

'De Heer Maritz zijn lager' at the Suikerbosrand, Sep.-Dec. 1837¹

A. DOUCAKIS•

PART I

The second punitive expedition against Mzilikazi by the Potgieter, Uys and Maritz treks set out from the Suikerbosrand, Gauteng, in November 1837. P.J. van der Merwe² and R.K. Rasmussen³ have published the two most comprehensively documented reports of this expedition. Using five sources that were unknown to these researchers, this article complements their exhaustive studies. Firstly, information is provided on the route followed by the Potgieter and Maritz treks from the Sand River to the Suikerbosrand during September to November 1837, on the events that occurred during the Voortrekkers' sojourn in the Suikerbosrand, on the actual battle with Mzilikazi and on the return of the combatants to their laagers. The date of each event has been extrapolated from the few dates provided.

A startling revelation, which was strongly suspected by Van der Merwe in his definitive *Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers*, can now be confirmed: the duration

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1. This article was inspired from one written by J.S. BERGH, "Die vestiging van die Voortrekkers noord van die Vaalrivier tot 1840" in *Historia* 37(2), Nov. 1992, p. 46. In it Prof. Bergh confirms the Suikerbosrand laagers from a copy of 1839 and 1840 farm registration and request registers. However, lacking further sources, which in 1992 were unknown to me, it was not possible then to identify the locations of all the laagers. I acknowledge the sustained interest, constant suggestions and field visits of Prof. J.W.N. Tempelhoff of the Potchefstroom University for CHE, Dave Panagos and P.C. (Peet) Coetzee.
 - Alkis Doucakis has an academic interest in regional history and in his spare time is co-editing a book on Johannesburg's Doornfontein. He also conducts research for future postgraduate studies at two universities. His most recent publication research has dealt with the 1847 name change of a farm in the Suikerbosrand. It was published in 1999. He holds a B.Sc. Eng. and an M.B.A., and manages a family business. This article forms part of a research project on the history of the Vaal Triangle hinterland, which is being investigated at the Vaal Triangle Faculty of the Potchefstroom University for CHE in Vanderbijlpark.
 2. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers" in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1986).
 3. R.K. RASMUSSEN, *Migrant kingdom: Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa* (David Philip, Cape Town, 1978).

of the battle was *not nine days but three*. In addition, there are indications that the Ndebele were not driven out of the Marico district as a direct result of this expedition but that theirs was a voluntary migration.

Secondly, the precise location of the Maritz laager, its shape, its size, its fortifications and the number of wagons it comprised, have been determined and apparently substantiated from a 1944 aerial photograph. Further confirmation is being attempted from archaeological excavations.

Fourteen findings are discussed in this article:

1. Maritz laagered on today’s farm Blinkpoort 396 IR, originally known as Elandsrivier and shortly afterwards as Maritzlager, 18 km south-east of Heidelberg;
2. Maritz originally laagered on Portuurkraal—today’s farm Rietfontein, 21 km south-east of Heidelberg;
3. the Blinkpoort laager was composed of wagons that formed two non-concentric ovals, which approximated ellipses—a smaller ellipse within a larger one;
4. the outer ellipse measured 50 m along its major axis and 28 m along its minor axis; the inner measured about 23 m and 14 m, respectively;
5. this was the predecessor of Maritz’s *Sooilaer* on the Little Tugela River, the laager’s fortifications in the Suikerbosrand being composed of what must have been walls of “earth and stone”;
6. the “stone” was obtained from the stone-walled remains of nearby Sotho-Tswana ruins; Maritz used the rock from the stone walling and earth from a nearby hole that was dug to create the defences around his laager;
7. of the approximately 100 wagons that comprised the Maritz trek, about 40 wagons formed his laager, which left as many as 60 wagons as commissariat for his “division” of the commando;
8. the farm Lagerspoort—Potgieter’s laager 15 km south of Heidelberg—was originally called Onderste poort. The source used to establish most of the above findings is a manuscript that was documented by the Revd Noel Roberts around 1938 (see figure 1).⁴ He was the brother of Austin Roberts,

4. MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES, HEIDELBERG, (Hereafter HMA): N. ROBERTS, “The story of Heidelberg” (Heidelberg, 1938). Unpublished unpaginated 98-page manuscript which Roberts willed that his niece, Doreen Meth, have published after his death (in 1960). The manuscript, further, was to be delivered to the “Chief Archivist, Union Buildings, Pretoria”. (National Archives Repository, Pretoria (hereafter NAR) (formerly Transvaal Archives Depot (TAD)), MHG 856/60, death notice, last will, liquidation and distribution account.) Although Roberts’s two requests were not carried out, the manuscript found its way to the Heidelberg Town Hall. It is dated Nov. 1938, but has three other entries dated Dec. 1938, 1939 and Dec. 1941. I am grateful to Trix Rousseau of the Heidelberg Public Library for recommending Mrs Jackson of the HMA, who provided me with a copy of the document in 1998 and, in 1999, made all the town’s historical archives available to me. The words said of Austin Roberts could apply as well to Noel: “[A] man whose formal education was not extensive, but whose dedication and enthusiasm were boundless”: G.L. MACLEAN (ed.), *Roberts’ Birds of Southern Africa* (Sixth edition, Cape Town, 1993), p. ix.

author of *The Birds of South Africa* (1940). Noel's findings have been reasonably proved by reference to the earliest aerial photographs taken in 1944⁵ and to farm registration registers housed in the National Archives Repository in Pretoria.⁶ The results should shortly be better substantiated from the archaeological excavation of the actual Maritz laager.⁷ (Illustration 1) Scant information is available on the Potgieter and Maritz treks from the Sand River to the Suikerbosrand during September to November 1837. Such too is the case with the second punitive expedition in November 1837. With the discovery of the reminiscences, written in 1869, of John Montgomery (1803-1878),⁸ a smous with the Voortrekkers, a further five new findings have been made possible (see Figure 2) (Illustration 2)

9. the Voortrekkers reached the Suikerbosrand on about 4 November 1837;
10. Piet Uys arrived in the Suikerbosrand on about 6 November, whereupon "*eene grote oneenigheid*" (a serious disagreement) occurred between him and Maritz;
11. on about 14 November, 18 guides sent by Moroka arrived in the camp; there were no other blacks on the expedition;
12. there was no famed "nine-day battle" with Mzilikazi: the battle lasted but for three days, from 28 to 30 November; of the 48 000 livestock taken by Mzilikazi at the Vaal River battle and at Vegkop, about one-fifth⁹ was recovered during both punitive expeditions; and indications are that Mzilikazi's might was not broken: he left the Marico region voluntarily;
13. the commando returned to the Suikerbosrand on 8 December 1837.
14. The fifth source referred to concerns the debate that has centred on the exact date of the Vegkop battle. Of especial significance is that date recorded by

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5. Chief Surveyor-General, Survey and Land Information, Mowbray, Cape, through Map Office (Pty) Ltd, 40 De Korte St, Braamfontein, Johannesburg: job 55 of 1944, strip 26, photo 2439, 1:20 000; numerous magnifications of this photo and of adjoining photos were made to support the research.
 6. NAR, TAD, RAK 2433, farm registration and request register. The author acknowledges being informed of the existence of this register by Prof. J.S. Bergh, Head: Department of History and Cultural History, University of Pretoria.
 7. See report, to follow, by Prof. T.N. Huffman, Archaeological Resources Management, University of the Witwatersrand, of archaeological excavations undertaken at Blinkpoort 396 IR on 7 and 8 October 2000.
 8. A. GIFFARD (Ed.), *The reminiscences of John Montgomery*, (Balkema, Cape Town, 1981), pp. 117-129. Montgomery, an 1820 Settler, was one of "the outstanding leaders in . . . history and reminiscences . . . who did so much to enrich the Colony's cultural heritage". Montgomery's reminiscences are mentioned in G.H. VAN ROOYEN, "John Montgomery English Voortrekker and Voortrekker trader" in H. ROOSEBOOM (Ed.), *The romance of the Great Trek* (Pretoria, 1949), pp. 91-92. I am indebted to Prof. J. Tempelhoff for suggesting the P.J. van der Merwe Collection in the Cape Town Archives Repository, where Miss M.I. Bronkhorst found a Montgomery document in vol. 187 of ref. A2599. This led, through Montgomery biographer, K.W. Smith of Pretoria, to tracing Giffard's book. It therefore appears that although Montgomery's memoirs were available, Van der Merwe became aware of them *after* his manuscript was ready, otherwise they would surely have been included in his manuscript.
 9. Livestock losses: about 1 000 at the Vaal River battle and about 47 000 at Vegkop, of which about 6 000 were retrieved from the first commando and 4 600 from the second: $10\ 600/48\ 000=22\%$.

Captain William Cornwallis Harris, who at the time was on a hunting expedition in the vicinity and who witnessed the retreat of Mzilikazi’s army. It is interesting to note that Van der Merwe, describes Harris as the first historian of the Great Trek.¹⁰ In *The Wild Sports of Southern Africa*, in which the introduction is dated 1840, Harris records the date of the battle as having taken place “on the 29th October” 1836.¹¹ The book ran into many editions, but this date is obviously an error. However, in the unedited French version of his notes, which appears on page 69 of the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* of February 1838, the date is given as 19 October 1836.¹² It appears, therefore, that a typographical error crept in during publication of Harris’s book.

Background: Vaal River battle, Vegkop, 1st commando against Mzilikazi¹³

The inevitable clash between the northward-advancing whites and the Ndebele of Mzilikazi, who had depopulated the land to the north of the Vaal River, first occurred in August 1836. On the 15th of that month he sent an impi of about 500 warriors to the north bank of the river, approximately south of the future Potchefstroom. Here Stephanus Erasmus and his hunting expedition from the northeastern Cape had encamped.¹⁴ After destroying the camp on 21 August, murdering eight of the party and another five servants and slaves, the impi plundered five wagons, and took 23 horses and 74 oxen. It then separated and moved upstream. The larger impi force then attacked a hastily-formed laager, which consisted of 35 men belonging to Hendrik Potgieter’s *hooflaer* (main laager), on the south-western portion of today’s farm Rietpoort near Parys. In this Vaal River battle, which took place on 23 August and lasted from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., one Voortrekker and about nine servants were killed. The smaller impi force on the same day attacked the Liebenberg camp, half an hour (4½ km) up the river at

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10. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 190.
 11. See, e.g., W.C. HARRIS, *The wild sports of Southern Africa: being the narrative of an expedition from the Cape of Good Hope, through the territories of the chief Moselekatse, to the Tropic of Capricorn* (Facsimile reprint of fifth edition (1852), C. Struik, Cape Town, 1963), p. 295.
 12. NAR, TAD, A84, F. Oudschans Dentz accession, “Esquisse de l’émigration des colons habitant les frontières de la colonie du cap de Bonne-Espérance” (“Sketch of the emigration of the colonists inhabiting the frontiers of the colony of the Cape of Good Hope”) in *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* 2nd series, vol. IX(50), Feb. 1838, p. 69.
 13. With the exception of W.C. HARRIS’s *The wild sports of Southern Africa*, the contemporary works of U. G. LAUTS, *De Kaapsche landverhuizers* (Reprint of the 1847 edition, State Library, Pretoria, 1971); A. DELEGORGUE, *Voyage dans L’Afrique Australe* (Translated by F. Webb from the 1844 edition, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1990); and H. CLOETE, “Five lectures on the emigration of the Dutch farmers . . .” (Third edition, John Murray, London, 1900), give very little information on these events.
 14. The terms *laagered* and *encamped* are used interchangeably in this article.

today's Liebenbergskop, which consisted of some Voortrekkers. Fourteen were murdered plus 12 of their servants. They were one of an advance group of small treks that had dispersed along the Vaal. During this time Potgieter was on a 12-man commission, from 24 May to 2 September 1836, to explore the Soutpansberg territory in the north. The Ndebele, with a total loss of 50 men, withdrew with a booty of perhaps 1 000 head of livestock. No white children were taken. The Voortrekkers retreated on or before 31 August, some trekking to Thaba Nchu, about 60 km to the east of latter-day Bloemfontein, after stopping at the Vals River. The others went on to what was soon to become Vegkop, on the upper Renoster River some 15 km south of the future Heilbron.¹⁵

On 9 October 1836 Mzilikazi ordered his whole army of about 3 000-5 000 warriors to attack the laager, to kill all the males and to bring back alive all the females. Potgieter and Sarel Cilliers led the circular laager, which consisted of about 50 wagons and 40 able-bodied men. A patrol of about 36 men rode out and, after unsuccessfully trying to negotiate, engaged the army in retreating tactics about 10 km from the laager. Back in camp, Cilliers delivered a prayer. Under the command of Kaliphi, the ferocious battle on 19¹⁶ October lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. Before retreating, the army hurled 1115 assegais into the laager, killing two and seriously wounding

In total, the Ndebele lost over 400 men but carried away all the unprotected livestock: 6 000 head of cattle and 41 000 sheep. This completely ruined the Potgieter party. The horses, however, had been kept inside the laager. A patrol that followed the Ndebele could not retake any of the cattle. Laager conditions – hunger, infected drinking water, the stench from decomposing bodies – were unbearable. Chief Moroka sustained the *verrenueerde voorgetrokkene*¹⁷ (ruined Voortrekkers) with food, men, about 200 draught oxen and 16 milch cows for their children. This

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15. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argieffaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, pp. 1-45, 47; R.K. RASMUSSEN, *Migrant kingdom: Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa*, pp. 118-120; C. POTGIETER and N.H. THEUNISSEN, *Kommandant-generaal Hendrik Potgieter*, (Afrikaanse Pers-boekhandel, Johannesburg, c. 1938), pp. 51-58; C.F.J. MULLER, “Jan du Toit en die familieramp aan die Vaalrivier, Augustus 1836” in *Suid-Afrikaanse Historiese Joernaal*, 8, Nov. 1976, note 2 on p. 14 (I acknowledge P.C. Coetzee informing me of this article.).
 16. Van der Merwe devotes four and one-half pages (“Die Matebeles”, pp. 96-100) to the date of the battle and concludes it was 20 October 1836, but ends off with, “In case the conclusion is wrong, it cannot in any case be far wrong”. In Harris’s *unedited* journal, to which Van der Merwe does not refer, the date is given as “19 octobre”: NAR, A84, *Bulletin*, Feb. 1838, p. 69. This date coincides with Rasmussen’s conclusion (*Migrant Kingdom*, note 15 on p. 222). Harris, however, was not a witness; he obtained his information probably from the American missionaries.
 17. This variation of the Afrikaans *geruïneerde* (ruined) occurs in the minutes of the Volksraad, e.g. G.S. PRELLER (Ed.), *Voortrekker wetgewing : Notule van die Natalse Volksraad, 1839-1845 / met inleiding en aantekeninge*, (J.L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 1924), p. 86: Art. 20, 17.11.1840. *Voorgetrokkene* refers to the first Voortrekkers, i.e. those who trekked on or before 1838. Those who trekked during 1839 and 1845 were known as the *nagetrokkene*.

help, which arrived about two weeks later, enabled the defenders to trek back to Blesberg (Thaba Nchu) in two moves.¹⁸

The Maritz trek, which had departed from the Cape probably in mid-September 1836, started arriving in Blesberg from 19 November 1836. On 3 January 1837 Gert Maritz and Potgieter led a punitive expedition consisting of a commando of 107 burghers, and about 35 Griquas, 5 Korannas and 60 Tswanas (Barolong), from Thaba Nchu against Mzilikazi. Their guide was Chief Matlabe, also known as Machavie, a former captive of Mzilikazi. The commando left their wagons on the south side of the Vaal at Kommando Drift, just to the north of the Makwassie confluence. Continuing on horseback, they attacked Mosega on 17 January, about 15 km to the south of present-day Zeerust. The battle lasted from “sometime before sunrise” until 11.30 a.m. Perhaps 15 Ndebele villages were destroyed, 400 men killed and 6 000 head of cattle captured. Although none of the burghers was killed or wounded, two Tswanas were killed. The resident American missionaries under Revd Daniel Lindley returned with the commando when informed of Potgieter’s intention to mount an even larger punitive expedition against the Ndebele. The booty was divided upon re-crossing the Vaal.¹⁹

New light on the Suikerbosrand laagers and on the second punitive expedition against Mzilikazi²⁰

Preparations were soon underway for dispatching the second commando against Mzilikazi. On 13 June 1837 it was decided to send a commando of 500 men against the Ndebele. Five days later this expedition was abandoned (*gestaakt*).²¹ On 9 September 1837 Retief wrote of having received reports that “Matselikatsi has completed preparations for another attack upon us”.²² Potgieter and Maritz, shortly

18. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, pp. 49-107; R.K. RASMUSSEN, *Migrant kingdom: Mzilikazi’s Ndebele in South Africa*, pp. 120-123; C. POTGIETER and N.H. THEUNISSEN, *Kommandant-generaal Hendrik Potgieter*, pp. 59-66. Thaba Nchu is about 60 km east of Bloemfontein.

19. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, pp. 137-177; R.K. RASMUSSEN, *Migrant kingdom: Mzilikazi’s Ndebele in South Africa*, pp. 123-128; C. POTGIETER and N.H. THEUNISSEN, *Kommandant-generaal Hendrik Potgieter*, pp. 69-74; H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz* (Nasionale Pers, Cape Town, 1947), pp. 126-137, 139.

20. This section appears in greater detail, with the most important sources but without footnotes, in: A. DOUCAKIS, “New light on the second punitive expedition against Mzilikazi, 13 Sep. 1837-8 Dec. 1837” in *Yearbook of the Africana Society of Pretoria*, no. 12, 2000.

21. Journal of F. Schultz, 1837 in A. DREYER, *Die Kaapse Kerk en die Groot Trek: Amptelike en ander stukke versamel, van aantekeninge voorsien en uitgegee*, (Van de Sandt de Villiers, Cape Town, 1929), pp. 23-24; cf. Journal of B. Roedolf, 1837 in J.C. CHASE (comp.), *The Natal papers: Reprint of all notices and public documents connected with that territory, including a description of the country and a history of events from 1498 to 1843, I*, (Godlonton (Printer), Grahamstown, 1843), p. 90, where a date of 1 June 1837 is mentioned. (Hereafter C.J. CHASE, *Natal papers*).

22. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

Historia 45(2), November 2000, pp. 502-28.

after the “*grote bijeenkomst des volks*” of 13 September 1837,²³ trekked northwards with their families and livestock from near the source of the Sand River, where they were encamped.

They headed for the Suikerbosrand as it was outside Mzilikazi’s sphere of influence: during 1832-1837 his patrols did not scout that far eastwards.²⁴ After crossing the Vals River, the two treks reached Vegkop, “with all its touching recollections”, on 3 October. “The space encircled by the wagons was but small”.²⁵ This observation is consistent with the 50-odd wagons that formed the Potgieter laager: considering that there were four wagons forming the inner²⁶ of the two circles, its outer diameter would have been in the order of 70 metres only.²⁷

The trek was resumed on 6 October. The Wilge River was crossed and the southern bank of the Vaal was reached on 2nd November”.²⁸ Maritz arrived at the “Zuikerboschrand”, and Potgieter at “Potgieter’s laager”, by extrapolation, on Saturday 4 November. This date is currently thought to be the start of the nine-day battle.²⁹ These laager descriptions by Montgomery³⁰ are significant differentiations for in 1837 there was only one Suikerbosrand,³¹ that on today’s farm Blinkpoort, which Roberts confirms.³²

Maritz originally laagered at what became Portuurkraal,³³ subsequently renamed Rietfontein³⁴ 504 IR. When he moved his encampment is not known, but considering the time it must have taken him to build his defences around his laager at Blinkpoort, he could not have sojourned for many days on Portuurkraal.³⁵

Piet Uys, after having concluded a treaty with Moroka on 19 October 1837,³⁶ arrived with his commando from the Modder River on perhaps Monday 6

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23. G.S. PRELLER (ed.), “Dagboek van Erasmus Smit”, *Voortrekkermense II* (Nasionale Pers, Cape Town, 1920), p. 129.
 24. R.K. RASMUSSEN, *Migrant kingdom: Mzilikazi’s Ndebele in South Africa*, p. 99.
 25. A. GIFFARD (Ed.), *The reminiscences of John Montgomery*, p. 119.
 26. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 57.
 27. A diameter of 68 m has a circumference of 213 m. A wagon measured 13,5 ft on average,* i.e. 4,1 m. Assuming a space of 0,5 m between wagons, $213/4,6=46$ wagons. *See G.H. van Rooyen, *Kultuurskatte uit die Voortrekker-tydperk I* (Bloemfontein, 1938), p. 19.
 28. A. GIFFARD (Ed.), *The reminiscences of John Montgomery*, pp. 119-121.
 29. C. POTGIETER and N.H. THEUNISSEN, *Kommandant-generaal Hendrik Potgieter*, pp. 79, 87.
 30. A. GIFFARD (Ed.), *The reminiscences of John Montgomery*, p. 121.
 31. Today there are three Suikerbosrand sites, see South Africa, 2628DA Balfour, 1:50 000 (3rd edn), 1991 (south-east of Heidelberg); 2628CB Heidelberg (Gauteng) (west of Heidelberg); and 2628BC Endicott (south-east of Nigel). The last Suikerbosrand site is the northern extension of the original range.
 32. HMA, N. ROBERTS, “The story of Heidelberg”, Appendix B, “The Suikerbosrand laagers”, footnotes 67-86 (pp. 87-95, my pagination).
 33. NAR, TAD, RAK 2433, farm registration and request register, folio 136, no. 311.
 34. N. ROBERTS, “The story of Heidelberg”, Appendix B, above note 71 (on p. 91, my pagination).
 35. This is dealt with in greater detail under the section headed 7. Revd Noel Roberts (1880-1960) and in Table 3.
 36. G.S. PRELLER (Ed.), “Dagboek van Erasmus Smit”, *Voortrekkermense II*, p. 148.

November.³⁷ Upon Uys’s arrival there was an “intended battle” between his men and Maritz’s.³⁸ This episode is corroborated by J.J. Malan.³⁹ Montgomery, who claims that he got Maritz and Uys to an interview, writes, “I thought I should have died of laughing when they met; they abused each other like pickpockets”.⁴⁰ On a Friday, which is assumed to be 10 November, a troop of elephants was shot.⁴¹ Again, this incident is corroborated, this time by Roberts.⁴² On Tuesday 14 October, by extrapolation, 18 of Moroka’s guides arrived.⁴³ Van der Merwe, who mentions the evidence given by Matlabe at Bloemhof in 1871, reasonably confirms this number.⁴⁴

Piet Retief, not heeding Uys’s request to await his return,⁴⁵ prepared to visit Dingane. Andries Pretorius paid a short visit from his home in the Cape to Maritz’s laager in the Suikerbosrand during preparations for the commando against Mzilikazi.⁴⁶

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37. Cf. A. GIFFARD (Ed.), *The reminiscences of John Montgomery*, p. 122. This date is consistent with that proposed by J.J. Smit, *Die geskiedenis van Heidelberg, Transvaal, 1836-1877*, (MA, Unisa, 1958), note 19 on p. 24. Smit contends that as Uys signed a treaty with Moroka on 19 October, he could not have reached the Suikerbosrand before 13 or 14 days had elapsed. Assuming Uys left the following day, 20.10.1837, he could not have reached the Suikerbosrand before 2 November. The assertion that the “nine-day battle” took place from Saturday 4 to Sunday 12 November, as claimed by Potgieter and Theunissen, is thus disproved.
38. A. GIFFARD (Ed.), *The reminiscences of John Montgomery*, p. 122. Montgomery makes an inexplicable statement: “Eventually it was decided to enforce obedience upon Gert Maritz by despatching to his tent a body of 150 armed men”. As Potgieter “would not interfere one way or the other”, from where could Uys have found 150 men, considering that his party totalled 170 souls (see table 2 below)?
39. NAR, TAD, SS 4063, reminiscences of Jacob Jacobus Malan, p. 195. This document is repeated in: F.J. du T. Spies, “Herinneringe van Voortrekkers soos opgeteken deur G.A. Odé”, “Herinneringe van Jacob Jacobus Malan” in *Historia* 5(1), Mar. 1960, p. 29. Cf. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 200 where the professor, who did not have the Montgomery source at time of writing, mentions: “*geen bevestiging gevind is nie*”.
40. A. GIFFARD (Ed.), *The reminiscences of John Montgomery*, p. 123.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
42. N. ROBERTS, “The story of Heidelberg”, note 68 in Appendix B (p. 89, my pagination).
43. A. GIFFARD (Ed.), *The reminiscences of John Montgomery*, pp. 125-126.
44. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 206.
45. G.S. PRELLER (Ed.), “Geskiedenis van die Uijs-kommissie”, *Voortrekkermense I*, p. 286 and note 30 on p. 288.
46. H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, pp. 172-174. Cf. G.S. PRELLER, *Andries Pretorius* (Johannesburg, 1937), pp. 21-22; C.F.J. Muller, “Andries Pretorius se verkenningstog gedurende Oktober 1837 tot Januarie 1838, met spesiale aandag aan sy roete terug van Port Natal na Graaff-Reinet”, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 1(1), Mar. 1961, p. 6.

This second commando,⁴⁷ which was well equipped and consisted of about 313 Voortrekkers and Barolong,⁴⁸ departed on about Thursday 16 November 1837.

Maritz, due to illness, did not accompany the commando. Instead, he took charge of the *vrouelaer* (women's laager) at the Suikerbosrand.⁴⁹ Gert Rudolph, his nephew, led Maritz's men on the commando. Potgieter and Uys each led their own men. The commando travelled through the Gatsrand to Mosega, which was still in ruins, and, for the sake of mobility, they laagered their wagons⁵⁰ probably just outside the Mosega Basin.⁵¹ They then rode about 80 km north to Kapain (Gabeni)—Mzilikazi's headquarters.

The distance from the Suikerbosrand to Mosega and thence to Kapain is about 320 km. At 35 km per day the trip would take nine days plus a Sunday, which would have been a day of rest, that is, from 16 November to Saturday 25 November.

Montgomery writes that after they became "masters of the position" at sunrise [Sunday 26 November], they captured a large herd of cattle. This was left with the Barolongs at night.

Next morning [Monday 27 November], to our horror and amazement, we found the 18 Barolongs all slain, and the herd of cattle gone.

After narrowly escaping "Moselekatze's commando", they overtook their own commando, "which was collecting cattle".

Next day [Tuesday 28 November] we had a sharp engagement with the enemy, who tried to recapture the stock, but we beat them off and returned.⁵²

Montgomery makes an interesting comment:

Had Moselekatze followed us up two or three days afterwards he might have retaken the cattle and done a considerable deal of mischief, as many of the Boers rode home, leaving those who had but indifferent horses to follow. We reached our camp on [Friday] the 8th December.⁵³

This suggests that after three days of war, the Voortrekkers' horses were tired out and could do no more battle. The *verrenueerde voorgetrokkene* could only retake 4

47. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers" in *Argieffjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, pp. 196-207; H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, pp. 168-172; cf. R.K. RASMUSSEN, *Migrant kingdom: Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa*, p. 131; cf. C. POTGIETER and N.H. THEUNISSEN, *Kommandant-generaal Hendrik Potgieter*, pp. 82-85.

48. See table 2 below.

49. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers" in *Argieffjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 199; H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, p. 173.

50. H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, p. 173; C.F.J. Muller, "Andries Pretorius se verkenningsstog", p. 6. Cf. C. POTGIETER and N.H. THEUNISSEN, *Kommandant-generaal Hendrik Potgieter*, pp. 84, 94, who state that the wagons were laagered in Hartebeestfontein, in today's Klerksdorp district: P.J. van der Merwe, ("Die Matebeles..."), pp. 225-226), disputes this.

51. R.K. RASMUSSEN, *Migrant kingdom: Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa*, p. 131.

52. A. GIFFARD (Ed.), *The reminiscences of John Montgomery*, pp. 127-128.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

600 head of cattle.⁵⁴ This indicates that things could not have gone that well for the commando. For not only was this number a fraction of what they had lost, but Montgomery described the cattle as “some of which . . . were not worth the trouble of driving”, implying that they were unable to plunder the choicest stock. Further, for about 300 able-bodied men⁵⁵ to dislodge a whole tribe spread over many kilometres across the Marico valley in three days with the resources on hand would not seem possible.

Montgomery, who does not mention Deelkraal, does say that 4 600 head of cattle reached our camp . . . [and] each warrior, on division of the spoil, after deducting the expenses, received from five to seven head.⁵⁶

Deelkraal, about 33 km northeast of Potchefstroom, was the place where the captured livestock was distributed. The distance from Kapain to Deelkraal is about 170 km; having left on Wednesday 29 November and travelling at 35 km per day the journey would take five days, that is, Deelkraal would possibly have been reached on Monday 4 December, barring Sunday. The commando probably left Deelkraal on Wednesday 6 December, for the remaining 110-kilometre distance to the Suikerbosrand would have taken another three days, that is, to Friday 8 December 1837 as is stated by Montgomery.

Van der Merwe mentions that the commando had not returned by the time Retief had returned to his laager on 27 November 1837 from Dingane.⁵⁷ This is in conformity with the dates of the second commando proposed by the author: *Sunday 26 to Tuesday 28 November 1837*.

After the November 1837 campaign the Ndebele migrated to beyond the Limpopo.⁵⁸ Although there were no losses on the Voortrekker side, Mzilikazi lost 500 men.⁵⁹ The booty was, after strong disagreement between the leaders, distributed at what came to be called the farm Deelkraal in the Gatsrand. Uys’s men then left for the Modder River, and Potgieter’s and Maritz’s men rode back to the Suikerbosrand.⁶⁰ Here they decided to trek to the east of the Drakensberg (the future Natal).⁶¹

54. P.J. van der Merwe mentions figures of 3 000-6 000 head of cattle (“Die Matebeles”, pp. 217-218). Montgomery’s figure of 4 600, therefore, appears to be accurate.

55. See table 2 below.

56. A. GIFFARD (Ed.), *The reminiscences of John Montgomery*, p. 128.

57. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, pp. 206-207.

58. U. G. LAUTS, *De Kaapsche Landverhuizers* (Reprint of 1847 edition, State Library, Pretoria, 1971), p. 46.

59. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, pp. 217-218.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 207-223; H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, pp. 173-176; cf. C. POTGIETER and N.H. THEUNISSEN, *Kommandant-generaal Hendrik Potgieter*, pp. 83-95.

61. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, pp. 240-246; H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, p. 177.

Historia 45(2), November 2000, pp. 502-28.

Corroboration of dates of the second commando

Van der Merwe writes that in those days one day's journey in Southern Africa was reckoned as 20 to 24 miles,⁶² that is, as 35 km on average. To confirm this, it is checked against that taken by the first commando against Mzilikazi. Here the distance from Thaba Nchu to Mosega is about 483 km. It took Maritz from Wednesday 3rd to Tuesday 16th January 1837⁶³ to cover the distance, that is, 14 days less two Sundays or 12 days to cover 483 km, which equates to about 40 km per day. This figure agrees with that of Van der Merwe's. The return journey took from Thursday 18 January to Wednesday 31 January,⁶⁴ that is, also 12 days excluding the two Sundays.

The dates calculated above are therefore consistent with the assumed speed of travel: 35 km per day. Although 40 km per day was possible with 207 men in the first commando, it is felt that this speed could not have been maintained with the 50 per cent bigger, second commando. Assuming 40 km per day were possible, the above dates would remain unchanged except for two: the commando would have left on Friday 17 November and have reached Deelkraal on Sunday 3 December 1837.

Professor Van der Merwe's findings: 3-DAY, not 9-day battle⁶⁵

In his book, Van der Merwe states emphatically that

die een skrywer na die ander, met of sonder verantwoording vir die herkoms van sy gegewens, van die negedaagse veldslag teen die Matebeles geskrywe asof daar oor die nege dae nie die minste twyfel bestaan nie.⁶⁶

that is, every historian, with or without recourse to sources, writes of the nine-day battle as an accepted fact. Other than the unconvincing testimony of J.G.J. van Vuuren, who testified at the Bloemhof commission in 1871 that the battle had lasted for nine days, no other confirmation can be found. Van der Merwe explains that there is other evidence that is contradictory and that, according to Van Vuuren's own testimony, his memory, owing to illness, had suffered.

Van der Merwe cites two references to a three-day battle: I.J. Breytenbach's and A.H. Potgieter junior's reminiscences in the third volume of *Voortrekkermense*.

62. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers" in *Argieffaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 208.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 149.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 215-217.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

With Montgomery also apprising us of a three-day battle, the nine-day battle duration as testified by Van Vuuren must therefore be considered as incorrect.

Van der Merwe severely criticises nearly all of Breytenbach’s other information, yet his version of the second commando agrees closely with Montgomery’s. And although Potgieter junior asserted that his information refers to the first commando, Van der Merwe emphasises that Potgieter’s information can only refer to the second commando. Montgomery’s memoirs, therefore, confirmed by Breytenbach and Potgieter junior, refute the century-held belief concerning the second commando: the battle lasted not for nine days but for three.

Changes of farm names and parallel registration of farms

Potgieter, upon retiring from Natal after the battle of Italeni,⁶⁷ settled with his followers in May 1838 in what today is the northwestern Free State. On 13 June he obtained the land between the Vet and Vaal Rivers from the destitute Makwana, a chief of the Bataungs. The land was exchanged for possibly 49 cows and the promise of protection against Mzilikazi. Fourteen neighbouring petty chiefs acknowledged the transaction.⁶⁸ From 18 June 1838 Potgieter registered farms between the Vet, Sand, Renoster and Wilge Rivers, all to the south of the Vaal.⁶⁹ Towards the end of 1838 a strong patrol was dispatched beyond the Vaal to ascertain the whereabouts of Mzilikazi and to select a suitable spot for a village.⁷⁰ Potgieter and his followers then crossed the river *en masse*, possibly at the beginning of 1839, first settling along the Mooi River and in the surrounding territory,⁷¹ and then laying out Potchefstroom.

By noting the names of mountains, rivers and rande (ranges of hills) on which farms were first registered, it is possible to trace the course of farm occupation in the territory to the north of the Vaal. By the end of July 1839 occupation had extended eastwards from Potchefstroom, first to the Gatsrand and thence to the Suikerbosrand. Interestingly, the first farms to be registered, and probably occupied, were those associated with the second commando against Mzilikazi:

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67. The battle of Italeni took place on 11.4.1838: see G.S. PRELLER (Ed.), “Uit ‘t dagboek van Erasmus Smit”, *Voortrekkermense II*, p. 193.
 68. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, pp. 270-273.
 69. NAR, TAD, RAK 2433, farm registration and request register, folios 1-4; see J.S. Bergh, “Die vestiging van die Voortrekkers”, p. 44.
 70. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 276. Cf. C. POTGIETER and N.H. THEUNISSEN, *Kommandant-generaal Hendrik Potgieter*, p. 114; W.J. BADENHORST, “Die geskiedenis van Potchefstroom”, in A.J.H. VAN DER WALT, *et al.*, *Potchefstroom 1838-1938* (Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, Potchefstroom, 1939), p. 6.
 71. W.J. BADENHORST, “Die geskiedenis van Potchefstroom”, in A.J.H. VAN DER WALT, *et al.*, *Potchefstroom 1838-1938*, pp. 9-10. On 3.12.1838 Potgieter was still at the Sand River; H.S. Pretorius, H.S. PRETORIUS, D.W. KRÜGER and C. BEYERS (Eds.), *Voortrekker-argiefstukke* (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1937), p. 29: R.20/38.

De dele Kraal” (Deelkraal) in the Gatsrand⁷² and Elandsrivier in the Suikerbosrand, “*alwaar de Maritz zijn lager getrokken was*”⁷³ (to where Maritz’s laager had trekked).

All the original Suikerbosrand farms that were associated with the commando, however, had their names changed. Consequently, it has not been possible to link the new farm names with those of the old. The main reason for name changes during the pioneering years of 1839 to 1841 is due to farms frequently changing hands. In such cases some of the new applicants⁷⁴ would give the farms new names.⁷⁵ The frequency of farm changes can be attributed to a quest for finding better farms in the vast territory that lay awaiting habitation to the north of the Vaal. Some of the new farm attributes sought were for stronger springs, better grazing, more arable land and denser woodlands.

Applicants who were not satisfied with their farms could legally vacate them and cancel the registration.⁷⁶ The new applicants to such *bedankt* (declined) or *doorgehaald*⁷⁷ (deleted) farms would probably also have given the vacated farms new names.

Applicants, who had registered more farms than what they were entitled to, lost their surplus farms.⁷⁸ In such cases most of the new applicants would probably also have named their farms differently.

These cases were eliminated when De Clercq consolidated all farm requests in 1841.⁷⁹

72. NAR, TAD, RAK 2433, farm registration and request register, folio 5, no. 16: “J.H. Duplesies de oude” on 3.6.1839 registered “De dele Kraal”, no location specified, but known to be in the Gatsrand. (Cf. folio 133, no. 214: Deelkraal was also registered in parallel: see below.)

73. NAR, TAD, RAK 2433, farm registration and request register, folio 127, no. 18: Elandsrivier was probably registered sometime between 31.7.1839 and 2.8.1839.

74. Basically, *applicants* officially registered farms, or placed them on request, whereas *claimants* unofficially laid claim to farms. Although *owners* were granted farms, none need have *occupied* them. A detailed account of farm allocation—from reconnoitring; occupation or settlement; application; registration; through the testing phase; beacon erection; inspection; provision for sale; to grant—appears in A. DOUCAKIS, “The origins of Doornfontein and its adjoining farms being the earliest histories of Johannesburg, Bedfordview, Edenvale, Sandton, Alberton and Germiston 1841-1853”, *Historia* 42(2), Nov. 1997, pp. 10-12. Here, a detailed evolution from 1840-c.1860s is also presented of the method of farm inspection—that known as *een uur gaans over kruis*.

75. Names such as Ongeluksfontein and Poopkuyfontein (—hole fountain) were changed (NAR, TAD, RAK 2433, farm registration and request register, folio 56, no. 847: 28.5.1850 and folio 23, no. 208: 22.12.1848). Yet exceptions such as Bliksem, Disappointment and even Kiss-me-quick-and-go-my-honey still persist! (SURVEYOR-GENERAL’S OFFICE (comp.), *Alphabetical List of Farms in the Province of Transvaal* (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1974), pp. 11, 23, 52.)

76. G.N. VAN DEN BERGH, “Voortrekker plaasbesetting op die Transvaalse Hoëveld: ‘n versteurde beeld” in *South African Journal of Surveying and Mapping* 20(7), Dec. 1990, pp. 305-306.

77. Cf. NAR, TAD, RAK 2433, farm registration and request register, folio 6.

78. A. DOUCAKIS, “The origins of Doornfontein and its adjoining farms being the earliest histories of Johannesburg, Bedfordview, Edenvale, Sandton, Alberton and Germiston 1841-1853”, *Historia* 42(2), Nov. 1997, p. 8.

79. G.N. VAN DEN BERGH, “Voortrekker plaasbesetting op die Transvaalse Hoëveld: ‘n versteurde beeld” in *South African Journal of Surveying and Mapping* 20(7), Dec. 1990, p. 303.

Farm name	Potgieter Register II	Date	Location	De Clercq Register	Date	Location
De “roodepoort”	114 ⁸⁰ M.J. van “Stade”	31.10.39	Suikerbosrand	602 Wijnand Smit	9.11.40	<i>Oostzijde Skrbs rivier</i>
De Olifantshoek ⁸¹	115 Petrus van Stade”	31.10.39	Suikerbosrand	743 Gert Johs. Lindekwe	7.12.40	<i>Overzijde Kliprivier aan Skbsrnd</i>
De Malangskraal	116 M.van “Royen”	31.10.39	Suikerbosrand	103 David “Fransois” Jacobs Snr ⁸²	25.1.40	<i>Suikerboschrand</i>
De “Klipfontyn”	117 J.L. “Krieger”	2.11.39	Suikerbosrand	623 Carel Bernardus “Bretenbach” 72483 Isaac G. van Aswegen	9.11.40 2.12.40	<i>Suikerbo-rand naast Legerspoort Suiker-boschrand</i>
De Kafferskraal	201 P.F. “Streydom”	15.1.40	Suikerbosrand	629 W.G. Smit	9.11.40	<i>Suikerboschrand</i>
“Nooitgedagt”	207 P.D. Jacobs	15.1.40	Suikerbosrand	386 Jacs. Hurkolaas” Nell Snr	22.10.40	<i>Skrbschrnd Westzijde vn 3 koppes</i>
“Nooitgedagt”	207 P.D. Jacobs	15.1.40	Suikerbosrand	386 Jacs. Hurkolaas” Nell Snr	22.10.40	<i>Skrbschrnd Westzijde vn 3 koppes</i>
Boshoek	208 J.H. “Streijdom”	15.1.40	Suikerbosrand	108 Jacs van “Dijk”	25.1.40	<i>Suikerboschrand</i>
De “Elandsfontyn”	210 W. “Streijdom”	15.1.40	Suikerbosrand	22 H.N. Jansen van Rensburg 413 A.J. de Beer	2.8.39 30.10.40	<i>Suikerboschrand Skrbschrnd rivier</i>
De Elands-hoek ⁸⁴	218 G.A. “Deploy”	16.1.40	Suikerbosrand	74 Gert Andries du Plooy	3.12.39	<i>Suiker-boschrand</i>

Table 1: List of farms under parallel registration in the Suikerbosrand.

Note the last entry in table 1: Du Plooy shrewdly registered his farm Elandshoek with both De Clercq and Potgieter!

80. It is doubtful if Roodepoort 149 IR, situated south-west of the Klipriviersberge, could be referred to. See Roodepoort in table 5, where the same applicant requested another farm with the same name! This latter farm Roodepoort is situated in today’s City of Roodepoort.

81. This farm name has changed.

82. A short biography of David Francois Jacobs (1786-1875), who was appointed elder and catechist in 1840 “aan gene zijde der Drakensberg”, i.e. to the west of the Drakensberg”, appears in A. DOUCAKIS, “The origins of Doornfontein and its adjoining farms being the earliest histories of Johannesburg, Bedfordview, Edenvale, Sandton, Alberton and Germiston 1841-1853”, *Historia* 42(2), Nov. 1997, p. 27.

83. Of the two farms Klipfontein located in the Suikerbosrand, one (perhaps even none) of these two may have been registered in parallel.

84. This farm name has changed.

Historia 45(2), November 2000, pp. 502-28.

This occurred after the *versoening* (reconciliation) between Potgieter and the Natal Volksraad on 16 October 1840,⁸⁵ when the territories “aan Deze zijde als aan geene [other] zijde van draaksberg” united.⁸⁶

Such was the case owing to Potgieter’s originally attempting to maintain his independence in the territory to the north of the Vaal River. To counter this, the Natal Volksraad in 1839 appointed their own landdrost in Potgieter’s domain.⁸⁷ He was Jacob de Clercq (De Klerk), who was stationed at the Skoonspruit River in today’s Klerksdorp district.⁸⁸

The process of farm allocation in the Suikerbosrand would be incomplete without reviewing the concept of “parallel farm registration”. This system existed in the territory to the north of the Vaal for 15 months from 3 July 1839 to 17 October 1840⁸⁹ – one day after unification. Here, applicants claiming a piece of land would register it either with Potgieter or De Clercq, depending on whether they were *Potgieter-mense* or *Raadsgesind* (Volksraad disposed), respectively. Parallel farm registration, therefore, was the result of politics: Potgieter *registered* applicants’ farms; De Clercq placed applicants’ farms on *request*.⁹⁰ Although both terms are analogous, the latter term is the one used by the Volksraad.⁹¹

Such a system has the obvious disadvantage in that two applicants claiming the same piece of land could rightfully register it with either Potgieter or De Clercq, resulting in two parties untenably laying claim to the same piece of ground.

As the Suikerbosrand was well known to the Voortrekkers from the days of the second commando against Mzilikazi, many of these pioneers registered farms in the

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85. NAR, TAD, A3, Lyall Soutter Collection, Packet No. 2, Potchefstroom 1840-1856, Document No. 2, pp. 108-112 (originally pp. 35-39); J.H. BREYTENBACH (Ed.), “Notule van die Natalse Volksraad (1838-1845)”, *South African Archival Records* (hereafter *SAAR*) *Natal No. 1* (Government Printer, Parow, 1958), p. 350: [Art. 1], *Bylaag* 28, 1840.
86. NAR, TAD, A3, Soutter Collection, Packet No. 2, pp. 108-112; *SAAR*, *Natal I*, p. 350: [Art. 1], *Bylaag* 28, 1840. *Deze zijde* referred to “this side” of the Drakensberg: Natal. [*G*]eene *zijde* referred to the “other side” of the range: Potchefstroom and the Vet River district—in 1842 to be called Winburg.
87. G.S. PRELLER (Ed.), *Voortrekker wetgewing*, p. 11: Art. 3, 7.9.1839.
88. NAR, TAD, RAK 2433, farm registration and request register, folio 127, no. 9: 22.7.1839. De Clercq’s biography appears in C.J. BEYERS and J.L. BASSON (Eds.), *Dictionary of South African biography* V (Human Sciences research Council, Pretoria, 1987), p. 168.
89. NAR, TAD, RAK 2433, farm registration and request register, compare folios 5 and 127, 15; G. van den Bergh, “Voortrekker plaasbesetting”, pp. 302, 304.
90. In this article the more concise term, *registered*, is used instead of the more accurate term, *placed on request*, in those cases that involve De Clercq.
91. J.H. BREYTENBACH (Ed.), “Notule van die Volksraad van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek”, *SAAR*, *Transvaal No. 3 (1854-1858)* (Government, Pretoria, 1951), p. 523: Art. 215; F. JEPPE and J.G. KOTZÉ (comps), *De locale wetten der Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek. 1849-1885* (Celliers Volksstem Drukkers, Pretoria, 1887), p. 67: Art. 215.

region from the end of July 1839. Consequently, over nine cases⁹² of parallel farm registration⁹³ have been traced in the vicinity where Potgieter and Maritz had laagered. The following farms were affected in the Suikerbosrand (see table 1 and map 1⁹⁴).

The Suikerbosrand laagers

The available information on these laagers, which sojourned from November to December 1837 in the Suikerbosrand, is very scanty.

1. Professor P.J. van der Merwe (1912-1979)

The most comprehensive published account of these laagers is given in Prof. Van der Merwe's manuscript: *Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers*.⁹⁵ Its translation⁹⁶ follows:

Based on the brief evidence given years later by some contemporaries, one gets the impression that Potgieter's and Maritz's followers laagered in one and the same place in the Suikerbosrand. Barend Oosthuyse, however, speaks in the plural of "de laagers" and F.P. van Gass of "ons laagers" at the Suikerbosrand. D.F. Kruger gives more precise details. He informs us in addition that two laagers were encamped close to one other in the vicinity: Potgieter was the commandant of the laager in which Kruger was a member; Maritz was the commandant of the other laager. According to the evidence of Gert Lukas Joubert, the laager to which his parents belonged stood in Lagerspoort at the Suikerbosrand River. S.J. Cilliers also informs us that they laagered "voor Lagers Poort" and his brother Johannes says "te Lagerspoort". Since Sarel Cilliers was a

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92. G.N. VAN DEN BERGH, "Voortrekker plaasbesetting op die Transvaalse Hoëveld: 'n versteurde beeld" in *South African Journal of Surveying and Mapping* 20(7), Dec. 1990, table 1 on p. 304. Of the 22 parallel-registered farms that are recorded in the table, four, or 18%, were situated in the Suikerbosrand. De Clercq registered 66 farms in the Suikerbosrand from about 31.7.1839 to 7.12.1840. Of these, the farms 22 Elandsfontein, 110 Uitkomst, 112 De bovensse poort, 145 de Maritzlager, 345 do(o)rnkop, 387 Welgevonden and 613 Groenfontein, i.e. seven farms, are duplicated as they changed hands, etc., during this time. Of the 22 farms registered here by Potgieter (NAR, TAD, RAK 2433, farm registration and request register, folios 7, 10, 11, nos 114-117, 199-212, 218, 219, 267-268), nine were registered in parallel. This left 13 non-parallel-registered farms. Thus from the total of 72 (66-7+13) farms registered in the Suikerbosrand, nine, i.e. 13% of the total, were registered in parallel. This percentage figure is higher owing to double counting as some farm names were changed in the interim. In such cases new farm names were given. Unfortunately it has not been possible to determine when the names were changed to obtain a more accurate figure.
93. Although this proved to be a complication then, historical information is obtainable from such a *versteurde beeld* (distorted image).
94. Map of farms surrounding the Potgieter and Maritz laagers in the Suikerbosrand. Source: Based on F. JEPPE and C.F.W. JEPPE (Comps.), *Jeppe's map of the Transvaal or S.A. Republic and surrounding territories* map 5 (Pretoria, 1899).
95. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers" in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 197.
96. All translations from Afrikaans into English have been undertaken by the author.

member of the Potgieter trek, it must have been Potgieter’s laager that stood at Lagerspoort in the Suikerbosrand. One would also deduce this from the evidence of J.H.B. de Beer. From maps, the present-day farm Lagerspoort is located ten miles [16 km] S.S.E. of Heidelberg, Transvaal.⁹⁷

It would therefore appear that there were two laagers, one under Maritz and the other under Potgieter. The latter encamped on the farm that later became Lagerspoort. Uys had no laager in the Suikerbosrand; his was at the Modder River.⁹⁸

2. Voortrekker J.H.B. de Beer

When Odé documented oral traditions of the Great Trek in 1894-1895,⁹⁹ one of his informants was De Beer, who stated unequivocally that *Potgieter encamped on Lagerspoort* near Heidelberg.¹⁰⁰ De Beer’s other evidence appears generally credible.

3. Historian Gustav S. Preller¹⁰¹

In his fourth volume of *Voortrekkermense*, Dr. Preller supplies more information on the above-mentioned Jouberts. Quoting from Dr. S.P. Engelbrecht,¹⁰² Preller says that they “originally belonged to the Potgieter trek, as in the beginning they went to the Suikerbosrand”. Gert Lukas Joubert, writing in his bible in 1892, says:

97. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 197.

98. H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, p. 177.

99. W.J. DE KOCK and D.W. KRÜGER (Eds.), *Dictionary of South African biography* II (Cape Town, 1983), p. 522. Odé’s interviews that were not recorded in *Voortrekkermense* have been documented in issues of *Historia*. See F.J. DU T. SPIES, “Herinneringe van Voortrekkers”, *Historia*, 5(1), Mar. 1960, pp. 19-29; 5(2), June 1960, pp. 117-119; 4(3), Sep. 1959, pp. 170-178; 4(4), Dec. 1959, pp. 235-245; See also F.A. Steytler, “Van tye wat was” in *Historia* 2(2), Sep. 1957, pp. 109 *et seq.*

100. NAR, TAD, SS 4059, Odé documents, J.H.B. de Beer, p. 38: “*t Laager van Laagerspoort in Heidelberg behoorde tot den Trek van Potgieter*”.

101. Dr Preller’s biography appears in: W.J. DE KOCK (Ed.), *Dictionary of South African biography* I (Human Sciences Research Council, Cape Town, 1968), pp. 643-647.

102. Dr Engelbrecht’s biography appears in C.J. BEYERS and J.L. BASSON (Eds.), *Dictionary of South African biography* V, pp. 242-243. Biographer Prof. A.D. Pont observed that Engelbrecht had “an extraordinary ability to trace and collect sources”.

Historia 45(2), November 2000, pp. 502-28.

in het jaar 1837 is wij hier in Lagerspoort gekoomen, in
Zuikerbosrantrivier.¹⁰³

Dr J.C. Visagie states that G.L. Joubert, born in 1826, trekked with his parents under Piet Retief, “although according to the reminiscences of the just-mentioned Gert Lukas Joubert, it would appear that [his father] Adriaan Josua Jacobus was, for a short while, under A.H. Potgieter”.¹⁰⁴ According to Joubert, therefore, Potgieter laagered on Lagerspoort.

4. Voortrekker J.P. Marais¹⁰⁵

Odé recorded the reminiscences of the above who also referred to Lagerspoort:

2de commando van Suikerboschrand, welke plaats nog heet Laagerspoort (the farm that is still called Lagerspoort) onder A.H. Potgieter en Maritz.¹⁰⁶

This information suggests that Potgieter was associated with Lagerspoort, otherwise the sentence would have read . . . “*onder Maritz en A.H. Potgieter*”.

5. Lecturer Klaas Bonsma (1871-1958)¹⁰⁷

Another account of these laagers is given by Bonsma. He is described as one who undertook much research into the early history of Heidelberg dorp and district. K. Bonsma was a lecturer in Holland and English, with (Senator, from 1948) T.A. Dönges, at the Heidelberg Normal College from August 1909. Bonsma’s other subjects were geography, nature study and history.¹⁰⁸

103. G.S. PRELLER (Ed.), “Herinnerings van Johanna P. Smit (geb. De Beer)”, *Voortrekkermense IV* (Nasionale Pers, Cape Town, 1925), note 2 on p. 110. This note, which specifies “*nader besonderhede openbaar gemaak*” in *De Volkstem* of 20.12.1922 was not found. A search from 15 to 30.12.1922 in *De Volkstem* and in the *Volksblad* was commissioned but no reference was found relating to Joubert. An undated and unnamed newspaper article was, however, found in: Hervormde Kerk Argief, Jacob Mare Street, Pretoria: S.P. Engelbrecht Versameling, P. 10/1/9: *Op 20 Februarie 1900 is . . . oorlede mnr Gert Lukas Joubert, een van die min persone wat lewend uit die bloedbad te Bloukrans in 1838 gekom het. . . Waarskynlik, so meen prof. S.P. Engelbrecht . . . het die Jouberts tot die Potgieter groep behoort, want hulle het nie dadelik na Natal getrek nie maar eers na Transvaal gegaan en in ‘n laer langs die Suikerbosrand gestaan*.

104. J.C. VISAGIE, “Voortrekker-stamouers” (ms awaiting publication, Stellenbosch, 1996), “Joubert, Adriaan Josua Jacobus”. I am indebted to Dr Visagie for his permission to quote from his monumental manuscript awaiting publication. I acknowledge the help of genealogical researcher Emmerentia van Rensburg of Pretoria for informing me of the existence of this manuscript. (The work was published in the second half of 2000 by the University of South Africa.

105. D.W. KRÜGER and C.J. BEYERS (Eds.), *Dictionary of South African biography III* (Human Sciences Research Council, Cape Town, 1977), pp. 580-581. Here his name is spelt Jacob Philippus Maré. I acknowledge genealogical researcher Emmerentia van Rensburg of Pretoria for informing me of this source.

106. NAR, TAD, SS 4063, Odé documents, reminiscences of J.P. Marais, p. 113; F.J. du T. Spies, “Herinneringe van Voortrekkers . . . J.P. Marais”, *Historia* 5(1), Mar. 1960, p. 19.

107. NAR, TAD, MHG 4398/58, *sterfkennis*.

108. P.W. LÖTZ, *Geskiedenis van die ontwikkeling van die onderwys aan blankes in die distrik Heidelberg, Transvaal van 1839 tot 1950* (M.Ed., PUCHE, 1952), pp. 1, 121, bibliography iii.

On 8 December 1938, Bonsma was appointed secretary of the historical subcommittee in Heidelberg for the Eeufees Ossewa-trek (Centenary Ox-wagon Trek). He was also commissioned to obtain the oldest history of the Heidelberg district and town.¹⁰⁹ A document signed by K. Bonsma titled “Iets uit die geskiedenis van Heidelberg, Dorp en Distrik. 1838-1938” is dated 8 December 1838.¹¹⁰ His signature follows “*Namens die Komitee*”.¹¹¹ He writes:

The evidence of descendants of the oldest white inhabitants of the district, a careful study of the terrain and a comparison of several historical sources, suggest with near certainty that Potgieter and his followers after they trekked across the Vaal River, laagered on the present Blinkpoort. Actually it was two laagers: a smaller laager at Laerspoort [*sic*] and a bigger one at Blinkpoort.

According to Bonsma, Potgieter laagered at the future Blinkpoort. Unfortunately no sources are quoted, other than Bonsma’s stating that he obtained his information from “the evidence of descendants of the oldest white inhabitants of the district”. In another document, Bonsma states:

The best knowledge of the history of these environs is without doubt [that from] the Revd Noel Roberts, All Saints Church, Rectory Booyens [Johannesburg. See below.]. During his stay here at Heidelberg he spared no time or trouble to acquaint himself with the historical facts concerning the first white inhabitants of the district.¹¹²

This statement need not imply that Bonsma took all his findings from Roberts.

6. Post-graduate student Johannes Jacobus Smit

In his Master’s dissertation on Heidelberg’s history, Smit quotes from Bonsma,¹¹³ and supplies oral information he obtained from Heidelbergers in 1958. From the farm Geluk, which today is a portion in the north-western part of Lagerspoort,

Mrs Maria Strydom informs that her parents told her that the spot [of Voortrekker graves] indicates where the wagon laager of Gert Maritz stood during the second punitive expedition against Silkaats [Mzilikazi].¹¹⁴

109. HMA, K. Bonsma, Heidelberg, to G.S. Preller, 12.9.1938.

110. NAR, TAD, A179, P.H. Langenhoven Accession: Voortrekker-eeufees Heidelberg, pp. 1, 9.

111. Introductory information on Accession A179 in the NAR, TAD.

112. HMA, File W.144¹) titled “Geskiedenis van Heidelberg (Mnr. Bonsma) Stadsklerk Heidelberg afdrukke” and “Sub-file (W.144¹) Korrespondensie omtrent oudste geskiedenis van Heidelberg. 89 pages”

113. J.J. SMIT, Die geskiedenis van Heidelberg, Transvaal, 1836-1877, pp. 19, 24.

114. *Ibid.*, p. 23 and note 16 on p. 23.

Historia 45(2), November 2000, pp. 502-28.

She was the daughter of Bêrend Jacobs,¹¹⁵ the son of Voortrekker G.G. Jacobs.¹¹⁶ The latter became the owner of Lagerspoort in 1859.¹¹⁷ Gabriel G. Jacobs was the son of Commandant P.D. Jacobs (bapt. 1780-1845), one of the most successful Cape Colony farmers, who held the rank of “*2de lid van den Krygs-Raad*” at the battle of Blood River.¹¹⁸

On emigrating from the Cape Colony, Jacobs and his two oldest sons joined Maritz’s laager in Natal on 15 November 1838.¹¹⁹ The original contact in Natal with Maritz may, 120 years after the event, have been confused with that in the Suikerbosrand.

7. Reverend Noel Roberts (1880-1960)¹²⁰

Attention should be paid to Roberts as his unpublished account of the laagers is, as far as is known, the only one ever to state that Maritz laagered at two different sites in the Suikerbosrand. The move was made so that he could be closer to the Potgieter’s encampment. This has recently been confirmed by archival sources.¹²¹ As to the location of the laager at Blinkpoort, Roberts names his informants, all three of whom are traceable. Roberts, however, also says that Potgieter laagered on today’s Blinkpoort.

115. NAR, TAD, MHG 0/9004, death notice: “Barent” Jacobus was the seventh child of G.G. Jacobs.

116. J.J. SMIT, *Die geskiedenis van Heidelberg, Transvaal, 1836-1877*, p. 23 and note 16 on p. 23. During extensive enquiries made on seven field trips from June to Nov. 1999 with Heidelbergers knowledgeable in the town’s history and with farmers in the surrounding district, *nobody* had heard of the Suikerbosrand laagers! Only two farmers had heard of Maritz and Potgieter having encamped on Lagerspoort and Blinkpoort, respectively. (Many more trips were made to Blinkpoort after Nov. 1999.)

117. Office of the Registrar of Deeds, Pretoria (hereafter Deeds Office): Farm Register No. 65, “IR 394-410”, Lagerspoort 406 IR, folio 406/1: Gabriel Gerhardus Jacobs was granted (“*Goew. Trp*”) the farm measuring 4 110 morgen 216 sq. roods (3 521 ha) on 18.7.1859. A check was undertaken to ensure that no other Gabriel Gerhardus Jacobses could have owned the farm. There were two other such Jacobses but they died in the Cape (J.A. HEESE and R.T.J. LOMBARD (Eds.), *South African Genealogies 4 (J-K)* (Human Sciences research Council, Pretoria, 1992), p. 45.). The author gratefully acknowledges the help of Gerry Levin, Consulting Geologist, for showing him how to undertake research in the Deeds and Surveyor-General’s Offices.

118. J.C. VISAGIE, “Minder bekende Voortrekkerleiers” in *Historia* 35(1), May 1990, pp. 47-49. This was the well-known Comdt P.D. Jacobs of Blood River fame; A. DOUCAKIS, “The origins of Doornfontein and its adjoining farms being the earliest histories of Johannesburg, Bedfordview, Edenvale, Sandton, Alberton and Germiston 1841-1853”, *Historia* 42(2), Nov. 1997, p. 27.

119. G.S. PRELLER (Ed.), “Uit ‘t dagboek van Erasmus Smit”, *Voortrekkermense II*, p. 251.

120. NAR, TAD, MHG 856/60, death notice. A short biography appears in appendix II below.

121. See table 3 below.

In his 98-page manuscript titled “The story of Heidelberg”,¹²² there is an Appendix B on page [87] titled “The Suikerbosrand laagers”.¹²³ As this source is not available in any library¹²⁴ nor in any archives, the relevant parts are reproduced, unedited, below:

[p. 87] In view of the public interest in the Voortrekker Centenaries being observed during recent years, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to the Suikerbosrand laagers, which played such an important part in our early history....

This may be due, partly, to . . . three distinct sites which are claimed by tradition to be the “Voortrekker lager”, which might be confusing were it not . . . that, prior to 1838, the “Suikerbosrand laagers” are always referred to in the plural, indicating that there was more than one....

[p. 88] All I have been able to learn from men of 80 and even over 90 years of age has been that their fathers or grandfathers had told them about these laagers but they had not been sufficiently interested to visit them personally....

The *traditional sites* are located as follows :-

1. Lat. 26 . 37’ 30” S. & Long. 28 . 25’ E. on the farm LAGERSPOORT 310 [406 IR], situated at the foot of a steep and high mountain, on the right [north] bank of the Sugar Bush River where it emerges from the hills to the North-East of the Heidelberg-Villiers road. From information gathered on the spot it appears that the lager [*sic*] stood close to the house now occupied by Mr. van Breda.

2. Lat. 26 . 30’ 4” S. [*sic*, possibly 26° 34’] & Long. 28 . 30’ 1” E. [*sic*, possibly 28° 31’] On the farm BLINKPOORT 208 [396 IR]. The site of this lager was pointed out to Fanie Bronkhorst in 1849 by his father Hendrik Bronkhorst.

[p. 89] Bronkhorst [*sic*] at the site on which he and other members of the Potgieter group, had made their lager. He, in his turn, described the spot to Mr. Albert Schultz as being “on the portion of Blinkpoort occupied by Paulus du Toit”. He said it was at the base of the hill, and that, opposite a

122. The manuscript details a comprehensive history, its bibliography containing 19 frequently used published sources. In addition Roberts refers to another 21 published sources, three newspaper and two periodical reports, two archival sources, a record from the Deeds Office in Pretoria, two diaries and oral evidence from five persons.

123. After documenting his findings on pages [87-91] of Appendix B, he tries to reconstruct Potgieter’s, Maritz’s and Uys’s movements from May 1837 to December 1837 on pages [91-95]. His 1938 reconstruction, which contains a number of errors by today’s standards, is annotated with footnotes that quote mostly from *Voortrekkermense II* and *III*.

124. On 13.9.1999 the CPSA Archives in the William Cullen Library of the University of the Witwatersrand accepted an accession from V.H.A. Roberts, nephew of Noel Roberts, consisting of the reverend’s church correspondence, a multitude of photographs, autobiography titled “My dossier”, etc.

spur which jutted out from the ridge, there was a grave of a little girl who was the only person who died while they were encamped there. [Endnote on Groenfontein Pan omitted.] Mr. Schultz had never visited the spot, but on December 27 1938, he agreed to accompany me in a search. [*sic*] for the place and, following the description given Fanie Bronkhorst, we had little difficulty in locating the lager and grave exactly as described.

[p. 90] All that can be seen of the lager, today, is the remains of *an old mound of earth and stone* [my italics], enclosing an irregular, roughly circular spaced [*sic*] about 100 yds [91 m] in diameter in the centre of which there is a similar circular enclosure of about 10 yds. in diameter. Just outside the wall there is a depression, alongside of a heap of stones, which may possibly mark the site of a well or water supply. To the East the ground rises to the base of a high stony ridge still covered with luxuriant Proteas from which the name “Suikerbosrand” was derived. [Endnote on Suikerbosrand naming omitted.] To the West and North the ground falls away across unbroken veld which evidently was the area which was cultivated by the Voortrekker party. These lands, covering a couple of hundred acres are enclosed on the two sides by the Sugar Bush River forming a triangle with the ridge as its base. The lager was placed *in the middle of this base line* [my italics], and lies due east of Voorbeeld or Spruytsrus Halt.

[p. 21] . . . Potgieter set his face Northwards once more and crossing the Vaal River established a laager on the Suikerbosrand [Endnote on Hartebeestfontein omitted.] on the *Eastern bank* [my italics] of the Sugar Bush River near Spruytsrus Station.

[p. 91] The nature of the site bears a marked resemblance to that of the lager at VEGKOP.

The grave is situated about 120 yards to the North-East of the encampment, and is in line with the stony kopje which forms a spur of the ridge, exactly as described by Fanie Bronkhorst.

3. There is a third site (26 . 36' . S. & 28 . 0' 32" E. [*sic*, probably 28° 32' east]) on the farm RIETFONTEIN 72 [504 IR], which also boasts of a tradition of being a “Voortrekker Lager”. From a defensive point of view this site would have been ideal, as it occupies a large plateau protected by steep sides and rendered practically impregnable to attack by natives by stone Skanse [*sic*].¹²⁵ Unfortunately much valuable evidence was destroyed when the same site was occupied by British troops during the Anglo-Boer War.

125. The sentence should probably read: *From a defensive point of view this site would have been ideal, as it occupies a large plateau protected by steep sides and, with the aid of stone skanse (fortifications), the site would be rendered practically impregnable to attack by natives.* Roberts may have known that Maritz had brought two small cannons from the Cape Colony (H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, p. 96, note 7 on p. 265).

Historical evidence

In my efforts to solve the problem of these lagers I have personally investigated each site, and . . . have come to the conclusion which I have summarised as follows:-

(1). After the Mosega fight [Jan. 1837] Potgieter trekked from Thabanchu and formed a lager (at Blinkpoort) in the Suikerbosrand, . . .

[p. 92] (2). Maritz . . . trekked to the Suikerbosrand (and encamped at Lagerspoort, about eight miles West of Potgieter’s laager) (Endnote 72: VTM [*Voortrekkermense*] III . 89.)

[p. 93] (6) As it was not likely that two lagers so far apart as Blinkpoort and Lagerspoort could be protected by Pretorius [*sic*] by only forty men, it is reasonable to assume that, before the expedition started, Maritz moved his lager from the latter site [Lagerspoort] to Rietfontein, within easy reach of Potgieter’s lager at Blinkpoort. The two laagers were not merged. (Endnote 77: VTM Vol. III 44 & 146.) This would account for the two adjacent lager sites.

Discussion

Two contradictory pieces of evidence are presented: the published sources of Van der Merwe and Preller, and the evidence of Voortrekker J.H.B. de Beer, state that Potgieter encamped on Lagerspoort, whereas the Heidelbergers¹²⁶ Bonsma, Smit, and especially Roberts, claim that Potgieter encamped on Blinkpoort. The saving grace comes from the Heidelbergers themselves who, according to Bonsma, informs: “*Eintlik was dit twee laers: ‘n kleiner een op Laerspoort en ‘n groter een [my romans] op Blinkpoort*”. Of the two treks, Maritz’s was the larger.¹²⁷ It consisted of “not less than one hundred waggons”¹²⁸ and 200 able-bodied men,¹²⁹ whereas Potgieter had about 50 wagons and 40 able-bodied men at Vegkop. The numbers of the Potgieter trek may have been slightly higher in the Suikerbosrand if those members of his trek who bypassed Vegkop rejoined him subsequently.¹³⁰ Even though Potgieter’s laager in the Suikerbosrand was augmented by the Malan

126. Bonsma was born in Holland. Smit lived in Balfour. Roberts was stationed in Heidelberg 1934-1938 (William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, CPSA Archives, N. ROBERTS, “My dossier: An auto-biography” (Typed manuscript, Booyens, Aug. 1944), p. 254).

127. H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, p. 95.

128. G.M. THEAL, *History of South Africa from 1795 to 1872* II (Fifth edition, Allen & Unwin, London, 1926), p. 294.

129. H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, p. 96.

130. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, pp. 47, 91, 91.

Historia 45(2), November 2000, pp. 502-28.

trek¹³¹ of about 30 wagons,¹³² the total number of wagons was still less than that of the Maritz laager. It is assumed that Gert Rudolph, who led Maritz's men, was included in the Maritz total.¹³³ Rudolph was a lesser-known Voortrekker leader who led his own trek, which comprised 20 wagons.¹³⁴ In any case, at the Suikerbosrand Maritz's followers, who totalled about 700, exceeded those of the Potgieter, Uys and Malan treks combined. Indications, therefore, are that it was members of the Maritz trek who encamped at the bigger, Blinkpoort, laager. After a time span of 100 years, it appears that the oral evidence¹³⁵ handed down by the Heidelbergers was altered to the extent that Potgieter encamped at the bigger of the two laagers.

To confirm which was the bigger of the two laagers, an attempt is made to reconstruct the numbers of individuals comprising the treks to the Suikerbosrand. (See table 2).

Table 2 confirms that the number of Maritz's followers, wagons and able-bodied men, outnumbered those of the other three treks combined. It therefore appears that the Maritz' laager at Blinkpoort was bigger than that of Potgieter's at Lagerspoort.

P.t.o for Table 2

Table 2: An approximation of the numbers of followers, wagons and men of the Maritz and Potgieter laagers at the Suikerbosrand.

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131. Although Potgieter had a small following—he was excluded from the council of policy (*Raad van Politie*) on 17 April 1837—there is an indication that it was decided at the “*grote bijeenkomst des volks*” of 13 September 1837 that the laagers be of approximately the same size: cf. G.S. PRELLER (Ed.), “Herinneringe van Ferdinand Paulus van Gass”, *Voortrekkermense I*, p. 16, where “at the Vaal River . . . it was decided that the people . . . would stay in groups of 50 to 60 wagons . . . while trekking to the Suikerbosrand”.
 132. G.S. PRELLER (Ed.), “Herinneringe van Ferdinand Paulus van Gass”, *Voortrekkermense I*, p. 10. Cf. J.C. VISAGIE, “Minder bekende Voortrekkerleiers” in *Historia* 35(1), May 1990, pp. 50-51: Malan, Hercules Philip.
 133. This is assumed as Thom states: “Naturally they did not all trek together from Graaff-Reinet, but in small groups . . .”: H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, p. 96.
 134. J.C. VISAGIE, “Minder bekende Voortrekkerleiers” in *Historia* 35(1), May 1990, p. 55.
 135. See pertinent comment on oral tradition handed down 100 years after the event in P.J. VAN DER MERWE, “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers” in *Argieffjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 159 lines 5-11 (and 12-18).

“De Heer Maritz” at Suikerboschrand

NAME OF TREK	NO. OF FOLLOWERS	NO. OF WAGONS	NO. OF MEN
Gert Maritz	700 ¹³⁶	>100 ¹³⁷	200 ¹³⁸
Piet Uys	170 (14.8.1837) ¹³⁹ at Caledon, say 25 able-bodied men to Suikerbosrand	<i>Vrouelaer</i> at Modder River: 72 wagons; ¹⁴⁰ 0 laagered at Suikerbosrand ¹⁴¹	say 25
Potgieter & Cilliers	200 ¹⁴² -losses (15 at Vaal River+2 at Veg-kop)+say 20 rejoined after Vegkop 203	50 ¹⁴³ at Vegkop + say 5 ¹⁴⁴ rejoined after Vegkop _ 55	<40 at Vegkop ¹⁴⁵ + say 5 ¹⁴⁶ rejoined after Vegkop 45
Hercules Malan	15 families, ¹⁴⁷ say 100	30 ¹⁴⁸	say 25 ¹⁴⁹
TOTAL	say 1 028	>185	say 295 ¹⁵⁰

136. A. DREYER, *Die Kaapse Kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 188; H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, p. 96.
137. G.M. THEAL, *History of South Africa from 1795 to 1872* II, p. 294; J.F. VAN OORDT, *Paul Kruger en de Opkomst der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*, (HAUM, Amsterdam, 1898), p. 32.
138. H.B. THOM, *Die lewe van Gert Maritz*, p. 96.
139. Originally the Uys trek comprised over 100 followers in 23 wagons (*Grahamstown Journal*, 20.4.1837 as quoted in I.S. UYS, *Die Uys-geskiedenis 1704-1974* (Heidelberg, 1974), p. 39; C.J. BEYERS (Ed.), *Dictionary of South African biography IV* (HSRC, Durban, 1981), p. 671). His trek was augmented by smaller treks at Thaba Nchu, which increased Uys's following to 170 (J.C. CHASE, *Natal papers* I, p. 104). Cf. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers" in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, note 58 on p. 198, note 90 on p. 202.
140. J.H. MALAN, *Boer en barbaar, of, Die geskiedenis van die Voortrekkers tussen die jare 1835-1840, en verder van die kaffernasies met wie hulle in aanraking gekom het* (Nasionale Pers, Bloemfontein, 1918), p. 198.
141. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers" in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, pp. 197, 240, 241, 242.
142. H.J. HOFSTEDE, *Geskiedenis van den Oranje-Vrijstaat, in verband met eene korte geschiedenis der aangrenzende kolonien, vooral der Kaapkolonie, volgens bezworen verklaringen der Voortrekkers en de archieven, documenten en proclamatien*. (Thieme, The Hague, 1876), p. 34. Interestingly, on Potgieter's return from Natal, his following had increased to 150 men with their families. See J.F. VAN OORDT, *Paul Kruger en de Opkomst der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*, p. 46.
143. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers" in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 53.
144. The figure—an estimate—is taken from the number who fled from the patrol that rode out to engage the Ndebele before the battle of Vegkop. See G.S. PRELLER, *Voortrekkermense I*, p. 128: 5 fled; S.J. du Toit, *Di Geskiedenis van Ons Land, in di Taal van Ons Volk* (Second edition, Du Toit, Paarl, 1895), p. 203: 6 fled; G.S. PRELLER, *Voortrekkermense IV*, p. 28: 7 fled.
145. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers" in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 67.
146. The 34 remaining able-bodied men at the Vaal River battle (P.J. VAN DER MERWE, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers" in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, pp. 45, 60) plus the 12-man Potgieter commission (P.J. VAN DER MERWE, *Nog verder noord* (Nasionale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1962), p. 167) totals 46 able-bodied men.
147. J.C. VISAGIE, "Minder bekende Voortrekkerleiers" in *Historia* 35(1), May 1990, p. 50.
148. G.S. PRELLER (Ed.), "Herinneringe van Ferdinand Paulus van Gass", *Voortrekkermense I*, p. 10.
149. Cf. G.S. PRELLER (Ed.), "Herinneringe van Ferdinand Paulus van Gass", *Voortrekkermense I*, p. 22, who mentions about 18 men in four families (Hercules Malan, Jakobus Malan, Jacob Swart and Braats). It is assumed that the other two families (Viljoens and Bothmas, after the trek split up) consisted of about seven men.
150. P.J. VAN DER MERWE, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers" in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis* 49(2), 1986, p. 205 concludes: "It is, however, dangerous to depend on evidence that is so muddled (*verward*)", after quoting the following figures: Van Vuuren >>first commando, S.J. Cilliers >200, Hatting 400, A.H. Potgieter junior 400, Sarel Cilliers 330, G.J. Kruger 135; H.B. THOM, *Gert Maritz*, p. 172 specifies 330, quoting as follows: Moodie (Sarel Cilliers?) 330, Potgieter and Theunissen 360; R.K. Rasmussen in his *Migrant kingdom: Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa*, p. 131, gives a figure of 360 upon quoting from Potgieter and Theunissen. The figure of 295 established in the table is closely corroborated by Montgomery: "There were three divisions of 100 men each, under the command of Piet Uijs, Potgieter, and Rudolf": A. GIFFARD (Ed.), *The reminiscences of John Montgomery*, p. 127. To this figure must be added 18 of Moroka's men, i.e. 313 men in total.

To be continued

Opsomming

“De heer Maritz zijn lager” aan die Suikerbosrand, Sep.-Des. 1837

Die tweede kommando teen Silkaats deur Potgieter, Uys en Maritz het vanaf Suikerbosrand, Gauteng, in November 1837 uitgetrek. Die twee mees omvattend gedokumenteerde beskrywings van hierdie kommando is gepubliseer deur P.J. van der Merwe en R.K. Rasmussen. Met gebruikmaking van vyf bronne wat aan hierdie navorsers onbekend was, vul hierdie artikel hulle uitvoerige studies aan.

Ten eerste, informasie word verskaf oor die roete wat deur die Potgieter- en Maritztrekke gevolg is vanaf die Sandrivier na die Suikerbosrand gedurende September tot November 1837, oor die gebeurtenisse wat plaasgevind het gedurende die Voortrekkers se verblyf in die Suikerbosrand, oor die werklike slag teen Silkaats en oor die vegters se terugkeer na hulle laers. Die datum van elke gebeurtenis is geëkstrapoleer van die paar datums wat verskaf is.

‘n Opsienbarende onthulling, waarvan Van der Merwe ‘n sterk vermoede gehad het, soos blyk uit sy gesaghebbende “Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers”, kan tans bevestig word: Die slag het *nie nege dae geduur nie maar drie dae*. Verder, daar is aanduidings dat die Ndebele nie verdryf is as ‘n direkte gevolg van hierdie kommando nie maar dat hulle migrasie vrywillig was.

Ten tweede, die presiese plek van die Maritzlaer, sy vorm, sy grootte, sy vestingwerke en die getal waens waaruit die laer bestaan het, is bepaal en blykbaar bevestig deur ‘n lugfoto van 1944. Verdere bevestiging staan verkry te word uit argeologiese uitgrawings.