

Who are the Natal communities in the national campaign?

THERE are about ten communities who AFRA is assisting with land claims in Natal. All of these are part of the National Land Restoration Campaign.

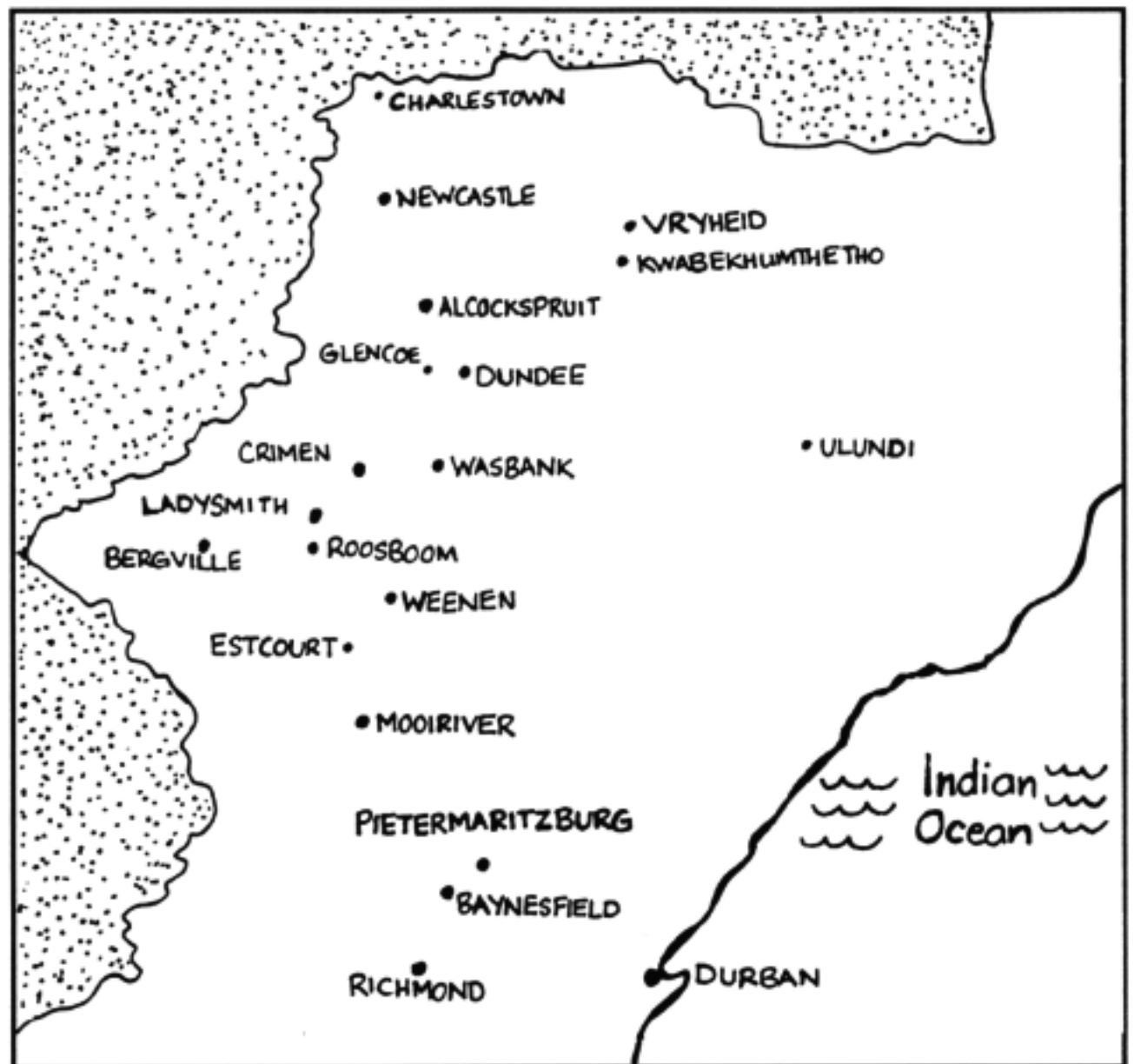
In previous newsletters, we carried profiles of those communities who have been part of the campaign for some time. These are Crimen, Charlestown and Roosboom.

Here we look at communities who have joined more recently. Of these "newer" communities who AFRA is assisting with land claims, 2 are freehold areas, 1 is a mission area, 2 stem from historic communal claims and 2 involve labour tenants. These, and other communities who have been part of the land restoration campaign for some time, have been meeting together in workshops to plan a joint approach to getting back the land they believe is theirs.

▼ Freehold

Alcockspruit

This is a freehold area in the Newcastle District where about 88 landowners had individual title deeds which were confiscated from them. From 1969 to 1970 the government forcefully evicted people, moving most to Madadeni. People who were evicted recall the stability and quality of life at Alcockspruit before their



removal. "Alcockspruit was divided into land for residential purposes with little gardens, cultivation land and livestock camps with dips. We had three schools, the walls of which are still standing up till today." (The community-built schools were demolished when people were moved off the land).

"We got water from wells and the river. There were two community halls and proper roads. The place is near a railway station as well as the main road to Johannesburg." It is also near to a coal mine and the AECI factory, where people worked. "We want to return to our land - at the moment rented by the boers. We want to be united and form a strong organisation with other communities that work

with AFRA so that we can be able to return to our land as Alcockspruit community," they say.

Longlands and Meran

Wasbank is the nearest town to the desolate area of Vaalkop to where the people from Longlands and Meran were removed. "We come from a freehold community. We were removed from two different areas, one called Longlands and the other is Meran. We want these places from where we were moved.

"In 1967, the Development Trust, assisted by the Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Dundee, took us to Vaalkop and showed us the farm where we were going to be moved. The Development Trust

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expropriated our properties but took no trouble to see that we get title deeds for the compensatory properties. This has caused great problems. The chiefs and indunas of this place (Vaalkop) let their people graze on our land and when we say something about this they ignore us. This has resulted in tension. We are told that we are foreigners in this place.

"We lived a happy life while we staying on our own land (at Meran and Longlands). We had shops, our farms were fenced - the land for grazing and ploughing was fenced and easily identifiable. We had boreholes to provide us with water when streams were dry. We had tenants who were free to build their houses and had a right to plough and keep livestock as they liked. We enjoyed the life we were living. We assisted one another in times of difficulty like death. We never experienced stock theft, we did not lose our cattle, our fences were not cut..."

At the moment the farms from which the communities were expropriated are being used by white farmers.

▼ Historic Communal Claims

Amahlubi

Some of the land being claimed by the Amahlubi clan is on the farm, De Hoek, near Estcourt. The whole claim, however, involves thousands of hectares, spread over about 20 trust farms. The claim dates back to

1873 when the Hlubi chief clashed with the British government, then ruling Natal. The clash was over chief Langalibalele's refusal to have a firearm registered. This firearm was brought back from the diamond mines by one of the AmaHlubi who worked on the mines. During those days it was common for weapons to be given to diamond mineworkers in part payment of their wages. But in Natal the law said that an owner had to register a weapon and also get signed authority from the Governor. When Langalibalele refused to comply, the government sent soldiers to arrest him. He fled, taking his family and indunas with him, but was eventually arrested in 1873. Upon his arrest, he was charged with what amounted to rebellion and the AmaHlubi land of some 90 000 hectares was confiscated. The tribe became scattered. When this happened, Bishop Colenso, a close friend of Chief Langalibalele, advised the clan to buy their own land. They did this and at present they live in an area called Draycott which is just outside Estcourt. But the area is dry and cannot sustain the people living there. There is not enough arable land on which to farm.

Amahlubi attempts to regain their ancestral land began as early as 1936. But up to now they have had no concrete response from the government. Recently, there were attempts to sell off some of the land under dispute. In

November 1991 public protest managed to halt a government attempt to auction off the De Hoek farm. Then, in March this year, the government again tried to auction it. However, the attempted public auction was stopped on instruction of the Minister of Land Affairs, Jacob de Villiers. This instruction followed a recommendation by the head of the Advisory Land Allocation Commission (ACLA) that the sale be stopped. More recently, the head of ACLA has called for a halt on the sale of all land which the Commission is to review.

Mdlalose (KwaBhekumthetho)

Situated about 22 km from Vryheid, the land under dispute encompasses about 5 000 acres. Historically, the land belonged to the Mdlalose Clan at the time of the arrival of the first whites. This was during Shaka's time. When the whites came, they took the land and turned it into farms.

Now the community says it wants to unite with other communities who are also struggling to get back their land.

▼ Labour Tenants

Baynesfield

The community, of about 100 families, were moved from the Baynesfield Farm in September 1974. Some were moved to Willowfontein in the Pietermaritzburg District, and others were scattered in different places such as Bulwer, Impendle, Richmond, Mid Illovo and

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the Vulindlela District. The farm is in the Richmond District.

Those who were removed from the farm tell of a will drawn up by the first owner, in which they were promised secure tenure. Now they are struggling to return to their ancestral lands.

"We lived on these farms long before the white people arrived. At a later stage, the farm came to be owned by Mr Baynes. He left it in his will that both black and white families should remain and stay on this farm.

"We were allowed to develop ourselves in this area. We were labour tenants. We paid tax/rent twice a year.

"Problems started in 1975 when the white people living on the farm started evicting the elderly and those who were no longer working on the farm. Now we are scattered in different areas as we had no place to go after being evicted from this farm.

"Before we were evicted from this farm, the land was divided into grazing land, forest and ploughing land. There was a dairy and school. We would like to continue with this process of development. We would also like to have a clinic, which we were already planning for before we were evicted."

The community who was evicted were using the land for subsistence farming and residential purposes and built a school there. Natural streams run through the area and there are forests and woodlot plantations.

Weenen

These labour tenants have suffered mass eviction since 1969. Weenen is one of the main areas in Natal where labour tenancy persisted, despite its legal abolition in the district in 1968. Under the labour tenant system, people provided labour for the farmers and this gave them the right to stay on the farms.

The first mass evictions in Weenen took place in 1969, when the abolition of labour tenancy came into practical effect. These evictions were followed by other large scale ones during the 1970s and 1980s. During May and June in 1989, large numbers of people were evicted from their homes in the Mngwenya Valley. Today, still, people are faced with the threat of removal from white-owned farms.

They want to go back to the land from which they were forcefully evicted and which they say is not being used properly now.

"These farms are not being used at the moment and they have not been developed," they say. We have held discussions with the NPA who said we must compile a programme of what specifically we want. We held a meeting at the Town Hall where we discussed this matter and also discussed the issue of the people living in tents. We want to return to those farms where we will be able to have land for cultivation as well as land for keeping our livestock. Schools and other things will follow later."

▼ Mission Land

Koenisberg

Koenisberg was communally bought and owned land. Near a mountain in the Newcastle District, it also had rivers and fountains, a forest and was suitable for cultivation and keeping livestock. The community built two schools - a lower primary and a higher primary.

Besides working the land, people worked in Newcastle and other towns. About 800 people (about 73 families) were removed from Koenisberg in 1967 and sent to Osizweni. The community wants to return to their land which they say was bought by their parents.

"Land was given to our parents by the British government. Later on our parents decided to buy the land, mainly because the land was subdivided by the government and given to white farmers. The community then decided to buy the land and were promised title deeds which we have not got up to now.

"We have united, held a meeting and formed a community committee. We also requested a lawyer to get us our deed of grant."

The land is currently administered by the Lutheran Church.

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