

THE HISTORY OF RONDEBOSCH

JAN VAN RIEBEECK

Jan van Riebeeck was born in Holland in 1618. When he grew up he became a surgeon but decided to join the Dutch East India Company (DEIC). He was later sent to the Cape to set up a half-way station for people travelling to the East. He arrived with his wife, Maria and baby son on the 6th April 1652. There were three ships in the fleet that brought him to the Cape - the Drommedaris, the Reijger and De Goede Hoop.

VAN RIEBEECK'S MISSION

Jan van Riebeeck was told by the DEIC that he had to:

- Build a fort to protect the soldiers and people at the settlement.
- Build a hospital for sick soldiers and sailors.
- Plant a vegetable garden so the sailors and the people living at the settlement could have fresh vegetables and fruit.
- Be friendly with the San and the Khoi so that he could trade/barter with them.
- Keep a diary so a record could be kept of life at the Cape.

He left the refreshment station after 10 years. He was not, however, a well man and he died on 18 January, 1677 at the age of 59.

WHY PEOPLE SETTLED IN RONDEBOSCH?

Whilst at the Cape, Jan van Riebeeck suggested to the DEIC that farmers be brought in to help produce the much needed food for the sailors and the people living at the settlement. The DEIC directors agreed and in 1657 nine men were given farms along the Liesbeeck River . These people became known as Free Burghers and the farms were used mainly to grow wheat.

HOW RONDEBOSCH GOT ITS NAME

In about 1657 Rondebosch was called **Ronde Bosjen** because there was **clumps of round bushes** in the area. Later it was changed to ‘t Rondeboschje’ and finally, in the last century, it was given the name Rondebosch.

PLACES OF INTEREST IN RONDEBOSCH



1. RONDEBOSCH FOUNTAIN (www.rondebosch.net/static/fountain.htm)

Contrary to its name, the Fountain is actually a Victorian lamppost surrounded by a drinking fountain for horses and bowls for dogs. The lamp above the fountain apparently contained the first electric street light

It was in this area, on 1 March, 1657 that Jan van Riebeeck granted land to 9 “Free Burghers” to farm land. The fountain was proclaimed a national monument on 10 April 1964.

2. ST PAUL’S CHURCH (www.stpaulsrondebosch.co.za)

On 5 September 1832, the ground on which St Paul’s church stands today was blessed by the Bishop of Calcutta so that the people of Rondebosch could have an Anglican church. The church is built on a rock-based terrace and it looks down on the Liesbeek River.



The graveyard is one of the oldest in South Africa – the last burials taking place in the late 1890’s. Details on the gravestones have been recorded and the facts are available to the public.

St Paul’s from Main Road (1891)	St Paul’s from Main Road (2008)
	

3. MOSTERT’S MILL

www.geocities.com/Heartland/Fields/1722/SouthAfricanAlbum/Album8.html



Mostert’s Mill was built in 1796 in order to grind the Free Burghers’ wheat. It was named after Sybrand Jacobus Mostert who bought the property on the death of his father-in-law, Jacob van Renen. The Mill is open to the public most Saturdays when volunteer millers operate it.

4. RONDEBOSCH COMMON

www.turtlesa.com/ezine60a.html

This is a very old piece of land. Maps dating back to 1807 show it was a place where soldiers used to camp, hence the name Campground Road. It was, however, often cold and



damp so many soldiers became sick and died.

In 1855, the rector of St Paul's church was given permission to graze his cows on the land. There was, however, a rule that the land had to remain open for public use. Over the years, however, bits of the original common have been lopped off and used for other purposes. The Red Cross Children's Hospital was built on Common Land.

In 1961, the Common was proclaimed a National Monument and remains so to this day. This 100 acre piece of open ground is home to 200 indigenous plant species.

5. RHODES MEMORIAL

www.sa-venues.com/attractionswc/rhodes-memorial.htm

Rhodes Memorial was built in remembrance of Cecil John Rhodes who gave much land to the people of South Africa. Built on the site where Rhodes liked to sit and think about his future, the memorial was designed by Sir Francis



Macey and Sir Herbert Baker. Rhodes memorial was built with money raised by the citizens of Cape Town. Forty nine steps, one for each year of Rhodes' life, are linked with granite walls.

On these walls statues of eight lions look out over Cape Town.