage optimism. Throughout the land, new marketable commodities were desperately sought to restore the economy. Overseas, no one

wanted the old and the trickle coming to the country through exports had all but stopped. Something more desirable than wool, hides and skins would have to be found. The only resources in which South Africa was really rich were ores and minerals but exploitation of Namaqualand's copper had proved a swindle and the pretty stones sent by geologists, naturalists, surveyors, farmers and excited individuals were pronounced virtually valueless. The Karroo and the Highveld abounded in them and every returning trader carried them in his pockets. Harry Fraser, R. Stonehouse, John O'Reilly and many others exhibited them in Colesberg while the ranchers hopefully collected them on their lands. Some, like James Murray and David Arnot (through his friend Layard) sent them overseas for appraisal. They were mostly beryl, topaz, quartz crystals, rubies and garnets with any amount of agate.

In the Trans-Gariep, conditions were worse and from one end of the Orange River to the other, men looked hopelessly into the future. Many of them leased or bought "farms" in Waterboer's country to the west and surveyors with a keen eye for mineral deposits, traversed the whole land. One was the son of Baron von Ludwig. He was at this time surveying the desolate area between the Vaal and its junction with the Orange in Griqualand. It was poor cattle country but rich in stones and von Ludwig not them appraisingly. Like most surveyors, he was geologically knowledgeable and found a kindred spirit in a rancher living in the area on a limestone infested place called De Kalk about 40 miles from Hopetown and bounded on its northern end by the Vaal River. An alert intelligent man of some education, Schalk van Niekerk was himself interested in "pretty stones" and welcomed von Ludwig's superior knowledge. In riding about his property, he had picked up many samples and showed them to the surveyor who, delighted by congenial company, spent his weekends at De Kalk for several months. When his work took him elsewhere, his parting gift to his host was a book on precious stones with the comment that as De Kalk seemed diamondiferous, he should be particularly watchful. Van Niekerk, later a valued member of the Divisional Council based at Hopetown, was no ordinary "boer" and kept the advice in mind, remaining alert to possible discovery.

While Arnot plotted and planned on behalf of the Griquas and pursued his multifarious occupations to maintain his family, life in the stricken dorp droned on. His brother-in-law William Grimmer was appointed District Surgeon in October 1863 and a year later, moved into Adolph Ortlepp's commanding house on the corner of the Market Square. Dr. Grimmer became almost the only person of affluence in Colesberg and participated in many of Arnot's schemes. Outright conflict with the Free State Republican Government over land ownership appeared inevitable but disorder prevailed until the new President could take office. He was Johannes Henricus Brand, an advocate of Cape Town and peppery schoolfellow of David Arnot's at S.A.C.s. He was also known to many others in the district where full honour was done him on his way to assume office at Bloemfontein in January 1864. The dorp was decorated with flags and bunting, the Municipal Commissioners presented an address of welcome and a public dinner under the chairmanship of the Civil Commissioner with Lorenzo Boyes in attendance was held at an hotel. The Toverbergers were still closely allied with their friends and relatives across the river. (Brand, later Sir John, was the son of Sir Christoffel Brand, first Speaker of the Cape House and an ardent Mason. As Deputy Grand Master of the Netherlands in Cape Town, Sir Christoffel came to Colesberg early in January 1866 to open the Northern Lodge in Campbell

Street where the leading Masons were Dick Sluiter, Thomas Bedford Junior, T.B. Kisch and W.S. Giddy. His official letter of inauguration survives in the original building.) While events in the Free State moved toward direct confrontations on both eastern and western borders, Colesberg slowly declined through its lack of commercial outlet. All kinds of loan and investment companies were floated, most with David Arnot as their secretary, and inevitably failed. Further efforts were made to induce the Government to build a bridge across the Orange River and a memorial signed by 105 leading men was sent to the Governor by Arnot as secretary of the movement; but although Sir Philip duly sought the co-operation of Brand, he was too preoccupied with rising troubles to reply. Arnot himself was never too busy to promote local affairs and devoted himself to combating drunkenness among the Hottentots, being elected to the chair of a small committee of like-minded men. They worked in an unsympathetic climate and got no further than establishing a small Savings Bank, which, they hoped, would deflect Hottentot stivers from tots to providence.

Ludwig von Maltitz died 13 February 1865 aged 42. His death sounded the knell of Colesberg. For a short time it continued momentum before dwindling into sheer disaster. The Show held on 21 March 1865, for the first time simultaneously with the Races, was not a success though 500 bales of wool were sold at the new Colesberg Wool Fair for £6,000. Ludwig's absence was deeply felt and many feared for the future of the Agricultural Society. The Sixth was in fact the last Annual Show. In November, Harry Green, titular and effective leader of the community, tried to resuscitate the Society whose secretary, David Arnot, had resigned, by calling a meeting. A handful attended. The total membership was 115 of whom 88 were townsmen, the balance consisting of 19 ranchers and their sons. Warm tribute was paid to Arnot whose business now took him largely elsewhere (particularly to Griqualand) but whose enthusiastic support would always be offered. The Society, said Green, owed its existence to his fostering care. Laurence Rawstone became the acting secretary. Insolvencies proceeded in spate and ordinary business barely survived...Professional men were hard put and almost all took to auctioneering to add to their dwindling incomes. Arnot earned where he could and derived an additional £10 from the Divisional Council for listing the town's erven.

The character of the district was changing. The later frontier wars had provoked a widespread diaspora among the Bantu settlers as the earlier had among the British. The number of "Kaffirs" in the Colesberg district had risen steeply. The Bushmen had all but disappeared except for small predatory parties and the degenerate Hottentots were diminishing. A comparison over ten years was striking:

	Whites	Hottentots	Other	Blacks	Total
1855:	5,456	4,440	577	10,483	
1865:	7,253	3,709	5,275	16,237	

David Arnot officially assessed the value for the Divisional Council at £645,987 / 7 / 6d and the dorp for the Municipal Commissioners at £80,210. It consisted now of 445 whites and 941 coloureds, commonly know as Hottentots. Its considerable shifting population was increased by the Basuto War. The figure of Arnot, now fully recovered from his insolvency, was even more familiar than the magistrate's. Henry Green was absent only on his annual leave which he habitually spent in King William's Town at the races where his horses excelled, Young Express winning the Kaffraria Derby in 1865 from Diaphantus. Lorenzo Boyes acted as Civil Commissioner in his absence. Arnot, short, swarthy and well spoken, was often away but

energetically pursued his local business, frequently advertising:

DAVID ARNOT Sworn Appraiser to the Master of the Supreme Court and Valuator to the Divisional Council Loans effected, Transfers executed, Estates administered and Agency in all its branches attended to with punctuality and despatch. Office: Ryneveld Street on the premises of and next to the Standard Bank, Colesberg

His industry was remarkable and his influence extended over most aspects of local and colonial life. One day he would be packing cases of bulbs, plants and roots for despatch to his Prussian friends, Haage and Schmidt of Erfurt who had sent him 213 varieties of flower seeds in packets for distribution in the neighbourhood. On another, he would be handing out tree seeds to the townsmen (Waldek had grown some in his garden) or to the ranchers whom he visited in his Cape cart. At one time, 37 different kinds were distributed and 40 at another. Some came from Dr. Brown, the Colonist Botanist whom Arnot had met when he lectured in Colesberg, others from Dr. Mueller, his counterpart in Australia, and some from Dr. Hooker at Kew (who reported that the euphorbias and other desert plants sent by Arnot, some of which were unknown, were flourishing). Casuarinas and acacias seemed particularly to suit Colesberg. To Arnot's office, every kind of person came. Whether they liked him or not, the dark thickset little man of open countenance with mobile mouth and lively eyes was known as exceptionally clever. The native chiefs west of the Vaal entrusted their affairs to him and he represented the Batlapin and their chief Mahura as well as the Griquas. It was early in 1866 that Waterboer agreed to Arnot's plan to protect his country from incursion of white migrants from the Free State by a bloc of British Settlers in the same way as Lord Charles had sought to contain the Xhosas by a similar bloc in 1820. The southern part was sparsely populated by tribesmen and Waterboer agreed to remove them to accommodate a number of families from the Eastern Province. In the winter of 1866 (exceptionally severe in Colesberg where great winds uplifted roofs, verandahs and trees and the thermometer stood at 10 degrees below zero at sunrise), Arnot went to Graham's Town to meet Frank Orpen and to canvass the scheme. He had persuaded Waterboer that in exchange for Orpen's support, his good offices in obtaining suitable settlers and his professional services in surveying the area, he should be appointed magistrate and Surveyor-General of the settlement. Mahura wished to make a similar arrangement to protect his territory in the north. Frank Orpen was away and, having tested the air in Graham's Town, Arnot returned to Colesberg and secured the agreement of his old friend by letter. Before the daring drama could develop (Orpen intended bolstering the scheme by engaging the support of the much-respected veteran Settler, Thomas Holden Bowker), events large and small in Colesberg altered the tenour of the future. There arrived in the district to stay with his Heathcote cousins the grandson of Lord Charles Somerset – Henry Fitzroy Maclean Somerset, son of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Somerset who had died in Gibraltar in 1862, leaving his 27-year old son a monthly allowance of £10. Fitzroy had gone from school at Sherborne to Oriel College, Oxford and thence to Magdalen where he was for four years a Choral Scholar, being, like his mother, intensely musical. He played the violin, violincello and piano and had a most melodious baritone. He had got his blue for rowing, was a good cricketer and, as befitted his family, an excellent horseman. Intended for ministry, he completed a year's study before revolting at dogma and, afflicted by rheumatism, left for the Cape well provided with letters of introduction to his family's official connections, friends and relatives. Typically of the youngest son of high-born English families, Fitzroy was expected to make a living in "the Colonies" when totally unequipped to do so. Highly trained academically

(he could set examination papers in Latin and Greek), he had neither aptitude nor temperament for daily wage-earning and disintegrated when confronted with mundane difficulty. A Plantagenet in bearing and appearance, he was tall, darkly handsome with beautiful blue eyes, graceful and exceptionally charming. The dusty dorp to which he came at the onset of winter in 1866 relieved him of his rheumatism but provided no employment. He played cricket with his Murray-Heathcote cousins in scratch teams of “farmers” occasionally assembled and came to know the people of Colesberg. One of them, drawn to him by close affinity, was David Arnot’s eldest daughter, Ellen Amelia. She was then 19 and, an outstanding soprano and performer on the piano and harp, taught music to the few children whose parents could afford it. (In April 1865, the School had been closed by the Government owing to the lack of paying parents.) Ellen Amelia with her fine figure, large violet-blue eyes, retroussé nose and nut-brown hair was considered a local belle. She spoke beautiful English as became a lady, painted in water-colours and was adept at fancy work, Fitzroy was attracted to her by their common interest in music. They were much in demand for duets and in July 1867, David Arnot permitted their marriage though his new son-in-law showed no sign of competence as a consistent wage-earner. The couple would have to rely on Ellen’s continuing her music school. Eleven other Arnot children remained to be set on their way and Fitzroy in fact merely added to their number, providing Arnot with constant concern. His mind was constantly dogged by the fear that he might die and leave his large brood destitute. There were 10 girls and 2 boys, the eldest son William Octavius Robert named for Dr. Grimmer being only 5 in 1866. Arnot then sought to provide for them by converting the lands Waterboer had given him – the Southern Reserve – into a trust empowered to lease them as farms in the name of his eldest son. The trustees were Waterboer and himself, Dr. Grimmer, Thomas Draper and Thomas John Plewman. Later developments caused Arnot to vary the terms of the trust to benefit his wife and all their children. The virtual bankruptcy of the whole Colony vexed the Home Government and the Governor, Sir Philip Wodehouse was instructed to urge it to clutch at straws. In the hope of promoting overseas trade, he formed a committee in Cape Town to secure exhibits of Colonial products for display at a gigantic International Exhibition to be held in Paris in April 1867. The secretaries were John B. Currey and Roland Trimen who had followed Layard as Curator of the South African Museum and whose *Birds of South Africa* to which Arnot had contributed specimens, was to be published in 1867. The Governor appointed Henry Green and David Arnot as Commissioners to collect local specialties. Green called a meeting on 7 August 1866 to stimulate contributions. A Karroo farmer at Richmond had already offered excellent example in submitting samples of barley, wheat, sheep and ox tallow, sheep-tail fat and oil, beeswax, ganna ash (used in making soap) and one bar of Boer soap. There was little time as the Colony’s exhibits were to be shown first in Cape Town before being shipped to Paris. (Great indignation was subsequently expressed at the Cape when it was learnt that the Exhibition judges in Paris had drunk 60 bottles of wine and eaten several large bottles of preserves constituting the South African exhibit.) Few people had a wider knowledge of the district’s natural and agricultural products than Arnot who, despite his preoccupations, set about collecting them. While Arnot’s Griqualand drama was beginning to unfold, the prologue of another approached curtain-rise. The *mise-en-scène* was the arid De Kalk whose owner Schalk van Niekerk was made the buffoon in an apocryphal story told by David Draper. A flash of lightning, said Draper, rent asunder some surface limestone, revealing a small *wederstein* or thunderbolt which van Niekerk took home, attaching no importance to it. In fact, the peculiar pebble was found in December 1866 by an impecunious bywoner Erasmus. S. Jacobs whom van Niekerk allowed to live on De Kalk. Jacobs took it to his shack where his

children played with it for two or three weeks before van Niekerk casually visited the family. Noting its curious brightness and no doubt thinking it might be a wedderstein, he offered to buy it from Jacob's wife who refused to sell such a thing and gladly gave it. The stone baffled the knowledgeable van Niekerk and when John O'Reilly, a longstanding friend and frequent visitor, came riding by on one of his trading safaris, he showed it to him, expressing the view that it might be a diamond. O'Reilly offered to take it to Colesberg in return for a share in whatever value the stone might have. O'Reilly's route took him through Hopetown where he called on the resident magistrate W.B. Chalmers who had been Civil Commissioner and thereby chairman of the Divisional Council since 1865. He therefore knew Schalk van Niekerk well and considered him "a very intelligent man". O'Reilly hoped that Chalmers would be able to establish whether the De Kalk stone was a diamond or not. Chalmers, his two clerks and O'Reilly himself tested it by scratching on the window of the Civil Commissioner's in Hopetown. The resulting marks proved nothing conclusively and O'Reilly pursued his way to Colesberg at the pace of his oxen, arriving well into the new year (1867). In due course, he called on his friend and supplier of trade goods, Thomas John Plewman at his office and showed him the pebble. Plewman gave as his opinion that it had no value and O'Reilly put it back in his pocket. Legend (supported by that purveyor of inaccuracy, R.W. Murray, editor of the Great Eastern in Graham's Town and later other papers), has it that after having shown how gun-flints could cut window-panes as well as stone, O'Reilly threw it out of Plewman's window. It reposed in the dusty street for some time before he recovered it. In fact, he went away with the stone in his pocket where it burnt the proverbial hole. Some time later, he returned to Plewman's office and repeated his conviction that the stone was of value. Either then or on the previous occasion, he used it to scratch letters D. and P. (Draper & Plewman) about 4 or 5 inches high on a window pane which, though chipped and cracked across, is preserved by the Colesberg Municipality. Plewman continued sceptic but Lorenzo Boyes who was with O'Reilly at the time and acting as Civil Commissioner in the absence of Henry Green, offered to send the stone to the most erudite authority then available, Dr. William Guybon Atherstone at Graham's Town. Although he later cast himself in quite another role, Boyes was unenthusiastic and in his covering note dated 12 March 1867, merely stated – "Mr. John O'Reilly thinks it is of some value". Atherstone was outraged that the large pebble should have been delivered by ordinary postcard in an envelope "quite loose, the letter not registered or sealed, simply fastened by gum as usual". He is alleged to have dropped it on the lawn of his house in Beaufort Street and to have been unable to find it for some time. David Draper gilded this lily by stating nearly 40 years later in the reputable S.A. Mining and Engineering Journal that "Dr. Atherstone, the senior surgeon of the Albany Hospital, upon one of his official visits, took the diamond with him enclosed in an ordinary envelope. Placing his hat upon the table in the entrance hall of the hospital, he laid the envelope containing the diamond beside it but, on leaving the building, forgot to take it with him. The next morning, he discovered his loss and returning to the hospital, instituted a search. He recovered the missing gem within its paper covering on the rubbish heap where it had been thrown when the floor was swept". Other apocryphal stories abound but fortunately for posterity, Atherstone recorded the truth: "I have never seen a rough diamond before but, taking its specific gravity and hardness, examining it by polarised light, etc., I at once decided that it was indeed a genuine diamond of considerable value." He rushed next door to his friend Bishop Ricards who, in the light of his own considerable scientific knowledge, confirmed the view and made assurance doubly sure by writing his name on yet another pane with the bulky pebble. Atherstone then tested it "on every jeweller's file in Graham's Town" and finally wrote to Boyes announcing his verdict and stating

that plenty more could be found in the locality of the First diamond's discovery. It weighed 21 ½ carats. He valued it at £500. It became the Eureka diamond. His letter arrived in Colesberg on 9 April 1867 and Boyes, hysterical with excitement, counselled O'Reilly to keep complete silence lest other seekers rush to De Kalk and rifle the supposed treasury. Somehow the news was leaked and on the same day the Advertiser came out with a sub-leader:

THE WONDERFUL SOUTH AFRICAN DIAMOND

“There is a story this morning afoot in the village. It has just been told us by a lady and we give it just as we have heard it. A Mr. John O'Reilly, a hunter, explorer etc., something of the Dr. Livingstone stamp but not quite so well known, in his travels in the North Country – somewhere about the Orange River – picked up a stone two or three months since which he thought had something remarkable about it and brought it down with him. It was shown to several persons here and was at length sent to Dr. Atherstone in Graham's Town to be examined and, as the lady told us, a letter has come by this morning's post from the doctor saying it is a diamond and worth £800. Now we quite expect the Great Eastern will have a great laugh at us about the South African Diamond as he did some time ago about the Orange River Serpent but we have stated the report just as we have heard it. Stranger things have come to pass in the world than the Discovery of Diamonds in South Africa.” Colesberg was mildly diverted by a possible fraud. For David Arnot, it was a time of intense activity. Early in 1867, he had gone to Graham's Town to meet Frank Orpen and together they had canvassed their Settler scheme among the depressed and dissatisfied Albany farmers. The chance of starting anew on lands leased at low figure by cultured gentlemen appealed to many though a few demurred at Waterboer's nominal suzerainty. Arnot returned to Colesberg to conduct the details of emigration by letter, maintaining close contact with Waterboer and Mahura while intending settlers arranged their departure. The Free State Government publicly expressed its ire and the whole Colony became aware of a private political exploit, which provoked violent feelings on all hands. In protecting Waterboer's interests, it behoved Arnot to secure his country against the prospectors and speculators who now ranged the whole of Southern Africa in the hope of discovering mineral treasure. Copper was their earliest aim and “prospecting parties” passed through Colesberg to the supposed “copper fields” in Griqualand and beyond where native chiefs were stated to know of outcrops of ore. Later it was gold. Arnot realised the dangers and insisted on all travelers and traders being inadmissible to Griqualand without payment of £3 for a licence which forbade them to traffic in liquor or firearms. Lorenzo Boyes as Acting Magistrate published the Arnot-Waterboer notice in the Colesberg Advertiser for information. News of O'Reilly's alleged “diamond” percolated slowly back to the dorp where much secretive speculation went on between the few men who grasped what the authenticity might portend – Arnot, his brother-in-law Dr. Grimmer, his son-in-law Fitzroy Somerset, the avaricious Lorenzo Boyes, C.W. Mathews and, when he returned early in May, the magistrate Henry Green. Atherstone had shown the rough pebble to a few people in Graham's Town on condition that they said nothing pending its authentication. Then, in response to Southey's reply to his report to the Governor, he gave it to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Eastern Province, Sir Percy Douglas who arranged its passage to Port Elizabeth and thence by sea to Cape Town where, after the Governor had seen it, Southey took charge. The Colonial Secretary kept it in his office pending despatch to the Paris International Exhibition at which, Atherstone had suggested, it would publicise a discovery of great importance to the Colony. The

French Consul Hérítte who had some knowledge of precious stones, and “other competent judges”, had declared the stone to be a diamond and Sir Philip had bought it at Atherstone’s assessment of £500. Southey “was never tired of gratifying the curiosity of the many who flocked to his office” to see the waterwashed pebble like a large yellowish bean. In due course, it was sent to the jewellers Garrard in London and to Currey in Paris to arrange its display at the Exhibition which had unfortunately been opened by the Emperor Louis Philippe in April. The Cape diamond reached it only during its last few weeks and excited no comment. Unbeknown to the Toverbergers, Mr. Emmanuel (a famous jeweller from England) would soon take a hand in their affairs and send Mr. Gregory among them. Arnot and Orpen were still busy building their “living barrier” or “wall of flesh” in the west, earning obloquy all the time in the Trans-Gariep. It was thought that the migrant farmers from the Eastern Province would travel through Colesberg on their way to the new province, confusingly called Albania (now the district of Herbert) in Waterboer’s country and there was some local excitement. Thomas Holden Bowker was addressing unexpectedly full meetings in Graham’s Town and there seemed great enthusiasm for the scheme. In July 1869, Arnot was with Waterboer in Griquatown and in August with Orpen and Bowker in Graham’s Town where Sir Percy Douglas expressed an embarrassing request that the capital of the new settlement be called after him. The Arnot Agency in Colesberg continued but many knew that the dynamic little man was pulling up his roots in the dying dorp and intended planting them anew in Griqualand. Apart from the fees due to him as the Griqua’s agent, he would derive some income from leasing his own vast properties there to new settlers. In September 1869, Arnot, Orpen and others left the dorp for Albania to arrange the location of the coming settlers – Dugmores, Buckleys, Siddens, Cooks and many Waylands. The lawyer John R. Will acted as Arnot’s agent in receiving local applications for land in the new settlement. No place could be worse than Colesberg. Based on his property Loskop, now called Eskdale, Arnot transacted the affairs of Albania from its proposed capital Douglas on the Vaal River, which Orpen had laid out as a township on the open veld. (Fitzroy Somerset later became its magistrate.) It had no services or facilities and mail was fetched from Hopetown. At the end of 1867, Arnot severed his business connection with Colesberg and the Toverberg, but the shadow of his dynamic personality was to fall upon them for many years. The shape of the country was rapidly changing with Colesberg its unhappy centre. Unsettled white men strove to establish their independence in small states surrounded and infiltrated by equally urgent black men while Arnot lay alongside with his whites and Griquas and Bantu under British influence forming a corridor to the north. Over all the troubled land, clamant but bankrupt, wandered the bent figures of traders, explorers, prospectors and mere adventurers seeking among the rocks and stones and streams a supposed mineral treasure. There was no containing the surgent forces of humanity which milled and murdered from the Zambesi to the Cape, their eddies swirling through the central dorp in the northern Karroo. While Arnot dealt with the Transvaal’s Pretorius in the interests of his northern Bantu clients and ignored the Free State’s Brand, absorbed once again by his eastern border, the British Government annexed Basutoland in January 1868 in the general cause of peace. Colesberg was transported. The diamond mare’s nest was all but forgotten. Now another appeared to torture a suffering people. Carl Mauch travelling in Moselekatze’s country in the northern Transvaal and beyond, announced the existence of goldfields and hopeful parties set out from various areas for the Tati, Matabili and Bamangwato “fields”. C.J. Kemper who had tried his luck in Australia, leapt into particular prominence. He still possessed the “cradle” or “Australian longtom” in which he had washed alluvial gold and would not part with it. James Campbell, the dorp’s carpenter, was later asked to copy it for an optimist on his way to the

“Bamangwato” diggings. It was the first piece of mining machinery manufactured in Colesberg and for some time, Campbell could hope for orders for more. The sentiment prevailing in the middle of 1868 was best expressed by Giddy’s anonymous correspondent at Hopetown – “It appears that no report of another diamond from this quarter being found will occur for some time except (if) one is accidentally picked up. Bosh with diamonds! Give us the Goldfields where we can obtain something for our labour – but to look for a needle in a haystack won’t do!” The dorp - and the country – drifted deeper into inactivity and gloom. The lawyer Edlington went bankrupt. W.S. Giddy sold up, George Robert Weakley buying the Advertiser and running it, as his predecessor had done, while operating as a general agent. Giddy later went insolvent and in his poverty, could not attend his creditors’ meeting for lack of a cart to bring him. Suspicious fires destroyed insured property. Draper & Plewman drew in their horns, closed their branches at Philipstown and Kalkpoort, and picked up what they could find as auctioneers and general agents. T.B. Kisch went off to look for diamonds in Waterboer’s country, calling first on Arnot at Eskdale. Arnot still maintained a token office in Colesberg where he represented various surveyors such as G. van Breda and Graham’s Town craftsmen such as Samuel Cronwright, the saddle and harness maker. He lived grimly on his desolate land across the Orange, hearing the complaints of his Albania settlers and enduring contumely from the Free State which strenuously objected to the boundaries he declared for Waterboer’s territory. Libel and abuse were rained upon him and some perpetrators were forced publicly to apologise; but Arnot persisted in his imperium in imperio and resisted all attempts to overwhelm his adopted peoples. Kisch looked for diamonds on his land but found no sign, nor elsewhere, returning to Colesberg to try to earn a livelihood with auctioneering. In December 1868, O’Reilly rode into Colesberg at the end of a trading safari with a sizeable diamond found on the way. At the same time, the London jeweller H. Emanuel wrote a letter to the Journal of the Society of Arts stating that on the basis of Gregory’s investigation, South Africa was not diamondiferous and that those stones found must have been “planted” by interested persons to enhance the value of their lands. The letter was widely publicised and aroused high indignation in Colesberg where John O’Reilly, “much annoyed”, wrote in refutation to the Advertiser. “No assertion of Mr. Gregory even though backed and endorsed by that great luminary Mr. Emanuel”, he stated in a letter evidently penned by another hand, “can by any possibility upset the positive fact that over twenty diamonds have been found and as to the idea of their having been thrown about over such an immense tract of country, the man who can assert such a thing is either a great knave or an outrageous fool”. Chalmers was equally incensed and wrote at length to the Graham’s Town Journal. The paper also published an account of the geological structure of the Vaal region where the diamonds had been found, contributed by the indignant Dr. John Shaw who had studied the area during school holidays. Athersone sent his definitive account of the discovery and the geology of the region to the English Geological Magazine and completed the discrediting of Gregory. Going quickly to work, George Weakley of the Colesberg Advertiser collected every word that had been printed on the subject and published a booklet *The Diamond Discovery in South Africa* at his own expense. He printed thousands of copies and distributed them overseas, sending “a large number” to England where, it was supposed, the Gregory-Emanuel calumny was effectively shattered. If anything, it had stimulated interest in surface-searching and, with growing disappointment in the Matabili and Tati Goldfields, adventurous men again turned to Griqualand. One of them was the Colesberg policeman, Stafford Parker who by March 1869, had followed the example of knowledgeable natives and begun examining the banks of the Vaal River in company with Louis Hond. Others were David Bebell (afterwards agent for Jantjie, a Batlapin

chief), Jacob Naude, Charles Mons and Julius Gerz, agent for the Lillienfield brothers who bought such stones as they found or acquired from natives. John O'Reilly remained in Colesberg, temporarily enjoying the small pleasures of civilisation and racing his horse Sponge against Henry Green's Gypsy. The portents of the situation had not escaped the astute Arnot who must have come to Colesberg to effect his coup. He advised Waterboer to award the exclusive right to prospect and mine precious metals in his territory as from 31 December 1868 to the South African Diamond and Mineral Company which he immediately formed locally and registered in London. Its directors were the magistrate Henry Green, his Clerk of the Peace Lorenzo Boyes who in November 1868 had been transferred as magistrate to Namaqualand where he remained for the next ten years, David Arnot, his son-in-law Fitzroy Somerset, his brother-in-law Dr. William Grimmer, the storekeeper C.W. Mathews and Henry Beadle, an adventurous young man given to prospecting. The award was in operation for exactly two years, being formally "annulled, cancelled, voided, etc." by public notice published in December 1870. With one notable exception, it was honoured, like all other such restrictions on diamond discovery, more in the breach than the observance. In the meantime, Arnot and Waterboer were more concerned with publishing long public notices defending themselves against "unfounded malicious and false reports appearing in Free State and Cape papers. Many people thought, and still think, that Arnot was a private adventurer concerned only with his personal gain. Others later conceived him as an arch-Imperialist anteceding Rhodes. In fact he took a road that led to ruin and obscurity. The floods of 1867 were trifling by comparison with the massive downpours of 1869, beginning in January and continuing through March. All the rivers came down in spate and great damage was done. Colesberg was isolated and almost every rancher lived marooned. On the night of the great downpour in January 1869, William Grimmer's wife and children were staying in one house and his brother Edward and his wife with several Draper children in the other. At midnight, both families were awoken by the sound of water washing against the windowpanes. The great dam had burst and a trickling torrent became a murderous flood. When Edward Grimmer opened his door, he was almost knocked off his feet by the onrush. The water was waist-high and his Scots sister-in-law was already struggling from the cottage with John (Jack) and Ellen in her arms and Irvine clinging to her skirts. He managed to take them to higher ground and for many days, the dorp marvelled at their escape. On 18 March 1869, Schalk van Niekerk and John O'Reilly rode into Hopetown with a diamond so gigantic that the minds of men reeled on contemplating it. "The Star of South Africa" weighed 83 ½ carats. A fully accurate account of its discovery will never be known. Fear, duplicity and the natural deviousness of a half-caste's mind resulted in conflicting versions but the one given by John O'Reilly to his son Antony Cecil and recorded by him, is likely to be nearest the truth. It accords in the main with verifiable details. O'Reilly traded in many goods including guns which, prior to Waterboer's strict regulations, were peddled in Griqualand as commonly as axes or pots. During five years of travelling, Gordon Cumming had bartered hundreds of guns only twenty five years earlier. The natives had become considerably more sophisticated and demanded accuracy and correctly-adjusted sights. It was O'Reilly's custom to test his trade goods on the banks of the Orange River at the farm Sandfontein and, with constant shooting at a target erected at his outspan against a kameeldoring tree, to adjust the sights of any malfunctioning gun. He had sold a gun with its accompanying powder-horn and bar of lead for casting bullets to a Griqua, Swartbooy, later described as a shepherd. While O'Reilly dallied in Colesberg indulging his love of horses and fulminating about Gregory's baseless allegations, Swartbooy was looking for him at his known outspans for the purpose of buying a bar of lead. His gun was useless without

bullets and he had no means of making them. When the Ou Baas failed to appear, Swartbooy remembered his firing countless bullets at the kameeldooring tree target and, presuming that the ground behind it must be full of lead, made his way there and started scrabbling in the sand. His reward was a big blink klip. By now, every Griqua was familiar with the kind of pebble that the white man sought and most had indeed been discovered by sheep and cattle herdsmen such as Swartbooy. He accordingly continued to wait O'Reilly's return to his outspan but, unbeknown to him, the Ou Baas was riding about the Colesberg race course (upon one occasion galloping to fetch Dr. Grimmer to a friend who had been heavily thrown) and was in no mind to leave until the middle of March. Swartbooy kept the diamond for "a long time" and, abandoning hope of seeing O'Reilly, took it to Schalk van Niekerk who, every native knew, had been looking for blink klippe for two years. Schooled by Hond and others, van Niekerk now knew a diamond when he saw one and immediately gave Swartbooy 500 sheep, 10 head of cattle and a horse. On the day following, John O'Reilly appeared at De Kalk and was shown the magnificent stone. The two went to Hopetown on 18 March and reduced the dorp to hysterical excitement by exhibiting the largest diamond ever seen. On the following day, the Lillienfeld brothers bought it for £11,200, van Niekerk and O'Reilly tricked themselves out in fancy clothes (frock coats and sponge-bag trowsers) and sat for a photograph to Mr. Du Toit, van Niekerk holding the diamond, while horsemen sped in all directions to spread the news. Arnot at Eskdale must have heard within hours. Weakley in Colesberg received his Hopetown correspondent's despatch dated 4.15p.m. of 18 March within two or three days and had it in print in his weekly Advertiser by the 23rd. Before the Lillienfeld could send the diamond to Mosenthals at Port Elizabeth on its way to Europe, the South African Diamond and Mineral Company took action in Colesberg where fortuitously the Circuit Court and Mr. Justice A.W. Cole were in session. Green, Grimmer, Mathews and Somerset were all at hand to assert their exclusive right and Judge Cole heard them "in chambers" in the dorp. They submitted an affidavit from the Government surveyor H. Papefus who deposed that, being on Sandfontein on 23 March, he had heard from its owner about the diamond and had asked to see Swartbooy. The Griqua then told him a long tarradiddle about finding the diamond across the river in Waterboer's country when herding goats and, fearful that the Griqua chief would claim it, bringing it across to the Colonial side where he had taken service at Sandfontein. He had then sent his nephew (a term applicable to almost any acquaintance) to Schalk van Niekerk to offer the stone, stating that it had been found on De Kalk for the purpose of protecting it from Waterboer. On the strength of this and other evidence, the Judge granted a temporary interdict on the selling of the stone which was immediately served on the Lillienfelds, causing much chagrin in Hopetown. It was conceded that the company's directors were all reputable and well-intentioned men but the justice of their claim, based on a right they should never have been granted, was loudly disputed. The dog-in-the-manger action of the concessionaires was also heavily criticised in the Cape Press, the Eastern Province Herald objecting strongly to a Government servant in the person of the Civil Commissioner Henry Green, having a hand in a concession. The Cape Argus referred scathingly to "a solemn proclamation from the great chief Waterboer disclosing a not very creditable compact with a few colonial adventurers". During the period of the interdict, the Colesberg coterie took no action and the Lillienfelds prepared to dispose of the diamond as soon as it expired.

For nearly two months, the concessionary company did nothing. Swartbooy on the other hand solemnly and unswervingly swore that he had found the diamond on the Cape side of the Orange River and not in Griqualand. Mr. Papenfus must have been mistaken. The interdict neared expiry and “Grimmer and Others” applied to the Supreme Court for an extension. The Chief Justice Denyssen and Mr. Justice Fitzpatrick commented severely on the dilatoriness and in the light of a mass of evidence revealing tremendous trafficking in stones among native finders and white exploiters, pronounced that they had no case whatever. Their application was dismissed with costs. “The Star of South Africa”, being of Cape origin, was free. The Company (described in the Cape Press as “certain Colesberg and Albania speculators”), possibly abashed by the unpopularity of its monopolistic rights, never again tried to exercise them and Griqualand became the happy hunting ground of every adventurer available. Henry Green was indeed in great trouble. Over the weekend of the 10th / 12th April 1869, a berglar had broken into his office, he stated publicly, and had stolen £1,245 in cash from the safe (a locked iron chest) - £275 in gold and the balance in Standard Bank notes of various branches. He offered a reward of £100 for information on the thief. The dorp and the whole district resounded with shock. It was common property that Green was in financial difficulty over the failure of Young Express and other extravagances. His enemies spoke openly of embezzlement of Governments funds and his friends were hard put to defend him. Green enjoyed immense popularity in Colesberg and beyond. Three months later, the Cradock magistrate, R.W.H. Giddy arrived unexpectedly and assumed his offices. The Government had suspended Green in the light of the charges to be brought against him. “We have no doubt”, said the Advertiser, “that Mr. Green will be able to give a full explanation. We understand that an influentially-signed memorial will be sent to the Governor praying that he be reinstated”. No berglar was ever traced and a year after the theft, Henry Green was adjudged. Judgement in “this painful case” against Henry Green, as the Chief Justice described it, was not given until 12 March 1870. The colonial Treasurer had based his plea on Green’s negligence in safe-guarding Government property and the Court found accordingly. Green’s answering plea that the equipment provided by the Government was faulty, was swept aside in the light of “the utmost laxity and remissness”, the more incomprehensible in a Government officer and a director of the Colesberg bank. With Denyssen and Fitzpatrick concurring, the Chief Justice ordered that “the loss must be borne by the defendant. There will therefore be judgement for the plaintiff for £1,308.17.3d with costs”. Henry Green was ruined. Once the dorp had recovered from the shock of its esteemed magistrate’s summary suspension on 3 July 1869, its customary torpor returned. Winter tended to reduce its activities and to stimulate the intellectual excursions of its few cultured inhabitants. Once again concerts were given to raise money for a public piano. The Ortlepp and Arnot sisters (who had not accompanied their father to Eskdale) were a host in themselves and now Fitzroy Somerset and his wife joined them in contributing their famous duet “The Brothers Return”. They sang it countless times and the people who came from Cradock, Richmond, Fauresmith, Philipstown and other distant dorps invariably requested the Somerset’s song. They now had a son, Henry Edward. Ellen Amelia continued giving music lessons to maintain the family. In 1870, they had a second son called after the doctor William Grimmer and, in the manner of the times, eight more children. Apart from the “encroachment” of Free State berghers into the country around the west of the Vaal, there were now hundreds of men wandering on its banks. Waterboer’s land for which Arnot had fought, had become a Tom Tiddler’s ground for footloose hard-bitten men of every kind. To Arnot, their presence was less of a menace than the determination of the Free State to establish its right to all the country east of the Vaal and possibly west as well. Albania,

where the new settlers were anything but satisfied, was intended to protect the south but despite Arnot's efforts to safeguard the continuing boundary line to the north, the Griqua country lay exposed to infiltration. It was in fact already occupied by many "Boers" of indeterminate allegiance and the few "settlers" owning the authority of Waterboer became increasingly aggrieved. They met him, attended by Arnot and his councilors, in January 1870 but lacking all force and means of persuasion, the Griqua Government could do nothing to clear its own country of land-hungry immigrants. It was at this point that Waterboer began to consider asking the British Government to annex his country. His case was enhanced by the escalating invasion by British subjects. The impending drama in which the Toverberg and its people – and the world at large – were so deeply implicated, was now moving to its climax.

At Arnot's instigation, Waterboer had published a lengthy Proclamation again defining the boundaries of his territory, which included the Diamond Fields, and protesting against the claims of the Free State. It provoked an immediate response from the Transvaal Government, which claimed part of the same land and had indeed already issued concessions. Stafford Parker summoned all the diggers who, preceded by a band consisting of a fiddle, concertina and a cracked drum, advanced in columns of three and four to the meeting place and roundly repudiated the Transvaal claim. No more was heard of it but Arnot and Waterboer now had to deal with Brand of the Free State. They met him inconclusively at Backhouse where he threatened to annex the whole of Griqualand. Arnot made one more attempt to establish his case (which he considered watertight) with the Lawyer-President before throwing in his negotiating hand and calling for Imperial help. Arnot now entered the last phase of his struggle to preserve Griqualand and its adjacent territories for their scattered native peoples. Marthinus Wessels Pretorius came down from the Transvaal to join his colleague Johannes Henricus Brand of the Free State in settling with Arnot, Waterboer and his councilors the ownership of land now seething with hundreds of Colonial and other subjects of the British Crown. They met at Nooitgedacht, six miles north of Klipdrift on 18 August 1870 and came to no conclusion, Brand being adamant that the land belonged to the Free State by demonstrable right. Arnot immediately issued a Proclamation recording Waterboer's meeting with Brand and repudiating the Free State's claim to his territory, later publishing the correspondence. It remained now to persuade the British to annex his country as they had with Moshesh. Waterboer, said Arnot, had promised him a grant of land in the north similar to his huge lands in the south and a pension of £1,000 a year if he could secure such protection. Aware of the diggers' hostility to the Transvaal intrusion on the Fields, Pretorius became more interested in diamonds than diplomacy and, prior to the conference, ranged the diggings. "The miners", wrote Babe who subsequently sat up till daylight in Mr. Biddulph's tent discussing politics with "the two Presidents" (Parker and Pretorius), "made arrangements for a subscription ball in honour of President Pretorius. It was successfully arranged and was held in President Parker's tent. There were about 150 gentlemen in all conceivable costumes from the swallow-tail to the clean mining suit. Sixteen ladies graced the ball with their presence. There was no roof to the tent. The floor was washed gravel from the mines. A few tallow candles dimly illuminated this gay and festive scene and the moon had to do the balance. At one end of the table was set with bottles of James Hennessy, wine and soda water, which were kept constantly in motion. The reserve stock of liquors and a lot of pies and cakes were lying near the side of the tent behind the bar and a number of individuals reached

under and cribbed a quantity, passing them around among the outsiders. The music consisted of an accordion, fiddle, flute and bass drum. Although we did not have all we could wish for, our ball passed off pleasantly. We meandered to work at daylight". The Toverberg diggers took a less genial view of Pretorius who, after the conference himself looked for diamonds and dug up some stones. He appeared, they thought, much stouter and very much older than on his last visit to Cape Town. "He strode along the banks of the river where hundreds of men were occupied in washing the precious soil, his huge size and the style of his attire the most remarkable portions of which were a crusher hat adorned with a white ostrich feather and patent leather casings for his nether limbs, gave him the appearance of some portly baron of the olden time, a delusion which was sustained by the suite that accompanied him, including Mr. Parker, president of our committee. Time was when even the mention of the name which he bears would have excited a glow in the heart of every Dutch Boer to the north of the Gariiep and a large portion of those residing south of it. Somehow or other, that prestige is lost and if Pretorius expected to arouse any enthusiasm in his own favour upon this occasion, he must have been sadly disappointed. The majority sat stolidly sorting their pebbles, merely stealing a side glance at him as he passed". Times had changed. The country was going forward, not on heroic contests with alien lands and alien peoples but on scrablings in river gravel to produce the wealth it needed. Everyone knew that Arnot was deluging the Colonial Secretary with letters pleading the cause of annexation for Griqualand. Less well known was his request to Southey for "the favour of your influence and powerful interest in favour of my son-in-law, Mr. Fitzroy Maclean Henry Somerset, son of General Somerset who is young – thirty years – healthy as a human being need be, strong as a horse, honest as daylight, steady as a rock and although not bred up to the law, is clever and takes to matters easily. He is an Oxford man and was rather favourably known there. You may try him with a temporary appointment". (Later he made similar application to Southey on behalf of Johannes Adriaan Smuts who had married his daughter Sarah Selina.) Fitzroy remained a constant problem to his father-in-law, faced now with the absurd situation of part of his client's country containing both British and Free State magistrates, each dispensing licences and justice in terms of instruments and agreements which both contested.

The ludicrous position in which both Britain and the Free State had manifested claim to Griqualand by installing magistrates at different points, could not continue. The new Governor Sir Henry Barkly had hardly landed with his wife and daughter at Cape Town where President Brand awaited him than he was compelled to go to the Fields. Arnot had maintained steady pressure on Southey and Barkly well knew what was expected of him. A meeting was arranged at Klipdrift at which the Toverbergers fully expected annexation. During the first months of 1871, tension prevailed along the Nu and Ky Garieps. In "the lively wagon trade" now plying on the main route to the Fields, Sir Henry avoided Colesberg and took a route to Philipstown where he was greeted by the traditional welcoming convoy of spring wagons and horsemen firing their rifles, a decorated arch and an address from the predikant and kerkraad. As his cavalcade approached Klipdrift, Moritz Unger's splendid spider with matching pair stood ready to carry him the remaining distance. (All the buyers now affected flashy clothes and fine carriages. Leopold Lillienfeld had a famous driver John and a magnificent pair of greys for his Cape cart.) Arnot and Waterboer had already arrived, carefully encamping alongside the British magistrate Campbell. Records of the proceedings fail to reflect the immediate rapport established between

the good-looking British Governor, still pale from the English winter, and the swarthy little man with lively eyes and eloquent tongue who confronted him on behalf of Waterboer. Arnot, it was said, greatly resembled the English actor O'Toole and was as alert and vivacious in manner. His love of his country was altogether genuine and he was able to impart something of its fascination to Sir Henry. Dedicated botanist as he had been for most of his life, Arnot easily attached the Governor's attention to the curious plants that grew in Griqualand, notably the Stapeliads of which little was known. Sir Henry responded with enthusiasm and became an ardent collector. During all the years of his governorship, Arnot brought or sent specimens of Stapelias to Government House in Cape Town where Barkly successfully cultivated them in the garden. Lady Barkly and her daughter made drawings of them which were sent to Kew with living examples and others in alcohol, Arnot's name being commemorated in *Stapelia arnotii*. He also sent *Piранthus grivanus* and in later years, contributed to Kew *Hypoxis arnotii*, *Haemanthus Arnotii* and *Talinum arnotii*. He had long been known to Hookers as a donor of rare and wonderful plants, some entirely new and unclassified. Sir Henry went to Bloemfontein but, lacking the support of his Government in the proposed increase of the Crown's commitments, possession of the Diamond Fields remained indeterminate and the state of confusion continued. All parties were active, the Free State suggesting international arbitration and Arnot pressing the cause of annexation. He went to Cape Town and enhanced his cordial relationship with the Governor, Sir Henry assuring him that should annexation finally be authorised by the British Government, Arnot would be rewarded in terms of Waterboer's original undertaking. He would in fact be confirmed in his ownership of the Southern Reserve with its income from leased farms, be awarded another vast tract called the Northern Reserve, and receive the promised pension of £1,000 a year. Inspired by Arnot's botanical knowledge and enthusiasm, Sir Henry let his interest in the collection of Stapelias be known, the more distant of his Civil Servants taking the hint and sending him specimens. Dr. John Shaw, still a busy visitor to Griqualand, also contributed the rare *Piранthus pulcher* and helped Lady Barkly with unusual specimens for her catalogue of South African ferns. He also found on the Diamond Fields strange specimens of the lichens which were his speciality and added his name to botanical lore with *Albuca shawii*. While Arnot brooded on the desolate Eskdale a few miles from Hopetown in the company of Fitzroy Somerset and other members of his family (his daughter Mary Catherine had married one of the Albania settlers, Charles William Henry Wayland) or rode about his lands, collecting strange plants for Barkly and growing some in a "garden" on the edge of a tiny pan, commissions sat to determine the rightful owners of Griqualand. A massive complexity bedeviled their work. Arnot who had parried all attempts to claim his client's country, was hated and loathed, particularly in the Free State whose full measure of rage and frustration had not yet fallen on him. The Diamond Fields for several months hung, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth and great activity took place upon them, all details being faithfully recorded for the Toverbergers' benefit by one of their number, Orlando Giddy who sent regular despatches to the Advertiser. When it became known early in 1872 that Dr. William Grimmer was leaving to become District Surgeon at Pniel at £400 per annum, the Toverbergers offered him an annual bonus to keep him in Colesberg. Failing to prevail, they presented him with an address when he left in April. His family became integrated with the diamond industry, his elder son Irvine spending his lifetime in Kimberley with De Beer's and his younger son Jackie, having a hand in history through Cecil John Rhodes. The story was told that Rhodes, standing on the stoep of the old De Beer's office which overlooked the stables, watched a young man trying to break in a horse and remounting again and again after being thrown. Rhodes admired his courage and

pertinacity and, sending for him, employed Jack Grimmer (whom he always called Johnnie) as his private secretary and general factotum. Jack became his devoted and beloved companion, attending him wherever he went until his death. Although his half-brothers and sister continued to live in Colesberg, Arnot never came back. While the Diamond Rush approached its height in 1872, the bitterness of having the prize snatched from their grasp by annexation, smote the Free State and the utmost obloquy was hurled at Arnot's head. No bounds of restraint or decency limited the abuse heaped upon him from across the Vaal. Reference was made to his mixed origin and vile insinuations were attached to his character. He remained in possession of his huge and barren southern property, drawing small rents from its few farmer tenants and complaining about his lack of money and failure to provide for his wife and family. When the Cape Government instituted an administration in Griqualand under Richard Southey in 1872, David Arnot and Henry Green were made members of the Legislative Council, Arnot's stocky figure and clean-shaven face contrasting sharply with the imposing bearded men who were his colleagues. He continued to live on Eskdale, confident that in due course the Cape Government would confirm his possession of the Southern and Northern Reserves and the pension Waterboer had promised him. Meanwhile, baffled by the complexity of the issues involved, Sir Henry Barkly asked Arnot and Frank Orpen to record and detail the history of "The Land Question of Griqualand West". The Free State Volksraad had already commissioned Captain Augustus Lindley in much the same terms and he completed "Adamantia – The Truth about the South African Diamond Fields or a Vindication of the Right of the Orange Free State to that Territory and an Analysis of British Diplomacy and Aggression which has resulted in its illegal seizure by the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope". It was published in April 1873 and Arnot's work (in which Orpen could have had little but a perfunctory hand) was published in 1875 with copious documentation. It was dedicated to the Governor who had repeatedly undertaken to secure his future. By then, Arnot's house of cards had begun to fall.

The Cape Parliament was no creature of the Governor and the annexation of Griqualand had been hotly debated, some members sympathising strongly with the contesting republics. One of them was Andries Stockenström, second son of Sir Andries Stockenström Baronet, original sponsor of the Toverberg and its peoples, who had died in London in 1864. He was a barrister and when decisions regarding the disposal of the new territory came to be made, he was appointed president of a special Land Court in June 1875. Arnot's claim, supported by the Governor's undertakings, came before him. In a personal attack on Arnot's honour and integrity, the judge disallowed them all with the exception of his possession of the single property Eskdale, his right for life to the rents paid by the Albanian settlers in the Southern Reserve, and his claim on the previous Griqua Government for a pension. Arnot appealed against the judgement to the Supreme Court in the terms of promises made him by the Griquas, the Batlapin and the Governor by which he expected the Southern Reserve, the Northern Reserve, ten farms between the Vaal and Harts rivers, and a pension of £1,000. The bitterness of his feelings all but choked him. It were better, he wrote, if Griqualand had gone to the Free State which had at least paid Adam Kok honourably for his territory. As for his own work of twenty years, the security of his wife and family was as distant as ever and at the age of 54, he would have to begin again to provide for them. "I might die tomorrow", he exclaimed to Southey in March 1876, "and what would become of my wife and children?" His case came before Sir Charles Warren at the end of 1877.

From Arnot's compliance with Warren's temporising, it would seem his spirit was broken. The judge in no way disputed the validity of the Governor's assurances but Arnot, perhaps with aversion to embarrassing the man he had liked and trusted, failed to press them. Voluntarily he renounced his claims to one grant after another until, in the end, he was confirmed only in the ownership of Eskdale and the lease of the nearby Clydesdale, and possession of the arid farms of the Southern Reserve for a period of 23 years during which he could claim rents. His pension was to be £500 a year on the lives of his wife and himself, given by the Cape Government for services rendered the Griqualand Government and thus recorded on the Civil List. Warren could not forbear from remarking in his diary that if Arnot had been awarded all that he justly claimed immediately on annexation, he would have been a wealthy man. Now he was ruined, his legal expenses being immense.

In the course of the case, promises made by Waterboer to the members of the South African Diamond and Mining Company were revived and Warren awarded two farms each in the country between the Vaal and the Harts rivers west of Fourteen Streams to David Arnot, Charles W. Mathews, Lorenzo Boyes, Fitzroy Somerset and Henry Beadle. They were at that time of no great value. Arnot left Griqualand and its Legislative Council in 1878 and brought his family to Cape Town where he lived in seclusion in a house at 77 Buitenkant Street on the corner of Mill Street. About 1886 at the age of 65, he joined the firm of Scanlen & Syfret as a special clerk. Always renowned for his penmanship (he was said to write only with a quill which he cut himself), he was occupied mainly with engrossing legal documents at which he was reputed to have few equals. When Henry Heathcote Murray, son of James (who had sold Kuilfontein to Thomas Plewman in 1887) bought the historic Quaggasfontein in 1892 through his agent Arthur George Syfret, it was the aged Arnot who engrossed the deed of Transfer and in a fine steady hand, recorded its early ownership by C.J. van der Walt with its attached diagram of 1838 showing the locality of the Plettenberg beacon. It survives on the farm in the possession of Henry Murray's grandson. Arnot died on 6 June 1894 at the age of 74 and was buried in the graveyard at St. Saviour's Church, Claremont, Cape in the family plot, his name merely being inscribed on the common monument. Only the Cape Argus noticed his death which was unremarked elsewhere, the Diamond Fields Advertiser copying the Argus two weeks later in the smallest print inconspicuously inserted in "Local and General". The Advertiser of Colesberg where Arnot had occupied every civic and public position outside the Civil Service (for which he sometimes acted) and where he had achieved untold benefits for the community, made no mention at all. Thus died a man who fundamentally altered the course of history and in his person, compounded his country's problems and its aspirations. Typically of the involuted Toverberg people, Anne Isabel, daughter of Arnot's son-in-law Fitzroy Somerset, married W.H. Murray, owner of Quaggasfontein. Fitzroy himself, doing no good on the Diamond Fields, had eventually found employment in the Civil Service at Arnot's instigation and in the early eighties, became magistrate at Douglas. A year-long illness forced his resignation and an attempt at farming was terminated by drought. Ruined in health and fortune, Fitzroy took his family of ten to Colesberg where he became a piano-tuner to add to his income of £10 a month. Ellen Amelia played the organ in the English Church. In 1884, they buried their tenth child, the great-grandson of Lord Charles Somerset and grandson of David Arnot, inside the gate of the old cemetery in Colesberg. No trace survives of Henry Plantagenet Somerset, aged eighteen months.

