EMPIRE, WAR & CRICKET

IN SOUTH AFRICA

LOGAN *of* MATJIESFONTEIN

DEAN ALLEN

ADVANCE REVIEWS

This book is a significant contribution to the burgeoning field of sports history and society. The author does well to demonstrate the linkages between sporting endeavours and wider societal currents in South African society during the heyday of empire. It is more than just a sports history and also more than just a political history. Its strength is the way in which it melds the two to provide a new perspective on a turbulent South African past. **Professor Albert Grundlingh – Chair: History Department, Stellenbosch University.**

Dean Allen's book is an example of original biographical history at its best. He has used extensive archival material from South Africa and the UK – some of which he accessed for the very first time – in order to explore the important themes of sport, politics, and power during a key period of South African and British Imperial history. He cleverly relates James Logan's love of cricket and his personal career to the wider processes of colonialism. **Professor Jennifer Hargreaves – Consultant and Visiting Professor of Sports Sociology, University of Brighton.**

Empire, War and Cricket explores the many complexities and contradictions of South African sport in its formative years. Using the life and career of James Logan as its lens, this is a book that offers a unique insight not just into cricket, but also into South African society on the eve of war. It is essential reading for cricket lovers in particular, sports fans in general and anyone interested in the history of South Africa. **Professor Tony Collins – Director, International Centre for Sports History & Culture, De Montfort University.**

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To David Rawdon (1924–2010)
and the people of Matjiesfontein

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FOREWORD

A series of publications have in the past decade and a half debunked some key founding myths of cricket in South Africa – for example, long-held notions that cricket was somehow a 'pure' game unsullied by politics, introduced and played on the African veld in a fair-minded way by British gentlemen. Historians have begun to show that the reality was somewhat different. Cricket's development in this country was closely tied to the process of military conquest, exclusionary colonialism, and harsh political and social attitudes that eventually led to apartheid.

Big gaps in our knowledge, however, still remain, and it is necessary for researchers to revisit in detail the source material in order to avoid easy political positions and to better understand specific aspects of both the old British colonial narrative and the complex nature of the early game in South Africa. *Empire, War and Cricket in South Africa* is therefore a welcome new addition to the historiography. Dean Allen's book joins a limited list of unique studies that illustrate the way in which cricket in this country became part of a transcontinental spiderweb of commerce, culture and politics from the late nineteenth century onwards. It deepens our understanding of the past by looking closely at the experiences, modus operandi and self-perceptions of an early colonial entrepreneur who (in the course of accumulating great wealth from a modest base) also became a pioneering patron of cricket.

James Logan was representative in many ways of a grasping late-nineteenth-century cowboy capitalism that came to reshape and dominate the subcontinent, while holding aloft the flag of 'fair play', 'civilisation' and 'empire'. Together with contemporaries like Cecil John Rhodes, this Scottish-born entrepreneur was in the vanguard of an accelerating expansionism at a time when the British bore few doubts about their historic mission.

Coinciding with Rhodes's and Logan's growth in prosperity (and the beginnings of organised cricket and tours), Britain 'acquired' almost five million square miles of new territory and about 88 million new subjects in the thirty years between 1870 and 1900. By the turn of the century, its empire stretched over an area of more than twelve million square miles and included around 460 million people. It occupied nearly one quarter of the world's area and almost one quarter of the world's total population. The British Empire was described by one historian as 'by far the most enormous imperial system that the world had known',[1] putting it on roughly the same scale in terms of size and population as today's new pace-setting BRICS alliance between Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

By the time of Queen Victoria's death in 1901, there were approximately 100 million people of 'British stock' living in territories beyond the United Kingdom. Historians have noted that cricket's 'geographical spread matched that of British expansionists who were part of the direct and indirect British Empire'.[2] Tests and tours became an important part of a cultural imperialism designed to cement ties between Britain and her dependants and it was not long before South Africa was accepted into imperial cricket's exclusive 'club of empire'. As Jack Williams has observed:

> Test cricket was played only between England and colonies or former colonies. As cricket was believed to express a distinctively English morality and as apologists for the Empire stressed the moral obligation to extend the benefits of British rule, the nature of cricket as an imperial game meant that cricket and imperialism became mutually supporting ideologies.[3]

The colourful James Logan rose to prominence as a sponsor of the game within this context. In Altham and Swanton's *A History of Cricket*, he was described as 'the second of the three great patrons of [South African] cricket', alongside

Sir Donald Currie and Sir Abe Bailey.[4] Logan helped to popularise cricket in South Africa and he became an important and controversial figure in the economic, cultural and political life of the Cape Colony. Despite this there has remained a dearth of information about Logan and the influence he had on the game's development at the end of the nineteenth century. Now, more than a hundred years later, Dean Allen has stepped forward to help redress this situation in an interestingly eclectic work.

Allen's book profiles an influential personality during a pivotal period in South Africa's history. Through his patronage of cricket, James Logan invented a particular identity for himself in the colonial situation, and we read here also about his involvement in several important historical episodes: from his role in Cape politics – where he was ultimately responsible for the downfall of two governments – to his involvement in the Jameson Raid, the South African War, and the 'money politics' that prevailed around the turn of the twentieth century.

It was during the war, when his patronage of cricket culminated in his very own privately sponsored tour by 'South Africa' to Britain in 1901, that James Logan's influence and profile reached a high point. The tour was afforded first-class status by the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC). Allen's account here shows how significant it was beyond cricket as well. The tour took place while the war was still on, leading to considerable controversy. It was the crowning achievement in Logan's association with the game. Using contemporary sources, Dean Allen examines the public reactions to the tour and the context in which it happened, adding significantly to our knowledge of early South African cricket history. In attempting to sketch the life of James Logan on a wider social and political canvas, he has also added to our broader understanding of South Africa's history.

Professor André Odendaal
CEO, Western Province Cricket Association
Newlands, Cape Town
October 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SOUTH Africa is in my blood. My love affair with the country began when I first arrived in the Western Cape almost twenty years ago. The people and the place struck a chord within my soul and I have been returning ever since. I first visited Matjiesfontein in 1997, and like many I was captivated by this unique place in the vast surrounds of the South African Karoo.

Acquired in 1968 and restored to its former glory by the late David Rawdon, Matjiesfontein is today a national treasure representative of South Africa's rich and colourful colonial past. As a thriving monument to the Victorian era and to the workings of the British Empire, it is surprising that precious little has been written about the history of Matjiesfontein or its Scottish creator, James Douglas Logan. As a historian, and as a friend of the town, I am honoured to be able to make this contribution.

This book is based on a PhD completed in 2008, and I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Jennifer Hargreaves and Dr Marc Keech, for all their help and assistance throughout the course of that study. Special gratitude goes to Professor Hargreaves, whose support and guidance, starting at Brunel University in London in 2003, was a major factor in the project. I had the honour of being her final PhD student.

This book would not have been possible without the generous backing of the Rupert Foundation. I am extremely grateful for their kind support and the work they do in promoting South African history and culture. The road in bringing

this work to publication has been a long and at times challenging one, and I remain indebted to those special people who stood by me and who supported this project from the beginning. Thanks go to Marlene Fryer and Robert Plummer of Penguin Random House (Zebra Press) in Cape Town for restoring my faith in the publishing world.

I am grateful to Mike Hall for his work on a number of the photographs in this book and I am thrilled that these wonderful images have been reproduced here in all their glory. My gratitude goes to John Young, for his invaluable efforts in editing earlier versions of the manuscript and for his insights into South African and cricket history, as well as to Rob Meintjes and Claire Adlam for their contribution during the latter stages of the editing process. Thanks also go to Helen Moffett and Graham Viney for their help with earlier chapters of the book.

I am indebted to the staff of the many libraries and archives I have used throughout the United Kingdom and South Africa. Particular mention must be made to the staff of the South African National Library in Cape Town, as well as the librarians of the Special Collections Department at Stellenbosch University, whose help and friendship have played such a big part in my research over the years. Special thanks to Mimi Seyffert and in particular to Hanna Botha. This book would not have been possible without Hanna's incredible faith and support over the past few years. My gratitude also goes to the late Major John Buist (the grandson of James Logan) and his daughter Jenny, who allowed me access to their private family archives. Unless otherwise stated, the images used throughout this book are from this special collection. The fact that many of these artefacts have since been sold makes this book even more important. It has been a privilege to have been able to tell James Logan's story.

This book has been the culmination of living and working in South Africa over the past two decades. It has been a tremendous journey and now, along with the West Country of England, I am proud to call Cape Town 'home'. A special mention for all my good friends, particularly Carol van Vuuren, Lee Willcock and Lorrimer Esselaar: your hospitality and kindness have made my time in South Africa all the more rewarding. I would also like to thank Professor Elizabeth Bressan, who first allowed me the opportunity to study at Stellenbosch University all those years ago. Her guidance will always be appreciated.

I owe so much to the late 'Laird of Matjiesfontein', David Rawdon, a man of

exceptional faith and generosity, and whose passion for life and history inspired me to write this book. It was through David that I came to know all the wonderful people of Matjiesfontein – and it is to them that this book is dedicated. I hope that this book goes some way to ensuring that the history of this unique place is preserved and that its future is assured. This was David's sincere wish. Gratitude goes to David's family and to Liz McGrath and her team for their dedication and passion for Matjiesfontein and for taking over where David left off.

Finally, and certainly not least, my special thanks go to my parents Les and Gill, whose support throughout this long yet absorbing study has been unyielding.

I could not have done this without you all.

Dean Allen
Cape Town
December 2014


SOUTH AFRICA, 1899
Bulawayo
SOUTHERN RHODESIA
PORTUGUESE EAST AFRICA
GERMAN SOUTH-WEST AFRICA
BECHUANALAND
TRANSVAAL
Pietersburg
Komati Poort
Lourenço Marques
Pretoria
Johannesburg
Swazi-land
Vryburg
Klerksdorp
ORANGE FREE STATE
Ladysmith
Kimberley
Port Nolloth
Bloemfontein
Basutoland
Pietermaritzburg
Belmont
NATAL
Durban
Springbok
CAPE COLONY
De Aar
Naauwpoort
Stormberg Junction
Queenstown
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Beaufort West
Graaff-Reinet
INDIAN OCEAN
Touws River
East London
Matjiesfontein
Port Alfred
Worcester
Cape Town
Port Elizabeth
0 100 200 300 400 500 km

INTRODUCTION

THE SPORT OF EMPIRE

CECIL John Rhodes once said he had only met two creators in South Africa – himself and James Douglas Logan,[1] the orchestrator of the 1901 South African cricket tour to England. James Logan was born in Scotland in 1857. The son of a Borders railwayman, he immigrated to South Africa in 1877. There his enterprise within the burgeoning colonial society quickly earned him a fortune. Logan was an important figure culturally as well as politically; the story of his colourful life and contribution to the game of cricket in South Africa is revealed here for the first time.

At the conclusion of his country's tour to England in 1904, South African cricketer Ben Wallach recorded the following:

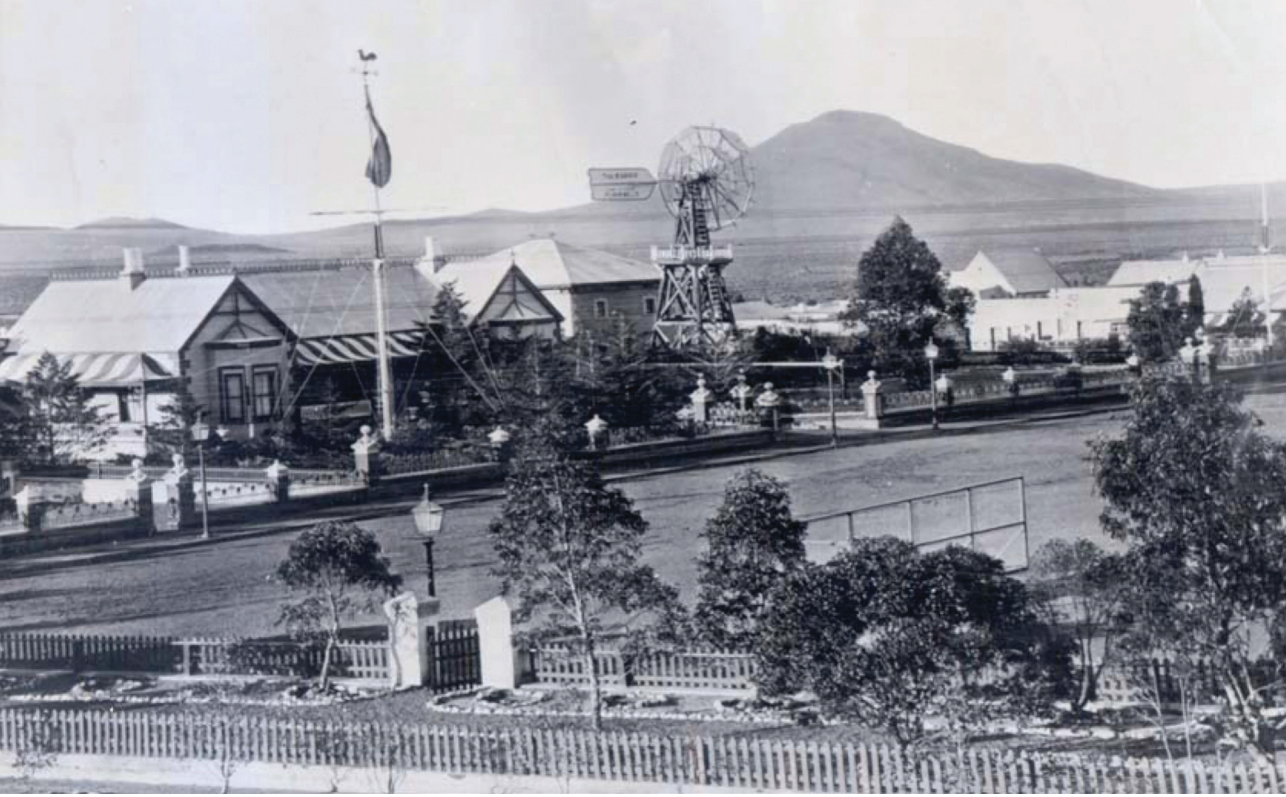
> I do not think the public of this country and England fully realise the generosity of gentlemen like Mr Bailey and Mr Logan who finance these cricket tours, which bring the colonies into closer and more friendly contact than any other means; but I can assure them that the men who have – thanks to them – fought South Africa's cricket battles are greatly indebted to them, and no doubt the appreciation of the larger public will come in good time.[2]

While the role of Sir Abe Bailey has been recognised over the years, very little has been written to date about the contribution of James Logan to the development of cricket in South Africa. More than one hundred years have passed since Wallach made his plea, and this book aims to address the situation. The archetypal

colonial, James Logan left the class confines of Britain during the 1870s to make his fortune on the frontiers of the British Empire. His untold history, including his influence on the development of Victorian society, Matjiesfontein in the Karoo and cricket in South Africa, is the inspiration for this work.

The story is set within a significant period in South Africa's history. The Victorian age was a period of expansion and the British Empire was at its peak. The population explosion which the British Isles witnessed during 1750–1900 left room for mass emigration as British subjects, like Logan, sought, and were encouraged to seek, new opportunities in the colonies. As much to do with commercial and industrial growth as with race or morality, competition from newly industrialised European nations saw Britain accelerate its expansionist policy in the last decades of the nineteenth century, benefiting those with the drive and ambition to succeed in the new colonies.[3] Cecil Rhodes was not alone in hailing the capabilities of James Logan in his new surroundings. 'If more men of the type of Mr Logan came to South Africa, a few years would quite transform the colony,' declared the *Westminster Gazette* in 1893 in the 'Story of a Successful Colonist'.[4] Ambitious, determined and opportunistic, Logan had arrived in South Africa at a time when British imperial intentions were focused upon achieving control of the region and he was set to prosper.

At a time when Victorian society was being redefined by the public schools and cricket promoted as the 'sport of empire', the imperial mission for the colonies was the 'export of the gentlemanly order' with an emphasis on individual effort and the values of order, duty and loyalty.[5] In this period of transformation, men of Logan's newly acquired status took to paternalism as 'squires to the manner born', attempting to recreate abroad the hierarchy which they were familiar with at home. Despite his own modest working-class background, Logan quickly aspired to climb the social ladder within colonial South Africa and was successful in combining business and politics as well as cricket to achieve his aims. He came to be known as the 'Laird of Matjiesfontein'. In many ways, James Logan epitomised the process of cultural imperialism forged between Britain and its colonies. The development of Matjiesfontein and the creation of Logan's own personal empire is explored as a backdrop to the influence this industrious Scotsman had not only on the development of cricket in South Africa but also on the politics and wider history of the period surrounding the Anglo-Boer War.



Matjiesfontein, Cape Colony, *c.* 1890

Today the Victorian village that Logan fashioned at Matjiesfontein lies a discreet half mile off the national road through the Karoo – 150 miles from Cape Town along the 1200-mile route through Johannesburg to Zimbabwe – still reeking of empire, war and cricket. It was a mere railway siding graced with a solitary iron shed when James Logan first saw it. Its stark surrounds reminded him of the landscape surrounding his home town of Reston in Berwickshire. There the similarity ended. Logan's Victorian settlement derives its name from a sedge commonly known as *matjiesgoed*, from which the indigenous Khoikhoi, nomadic pastoralists, made mats used in the construction of their dome-shaped huts. Logan might have been conscious of the ancient culture of the Khoikhoi and the veldcraft they used to survive in this harsh landscape for thousands of years. To his credit, he ignored suggestions that his village be renamed Logansville. So the irony of a Victorian village named Matjiesfontein survives.

Logan had the village built from scratch with materials imported from Glasgow. The lamp posts came from London. The Laird's personal staff came from Aberdeen

and throughout Scotland. The doctor hailed from a village close to Logan's birthplace in the Borders. Matjiesfontein had its own cricket pitch. The first English cricket sides to visit these shores played here. During the Anglo-Boer War cricket matches were played between the villagers and the British forces. Matjiesfontein was a home away from home.

Lord Randolph Churchill was an early visitor in 1891, followed by His Highness Prince Sayyid Ali, the Sultan of Zanzibar. During the Anglo-Boer War 12 000 British troops camped around the village, including the Coldstream Guards, Seventeenth Lancers and Middlesex Regiment. Matjiesfontein's Hotel Milner, completed in 1900, housed a machine gun in its turret. Major-General John French, Lord Ironside and Lord Roberts, commander-in-chief of the imperial forces, all marched down the main street.

Matjiesfontein is the stuff of legend – a magical Victorian village in the sun-drenched, wind-swept Karoo. A 'heavenly lark', a seventies guidebook has called it. A British war hero lies buried here. So does one of England's cricketing greats. Empire builder Cecil John Rhodes was a frequent guest. Rudyard Kipling spent time writing here. Olive Schreiner was so drawn to its blend of civilisation and the wilds that she lived and wrote here. Much is the pity that the founder of Matjiesfontein declined her offer to write his biography.

Historian B.L.G. Swart has left us with an evocative image of Logan's village: The trees and gardens were immaculate; the buildings kept in perfect condition, neatly whitewashed and painted, and the main street in front of the houses always swept clean. Logan was as meticulous about the neatness of his village as his own appearance. A Mrs Maritz, an early resident, recounted how the 'Laird' was very particular and a stickler for tidiness. The streets were regularly cleaned and the inhabitants would not dare to leave paper, weeds or other rubbish in front of their houses. Logan would think nothing of it to knock on the front door and order the inhabitants to remove unsightly litter. This was usually accompanied by a moral lecture.[6]

Matjiesfontein belonged to Logan and here he ruled, a landlord with the strictest authority. This was 'civilised behaviour' at the frontier. His painful neatness, according to his daughter Gertrude Buist, was inherited from his parents in Reston, and this he imprinted everywhere on Matjiesfontein and at his show farm, Tweedside, where his farm labourers received free cottages on condition

James Logan and family, late 1890s

that they kept them clean. If the Scot found a sign of litter, however, the labourer paid ten shillings a month in rent.[7] Logan was also a meticulous dresser. Each morning when not away on business, wearing a dress shirt and with a flower in the buttonhole of his jacket, swinging his walking stick, he would survey the houses in his sanctuary before progressing to the station to meet the arrival of the morning's train. Drawing on his customary cigar, Logan made a point of chatting with passengers as they headed for breakfast in his dining rooms. Not forgetting his roots as a railwayman back in the Borders, he would treat the engine driver and fireman to refreshments while they waited.

It was the late nineteenth century and South Africa had become the focus of Britain's vast empire. James Logan's time had come.

1

'THE IDEAL COLONIST'

JAMES Douglas Logan was born in Scotland on 26 November 1857 at Reston, a small Berwickshire town close to the English border. Set against a working-class background and one of five children, Logan's formative years were steeped in a strict family tradition instilled by his father, James Logan senior, who, like many of the working population of Reston, was employed by the North British Railway Company. Robert Toms, in *Logan's Way*, describes a happy yet 'resourceful' childhood, recounting how the Logan family income was supplemented by poaching – something to which the young James Logan appeared more than adept. 'Mr Logan's family in Reston were rabbit trappers,' recalled a local man many years later, 'and I remember that Mr Logan apparently got into trouble with the police and was due to appear in court on charges of poaching. He disappeared before court proceedings and went to South Africa.'[1] An apocryphal story, perhaps, but an early indication of the controversial nature of a man whose destiny lay elsewhere.

Logan's upbringing would shape his future. Resolutely proud of his Scottish heritage and close-knit Borders community, the nurturing influence of his mother and disciplined work ethic instilled by his father were part of the young Scot's education. Despite economic hardships, James Logan was keen to progress and with the support of his parents showed early promise at Reston House School. 'He is an excellent penman and a good arithmetician, besides being extremely smart and clever,' declared Logan's headmaster. 'I should rejoice to hear of him

Logan's parents

obtaining a good situation, and I have no doubt that he would discharge his duties to the satisfaction of his employers.'[2] Such confidence was vindicated when, after an audacious spell at sea as a cabin boy, Logan returned to Reston to join his father, as expected, as a clerk of the Scottish Railways at the town's station.

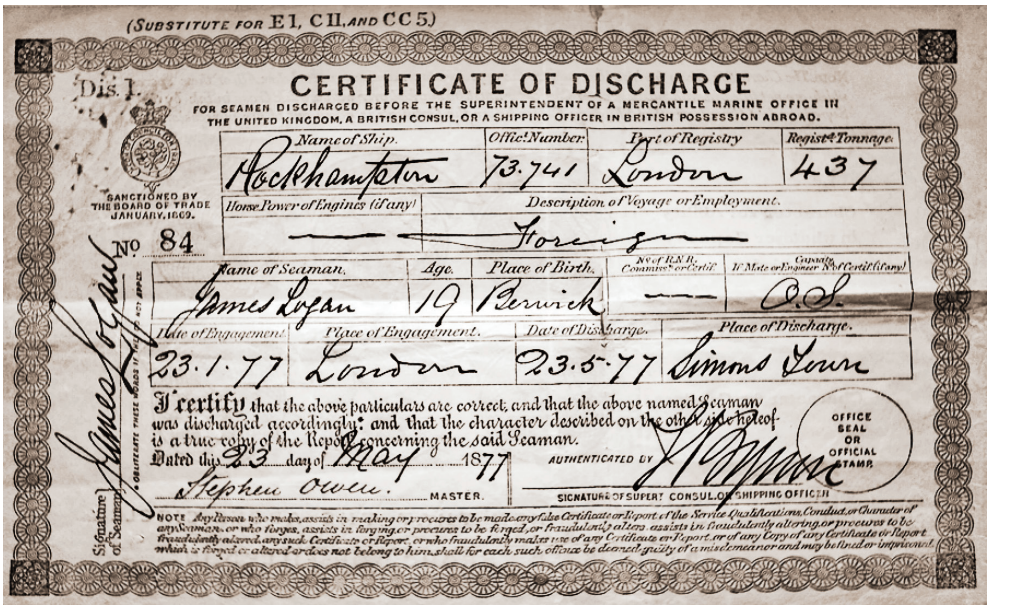
His aptitude for such work was noted by the management of the North British Railway Company and he was soon marked for promotion. Despite his admiration for his father, Logan was determined to be his own man. By now his ambitions had far outgrown the confines of the rigid class structure that defined Victorian Britain. Abroad, the British Empire was expanding and the colonies were offering the promise of a new beginning for Britain's working class. In South Africa, as one analyst suggested, 'money was the criterion … We didn't have any class other than a money class. There was no aristocracy.'[3] Inspired by this philosophy, James Logan, like thousands of others of his generation, decided that opportunity and, more importantly for him, status, were easier obtained in British enclaves overseas.

The empire appeared full of possibility to those with ambition. Having already experienced a world beyond Reston, in January 1877 Logan surprised his employers and parents by resigning his position and travelling to London with the intention of securing a passage to Australia. On the 23rd of that month he signed as an apprentice of the *Rockhampton*, a sailing ship of 437 tons, which regularly made the trip to the Antipodes. On 12 February 1877, with a general cargo and a number of emigrants aboard, under the ownership of W.M. Anderson and Company, the ship left the Port of London bound for Rockhampton in the British colony of Queensland. Working the voyage was the nineteen-year-old James Douglas Logan.

Where it all started: Reston Station, Berwickshire, Scotland, *c.* 1870s

It was fate that brought James Logan to the Cape instead of his intended destination of Australia. On 1 May 1877 the young Scotsman put foot ashore in South Africa for the first time after the *Rockhampton* was damaged during a storm nearing Cape Point and had to undergo repair work at the British naval port of Simon's Town. Frustrated by the delay, on 23 May 1877 Logan seized his opportunity by securing an official discharge from the ship's master, Stephen Owen. He headed to Cape Town, which at the time was a strategic part of the British Empire and a thriving colonial outpost, to seek employment.

Years later, the circumstances surrounding Logan's arrival would become folklore and part of the legend surrounding the man. Some sources have suggested that his ship was wrecked by a storm in the bay and that Logan was lucky to swim to shore in just the clothes he was wearing. Another story states that on leaving the ship, Logan was forced to walk the thirty or so miles into Cape Town with just five pounds in his pocket. His daughter, Gertrude Buist, always denied this claim, however, and it is to be doubted, given the availability of rail transport from Wynberg to Cape Town at that time. Nevertheless, such tales did little harm to the success and public reputation of James Logan in later years and he was never drawn on the accuracy of these accounts. The fact that Logan



(SUBSTITUTE FOR E 1, C II, AND CC 5)

Dis. 1.

CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE

FOR SEAMEN DISCHARGED BEFORE THE SUPERINTENDENT OF A MERCANTILE MARINE OFFICE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, A BRITISH CONSUL, OR A SHIPPING OFFICER IN BRITISH POSSESSION ABROAD.

SANCTIONED BY THE BOARD OF TRADE JANUARY, 1869.

No. 84

Name of Ship.	Offic. Number	Port of Registry	Regist. Tonnage
Rockhampton	73741	London	437

Horse Power of Engines (if any)	Description of Voyage or Employment.
—	Foreign

Name of Seaman.	Age.	Place of Birth.	No. of R.N.R. Commiss. or Certif.	Capacity in which Employed. If Mate or Engineer No. of Certif. (if any).
James Logan	19	Berwick	—	O.S.

Date of Engagement.	Place of Engagement.	Date of Discharge.	Place of Discharge.
23.1.77	London	23.5.77	Simons Town

I certify that the above particulars are correct, and that the above named Seaman was discharged accordingly; and that the character described on the other side hereof is a true copy of the Report concerning the said Seaman.

Dated this 23 day of May 1877

Stephen Owen. MASTER.

AUTHENTICATED BY

SIGNATURE OF SUPERY. CONSUL OR SHIPPING OFFICER.

OFFICE SEAL OR OFFICIAL STAMP.

Signature of Seaman. James Logan

* OBLITERATE THESE WORDS IF THE CERTIFICATE IS NOT SIGNED.

NOTE. Any Person who makes, assists in making or procures to be made any false Certificate or Report of the Service, Qualifications, Conduct or Character of any Seaman, or who forges, assists in forging or procures to be forged, or fraudulently alters, assists in fraudulently altering or procures to be fraudulently altered any such Certificate or Report, or who fraudulently makes use of any Certificate or Report, or of any Copy of any Certificate or Report which is forged or altered, or does not belong to him, shall for each such offence be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined or imprisoned.

James Logan's Certificate of Discharge, 23 May 1877

had arrived in the Cape by 'good fortune' alone, made his story all the more compelling.

By the 1870s Cape Town was a bustling port, a centre for trade and commerce with a rapidly developing infrastructure, and with the discovery of minerals in the north the country braced itself for transformation. James Logan's career in South Africa started at a time when the land was marked by a flourishing economy. New possibilities and needs were created when diamonds were discovered at Kimberley.[4] One urgent need was an improved rail and transportation system throughout the interior. Surely the timing of Logan's arrival in South Africa could not have been better.

The construction of Cape Town's new railway station was nearing completion. Having impressed a Mr Dell, official of the Cape Province Railway Service, Logan began work as a porter at the station, earning little over five shillings per day. His progress, however, was rapid. At that time the transport wagon was the only means of conveyance. Railways became a necessity to take the place of this slow and expensive mode of travel. Until 1873, the railways that linked Cape Town

Simon's Town, Cape Colony, shortly after James Logan's arrival

with Wellington and the interior were in the hands of the private Cape Town Railway and Dock Company. For the necessary expansion to occur, the Cape government endeavoured to take over the running of the railways in 1874.[5] Ten years later, lines from Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London were linked at De Aar, reaching Kimberley the following year. Schemes of imperial expansion were rife throughout South Africa and Logan's timing was opportune. When he joined the Cape Province Railway Service in 1877, the South African Railways was still in the initial stage of development and his experience of the Scottish Railway administration contributed to his rapid promotion within a week from porter to the clerical department of Salt River Station.

Further promotions followed when he was appointed station master at Cape Town's newly completed station. Logan quickly impressed those in authority, and such was his competence in the post that it was not long before the young Scot was offered the position of district superintendent of the railway section between Hex River and Prince Albert in the Karoo. He was to be stationed at Montagu

Adderley Street, Cape Town, early 1880s

Road, which in 1883 changed its name to Touws River. For Logan, however, the appointment carried with it an unexpected problem. The Karoo was isolated territory and the railway authorities, aware of this, decreed that the incumbent for the post must be married within three months of being appointed. Characteristically, Logan set about finding a wife and within months had proposed to and married Miss Emma Haylett, the well-connected daughter of Christopher Haylett, the proprietor of the popular White House Hotel in Cape Town. The establishment, situated in Strand Street, was popular with members of the Cape Legislative Assembly and would provide Logan, who was more than adept at networking, with many useful contacts. In addition, Emma's mother came from one of the oldest and best respected Dutch families in the colony – the De Villiers family of Villiersdorp.

In Emma, Logan had found a loyal, intelligent and dutiful companion who, like

most good Victorian wives, supported but never out-shone their spouses. Together they successfully created a home on the frontier, and it was a marriage full of compassion and fondness. Charismatic and forthright, Logan was undoubtedly a charmer. He enjoyed the company of women, but his letters throughout his marriage to Emma display a genuine love and admiration for his wife. Emma knew her place in the marriage and provided the stable family environment that Logan needed to be successful in all other areas of his life. As one contemporary wrote some years later: 'Mr Logan was fortunate in drawing this prize in the matrimonial lottery and in his wife has found a true helpmate in the early days of hard work and worry … By her goodness of heart she never failed to endear herself to those fortunate enough to be her friends.'[6] In his capacity as district superintendent of the railways at the age of twenty-one, the newlywed James Logan moved to the Karoo for the first time on 5 August 1879. Robert Toms paints a poignant picture of the scene he and his young wife would have faced:

> The line even in those days threaded its way first through verdant valleys in which imposing farm homesteads nestled in lush farmlands on the lower slopes of the mountains. Sixty miles from Cape Town Jimmy Logan and his bride would have reached a small station called Hex River. From here the rail track became increasingly mountainous, twisting its way steeply upwards among craggy peaks, until suddenly the crags were behind them and they were moving through a strange semi-desert tableland covered with a variety of aloes and other succulents. A pitiless sun might well have shone on a landscape forged by time and fringed by distant, tinted mountains, mountains mutely proclaiming that they had stood thus for a million years. This was the Karoo.[7]

'The effect of this scenery is to make you so silent and strong and self-contained,' wrote Olive Schreiner on her arrival in the region a decade later.[8] The country appealed to Logan. Raised in the Scottish Borders, he found familiarity in the wide open plains of the Karoo and the sense of space and freedom they offered was invigorating. It did not take long for him to establish himself at Touws River. Both his children were born there – James junior in 1880 and a daughter, Gertrude, two years later.

Family was important to Logan and as a parent he was a strict yet loving

Logan's daughter Gertrude and wife Emma

father. Fiercely patriotic and principled, Logan brought up his children with a sense of duty and responsibility while allowing them the freedom to grow and develop in the abundant space and natural beauty of the Karoo. Particular attention was paid to the schooling of Logan's son, Jimmy, who, at a young age, was sent back to his father's native Scotland to attend the exclusive Blair Lodge Academy near Edinburgh. Here Logan junior received a privileged education that centred on the life lessons of sport and cricket. In later life, the marriage of Jimmy to a widow with two children would cause an irreparable split between father and son. A devout churchgoer, James Logan would never fully recover from the disappointment of his son's marriage. While his daughter would eventually marry a high-ranking officer in the British Army, many considered the rift with his son to be Logan's greatest regret.

Through his marriage and early business dealings, Logan had become increasingly well connected. Alongside his rail duties, in 1882 he became caterer for refreshments at the town's station as well as the tenant of Frere's Hotel.[9] This would be the Scot's first foray into the lucrative rail catering market. Logan also held the post of deputy postmaster in the area, for which he received £144 per annum. It was here in Touws River, according to one scholar, that Logan began to lay the foundation of his great business empire: 'This undertaking, … which stretched eventually to Bulawayo from Cape Town, was to place this former castaway in a strong independent position which could easily be compared with that of Cecil Rhodes.'[10] Certainly Logan was quick to see opportunities. His new location meant he was presented with an ever-increasing upsurge of rail travellers to the newfound diamond fields at Kimberley and the gold mines of the Rand. Having already negotiated the lease of the only hotel in Touws River,

'Cricket's education'. James Logan junior, seated on the ground front left

within a year Logan had resigned from the railway service to devote his full attention to his burgeoning catering activities.

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James Logan now sought, and quickly found, his own wider personal horizon. With expanding ambitions, his focus turned to Matjiesfontein, a small railway siding thirty-four miles north of Touws River. The site consisted of little more than a solitary iron shed and a makeshift platform of loose Karoo stones. As it was remote and undeveloped, land in this region was inexpensive and in 1883

Logan the hunter (middle) at Matjiesfontein, mid-1880s

Logan was able to purchase 3 500 morgen (about 7 700 acres) for the sum of £400. Owning land for the first time in his life, Logan could now hunt and take horse rides across his own stretches of the Karoo. The days of poaching for rabbits in the Scottish Borders were long gone. South Africa was providing opportunities Logan could scarcely have dreamed of back in his native Berwickshire.

Against the prevailing background of a buoyant economy, Logan's plan was to take full advantage of the increasing levels of rail traffic heading to the north, and he needed a base from which to do this. After completing the transaction, the Scot established himself and his young family permanently at Matjiesfontein, leaving behind an astonished community at Touws River. The small town had served its purpose well, and in a relatively short space of time Logan had succeeded in making his mark in the area.[11] Yet from now on it was at Matjiesfontein, a remote rail outpost, that Logan was to establish a reputation that survives to this day.

In 1885, seeking to increase his influence in the area, Logan bought neighbouring farms to the south of Matjiesfontein. The acquisition of three properties – Visagie's Kraal, Besten Weg and Pieter Meintjiesfontein – was a firm indication that he intended to make Matjiesfontein and the Karoo his home territory. Logan started ventures the difficult way, however, and the building up of Matjiesfontein was no exception. Shortly after moving there it became apparent to the Scot that the lack of a reliable water supply would prove a problem in developing the area. The nearest water to Matjiesfontein was a fountain

A goods train at Konstabel Junction, near Matjiesfontein, mid-1880s

more than a mile away. It was not unusual for Logan to pay passing engine drivers for water from their locomotives. At the time it was commonplace for local farmers to build dams to store rainwater, yet Logan recognised this was impractical in a region where annual rainfall rarely rose above five inches. His solution, against the advice of others, was to sink a borehole through the layers of solid rock. When boring commenced in 1886 few believed he would be successful. However, stubbornness, perseverance and characteristic good fortune resulted in a permanent water course being located at 600 feet to provide for local needs, with the exception of the railways.

The successful outcome consolidated public opinion that Logan was a determined man who could succeed in whatever project he attempted. Copious water in the Karoo was news and the name of James Logan was once more associated in the public mind with successful enterprise. By now he had powerful allies within the Cape Assembly and after some serious lobbying was able to obtain government land around the station at Matjiesfontein for further development. Significantly, on 27 May 1887, Logan purchased the freehold rights to the farm Boelhoven, which bordered the land surrounding his newly built house. Not only did Boelhoven lie adjacent to Matjiesfontein, but the farm also offered the additional advantage of four permanent springs, each yielding excellent water.

Around this time Logan had observed that the water supply at the station was unable to meet the growing demands of the railway. This was posing acute problems to government and local business interests. Within months the astute