GEOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION of RHODESIA

PROCEEDINGS OF 1976/77

Number 10 December, 1977

URBAN PRIMACY AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD — *A. Lemon*

VICTORIA FALLS — THE GROWTH OF A RHODESIAN VILLAGE — *R. A. Heath*

THE POLITICAL ORGANISATION OF CHINESE AGRICULTURE — *J. R. V. Prescott*

A GEOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF TAIWAN — *S. O'Donnell*

THE LOCATION OF MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY IN RHODESIA UP TO 1952 — *L. Zinyama*

HUMAN SETTLEMENT PROBLEMS — *P. van Hoffen*

MEASUREMENT — THE KEY TO TOPOGRAPHIC MAPPING — *R. W. Sleigh*

The authors alone are responsible for the opinions expressed in these articles.
Articles intended for publication and all correspondence should be addressed to The Hon. Editor, c/o Department of Geography, University of Rhodesia, P.O. Box MP. 167, Mount Pleasant, Salisbury, Rhodesia. (Tel. Salisbury 36635-265).

Price $3,00

Distributed free to all members

Copies of Proceedings Nos. 3-8 are available at a price of $1,50 from the Editor, Department of Geography.

VICTORIA FALLS: THE GROWTH OF A RHODESIAN VILLAGE

R. A. HEATH

The village of Victoria Falls, which forms a small enclave within the Victoria Falls National Park, is primarily concerned with tourism and the provision of tourist facilities. In addition, it is an administrative centre for the surrounding rural areas and controls road and rail routes between Zambia and Rhodesia. While resembling many of the small Rhodesian settlements in townscape and morphology, Victoria Falls has differed in two major aspects of its development.

In the first place, although the village was formally established in 1907, its growth has been slow. There was little development until the mid 1960's when the breakup of the Central African Federation, Zambian independence and Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence followed in quick succession. These events heralded an era of rapid expansion at Victoria Falls, with more growth having taken place in the last decade than in the previous sixty years. Rapid and recent growth is not a characteristic of the small towns of Rhodesia. The more general pattern has been that of slow and steady development since the turn of the century with, apart from some notable exceptions, a decreasing rate of growth during the last decade.

The second major difference between Victoria Falls and many of the small Rhodesian centres lies in the fact that its growth has not conformed to the original survey plans for the village. Plans have, on several occasions, been altered and adapted to reflect the existing development. Victoria Falls represents a case where planning has largely followed individual decisions and enterprise rather than guiding the growth of the centre. However, in 1973, the Ministry of Local Government and Housing produced an Outline Plan for the region, which was approved in 1975. This plan (which is discussed later) will, it is hoped, provide for the needs of the village at least until the turn of the century, and will prevent any further haphazard development in the region.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Human settlement in the Victoria Falls region first occurred over two million years ago, when early Stone Age man inhabited the Zambezi valley. There are a number of prehistoric sites buried beneath the older terrace gravel deposits in the area (Clark, 1975). Early Iron Age settlements, dating from the sixth century A.D., have also been discovered in the region, although not in the actual Zambezi Valley. These people combined cultivation with stock-rearing, hunting and gathering and appear to have avoided the 'thin, scoured soils or heavier clays' of the river valley (Vogel, 1975). By about the tenth century, A.D., the Iron Age people had moved away from the Victoria Falls area but since the twelfth century A. D. the region has been occupied continuously, first by Bushmen and then by the Leya and Toka people in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These two groups have intermingled so that, today, they are culturally and linguistically very similar (Mubitana, 1975). In addition, in 1838 the Kololo people invaded the area, to escape the northward expansion of the Ndebele from Bulawayo (Phillipson, 1975a). To this long history of human settlement in the region was added the advent of the European towards the close of the nineteenth century.

The first European to visit the waterfall on the Zambezi river was David Livingstone, on November 16th, 1855. He named the waterfall, called 'Mosi

oa Tunya' (The Smoke that Thunders) by the local Kololo people, Victoria Falls in honour of the reigning British monarch. He was followed by hunters and explorers such as William Baldwin, Martinus Swart and Thomas Baines and by 1870 twenty five people are recorded as having visited the Victoria Falls (Phillipson, 1975a).

The 'scramble for Africa' by the European powers occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Although the British Government was reluctant to become involved in further expansion, commercial interests exerted considerable pressure upon Britain to extend her sphere of influence into Central Africa. In 1894 the British South Africa Company obtained effective administration of the whole of Southern Rhodesia and, in 1899, of North-western Rhodesia and Barotseland. During the same period, prospectors employed by the British South Africa Company reported the presence of rich copper deposits in the Kafue Hook region and on the Zambezi-Congo watershed (Phillipson, 1975b). The existence of the Wankie coal deposits was confirmed in 1897 and the combination of these reports of mineral wealth caused European expansion to shift westwards. The 'Cape-to-Cairo' railway, which had reached Bulawayo in 1897 and had originally been planned to pass through Gwelo and Salisbury, was rerouted to the west in order to link up with these mineral deposits. The only practicable crossing place over the Zambezi river, in this region, was between Kazangula and the Victoria Falls. Upstream from Kazangula was the large, marshy area of the Chobe swamp, while downstream from the Victoria Falls was the rugged and broken terrain of the Batoka Gorge. It was decided that the bridging point should be in the vicinity of the Victoria Falls. The actual siting of the railway bridge was influenced by Cecil John Rhodes. Although he did not ever visit the Falls, he expressed a wish that the railway should cross the Zambezi river just below the Falls and is quoted as saying 'I should like to have the spray of the water over the carriages', (Phillipson, 1975b). There was considerable controversy over the siting of the bridge since the railway engineers favoured a site several kilometres upstream. Rhodes' wishes, however, predominated and the railway bridge was constructed in its existing position, being completed on April 1st, 1905. The siting of this bridge was the first of several acts which have detracted from the natural beauty of the Victoria Falls.

The railway only reached the south bank of the Zambezi river in April, 1904 but as early as 1898 a wagon road had been cut between Bulawayo and Victoria Falls. A regular coach service, entailing a twelve day journey, was established by the Zeederberg company and utilized by travellers to the Victoria Falls and to Northwestern Rhodesia. The first European settler in the area also arrived in 1898. He was F. J. 'Mopane' Clark who set up business as a trader, hotel keeper and forwarding agent on the north bank of the Zambezi, nine kilometres upstream from the Falls. This was the narrowest crossing point on the river above the Falls and became known as the 'Old Drift' or 'Sekuti's Drift' (Phillipson, 1975b). Old Drift attracted other settlers and by 1903 had a population of sixty-eight Europeans, a mission station and a small school. In addition, the British South Africa Company had established an administrative post, known as the Victoria Falls Station, between Old Drift and the Falls, on the north bank of the river (Fig. 1). Both Old Drift and the administrative post were fever ridden and unhealthy so in 1901 the British South Africa Company moved its offices and the post office away from the river onto the higher ground of the sandbelt. This was called Constitution Hill and was to become the site of the present town of Livingstone.

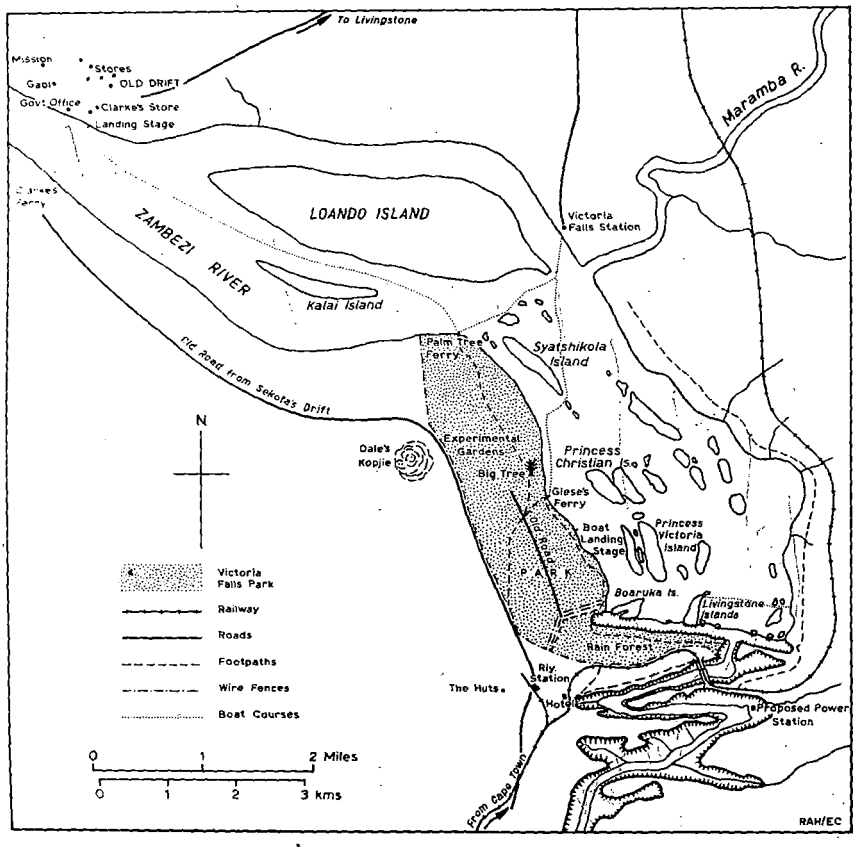


Figure 1: Victoria Falls and environs, adapted from a map produced by Sir Douglas Fox and Partners, 1904, and a B. S. A. Company survey of 1905.

In 1903 Percy M. Clark came to the Falls region. He lived for a while at Old Drift but later moved to the south bank of the Zambezi, near the site of the present Victoria Falls Hotel. Here he established a photographic and curio business called 'The Huts' which was to become well known to visitors from many parts of the world and which was the forerunner of the present-day curio trade at Victoria Falls. Clark was the first resident of the Victoria Falls village but was soon joined by a German born hunter and explorer, Albert Giese. Giese established a series of trading posts between Wankie and Victoria Falls, including one at Victoria Falls itself. He also operated a ferry service (Fig. 1) across the river above the Falls (Clark, 1972). The action of these two individuals was to play a significant role in the eventual siting of the Victoria Falls village.

With the completion of the railway line between Bulawayo and Victoria Falls in 1904, there was an influx of railway workers and tourists. Organised parties of tourists began arriving by rail from Cape Town at this time and the original Victoria Falls hotel was built to house these visitors as well as the resident railway workers. This temporary wood and corrugated iron structure was the predecessor of the hotels found in the village today.

Once the railway bridge had been constructed, the Old Drift settlement began to decline. The British South Africa Company decided to establish a new township at Constitution Hill, which they renamed 'Livingstone', and in November 1904 the township was surveyed. Many of the inhabitants of Old Drift, however, refused to move to Livingstone and in June, 1905, the administration was forced to serve eviction notices on these people (Phillipson, 1975b). Livingstone grew rapidly, despite much campaigning on the part of the residents to move the town closer to the Falls, and its prosperity was ensured in 1907 when the British South Africa Company agreed to move the capital of Northwestern Rhodesia from Kalomo to Livingstone. In the same year, as a concession to those residents who had wanted Livingstone sited closer to the Falls, the administration decided to establish a township on the south bank of the Zambezi, near the Victoria Falls railway station (Phillipson, 1975b).

THE VICTORIA FALLS VILLAGE

In 1907, when the decision was made to develop a township at the Victoria Falls, there was already a considerable degree of activity in the area, mainly concerned with catering for tourists. The Park area was fenced in 1904 (Fig. 1) and a curator was appointed for the region by the Administrator of Northwestern Rhodesia. By 1905 there was a temporary customs post at the railhead and the first survey of the suggested township was undertaken in the same year. In 1906 a police station, consisting of wattle and daub huts, was built and a rifle club was established. In the same year the Victoria Falls Reserve was created to protect the immediate environs of the Falls. The Reserve was the responsibility of the Lands Department and was administered from Livingstone. Concern was therefore apparent at an early date about the impact of visitors and entrepreneurs upon the fragile rainforest ecosystem.

The earliest available plan of the village is that representing the survey carried out by P. Fletcher in March 1908 (Fig. 2). This shows 147 stands, laid out in a rectangular grid pattern, which were intended to form the nucleus of the township. Fletcher's plan also indicates the Railway Reserve where, until that date, all development had taken place. As well as the railway and hotel buildings, a post office with a telegraph line to Livingstone, Zeederberg's

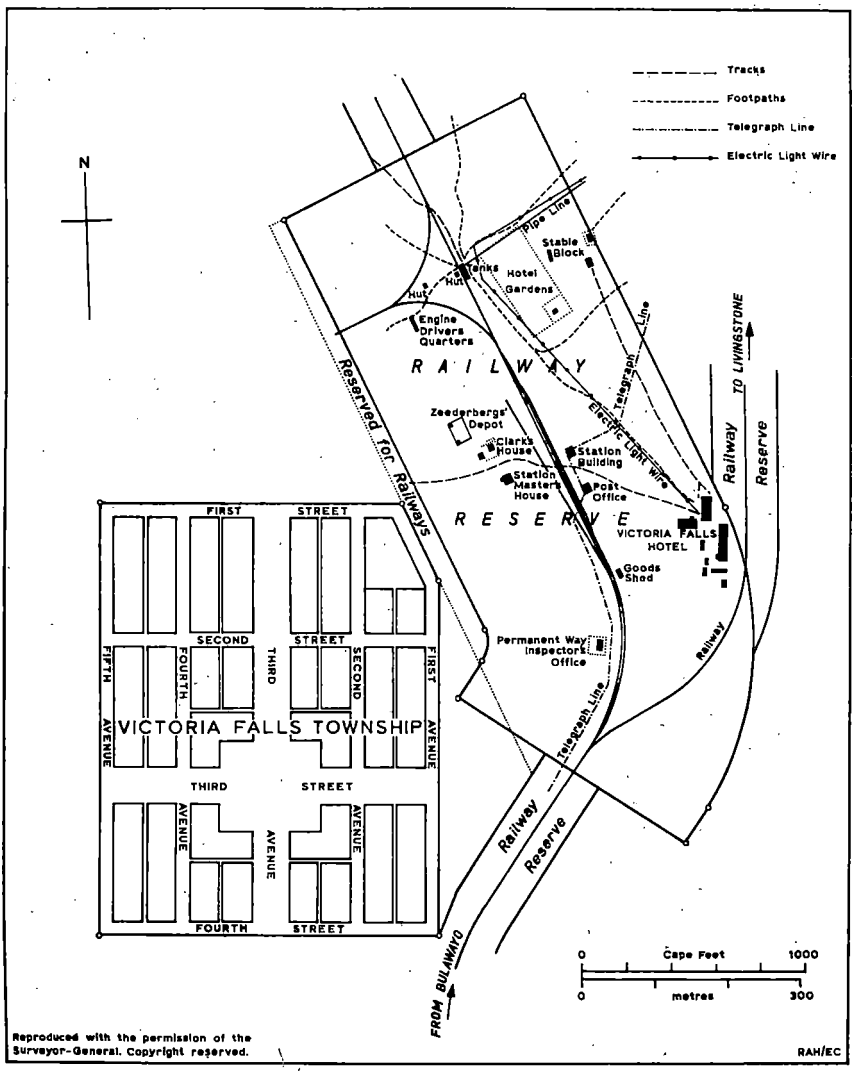


Figure 2: Victoria Falls: proposed Township, 1908

transport depôt and Percy Clark's house and curio shop were all located within the Railway Reserve and were supplied with water from a small pumping station above the Devil's Cataract, as well as electricity. The plan also shows that in 1908 the railway line to Livingstone passed to the east of the Victoria Falls Hotel in a shallow cutting, part of which remains visible today.

Between 1908 and 1920, almost all activity in the village centred around the railway and the hotel. In 1909 the position of the railway was changed, leaving the Railway Reserve via the northwestern boundary and curving sharply to the north east to link up with the bridge. Another curio shop was established within the Railway Reserve in 1910 by Jack Soper, who had earlier been employed as the toll keeper on the Victoria Falls bridge (Clark, 1972). By 1913, excursion trains were running from Cape Town to the Victoria Falls at the rate of about five a year. It became apparent that the existing hotel would have to be enlarged and improved and it was rebuilt in brick between 1914 and 1916. The first permanent building outside the Railway Reserve was erected in 1914 when the police camp acquired a brick building which was used both as an office and for accommodation. This building still stands and, today functions as residential accommodation for one of the married members of the British South Africa Police. In 1916 six acres were surveyed and set aside for the police camp and a rifle range. This was the first official government land to be surveyed and was located north of the proposed township and some distance west of the Railway Reserve, around the existing police camp buildings; an example of planning following rather than preceding development.

Only a limited amount of growth occurred in the decade between 1920 and 1930. Further additions were made to the police camp in 1921 and to the existing hotel buildings. Within the Railway Reserve, additional housing, government buildings and an African location were constructed west of the railway line and, towards the end of this period, a garage was built by the Railways in the north east portion of the Reserve (Fig. 3.). By 1928, communications with the rest of the country had been improved. During the period 1925 to 1928, a motor road was constructed between Bulawayo and Victoria Falls, via Turk Mine, Lonely Mine, Lupane River and Wankie, providing an alternative means of access to the area for tourists. An example of individual enterprise in the field of communications at this time was the building of an airstrip by a former B.S.A. Police officer, E. H. 'Ted' Spencer. He constructed an airstrip and founded the Victoria Falls Airways which he equipped with Moth aircraft (Clark, 1972). This service was utilised by tourists who were stranded at Victoria Falls during the rail strike of February 1929. The airstrip built on high ground to the west of the village is still in use and today serves as an aerodrome for light aircraft providing scenic flights for tourists. In 1928, additional building was undertaken by the Government. Southern Rhodesia had been granted responsible self government in 1923 and the Southern Rhodesian Ministry of Lands had assumed the responsibility for the administration of the southern bank of the Victoria Falls area. In 1928 a curator was appointed to take charge of the Victoria Falls Reserve and a curator's cotage was constructed between the Railway Reserve and the Police Camp. At the same time, land was set aside for an African village to the west of the surveyed township.

In 1930 new plans were drawn up for a proposed township north of the curator's cottage. The original site, surveyed by Fletcher in 1908, had not proved popular. The only buildings on the stands were the Cattle Inspector's

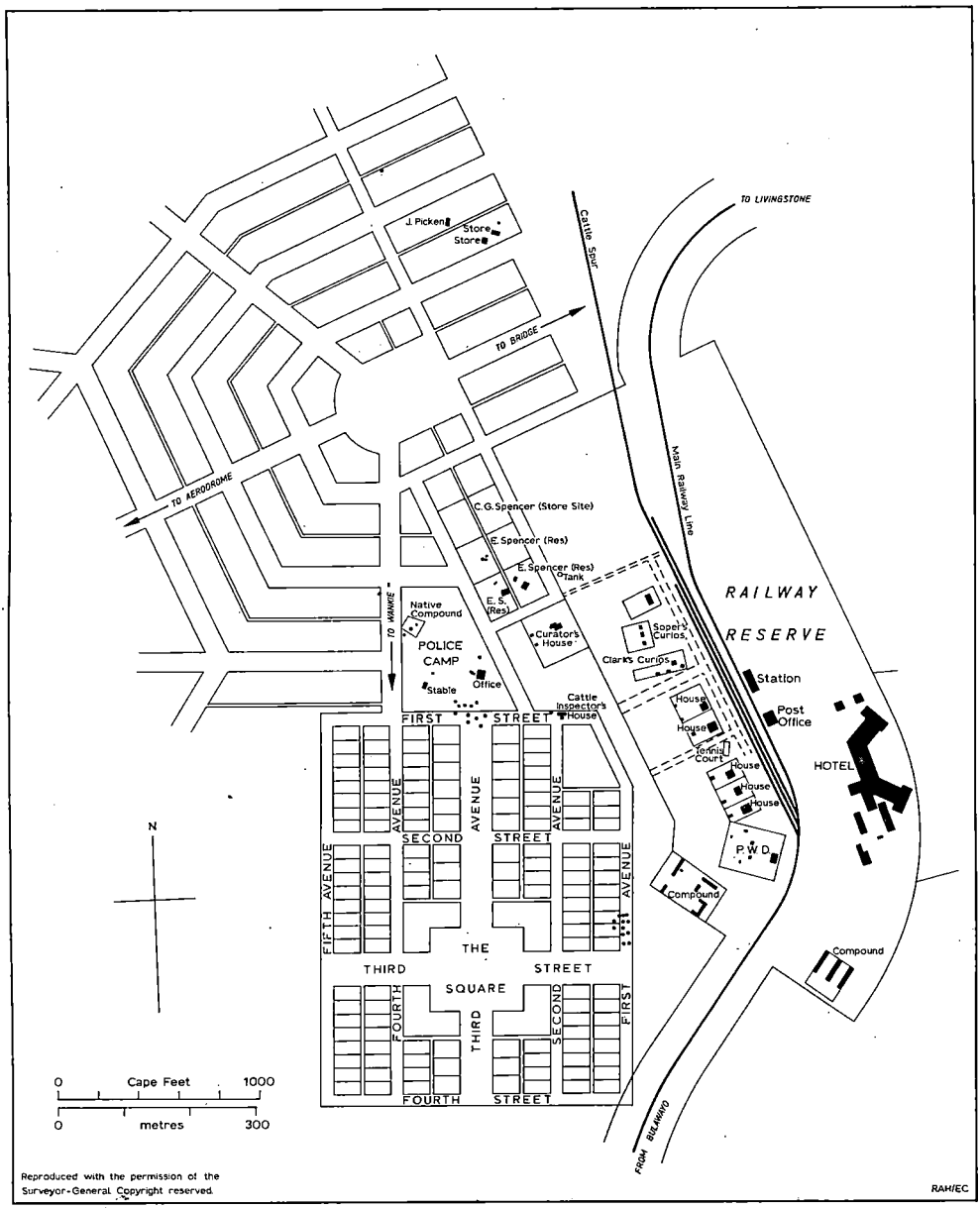


Figure 3: Victoria Falls Township: proposed Extension, circa 1930

house and several huts, all of which were located in planned roadways (Fig. 3). To the north of the curator's cottage, however, five stands had been occupied by Messrs. Spencer, Gibson and Lloyd, and further north, by a Mr. J. Picken (Fig. 3). It was decided to accept the status quo and to replan the township incorporating these five stands, the curator's cottage and the police camp. Two different plans of the northern township are in existence for this period. The first consists of a conventional rectangular grid, while the second is based upon a more ambitious semi-circular grid with radiating roads (Fig. 3). With variations in detail, the semi-circular grid was to become the basis for all future plans.

Little major development took place from 1930 to 1939. In 1931, the Victoria Falls was declared a 'protected area' and the use of the environs of the Falls became more strictly controlled. In the same year, the railway from Livingstone was realigned to its existing position. A factor which may have restricted development in the township prior to this period was the lack of piped water and electricity. Buildings outside the Railway Reserve had been dependent upon water obtained from a pump near the railway station and transported in drums by donkey cart. In 1932, however, the piped water supply was extended to the police camp and to the remainder of the village in the following year. In 1935 a small hydro-electric power station was built on the Northern Rhodesian bank of the third gorge. This supplied electricity to the Railway Reserve and the Railways, in turn, supplied the rest of the village. Other ground for tourists on the site of the old wagon camp on the banks of the Zambezi, near the Big Tree (Fig. 1). Later a second camping ground with rest huts was developed within the village adjoining the northwestern boundary of the Railway Reserve. In the African township concrete houses were built in 1933 and by 1939 the first brick houses were being constructed. The township was surveyed in 1940 and plans were drawn up, incorporating the existing buildings in the area.

During the period of World War II, growth at Victoria Falls was virtually halted. A 1945 plan of the township indicates that there had been a dearth of private development in the village since the 1930's. Only six or seven buildings had been constructed north of the police camp and all other development had occurred within the Railway Reserve. In 1947, the Flying Boat Station was built on the Zambezi, upstream from the Falls and in December, 1947, the B.O.A.C. flying boat service was inaugurated. This service, however, proved to be financially unsuccesful and was terminated in 1950. In 1951 the Victoria Falls National Park was created under the authority of the National Parks Board. This amalgamated the former Victoria Falls Reserve and the Game Reserve, and extended some seventy-four kilometres along the Zambezi River and twenty-six kilometres towards the Bechuanaland (Botswana) border. The environs of the Falls themselves came under the joint control of the Historical Monuments Commission and the National Parks Board.

The 1953 plan of business and residential stands (Fig. 4) indicates the actual size of the Victoria Falls village at this time, although details of the Railway Reserve are not shown. The original township, to the south of the police camp was replanned, although there was still no building in this area. Several sites around the police camp had been allocated for specific purposes but had not yet been utilised. The old curator's cottage was occupied by the Irrigation Officer and three houses had been built in the Railway Reserve, along the road to Livingstone. Ten stands had been occupied in the redesigned township to the north of the police camp. On one of these stands

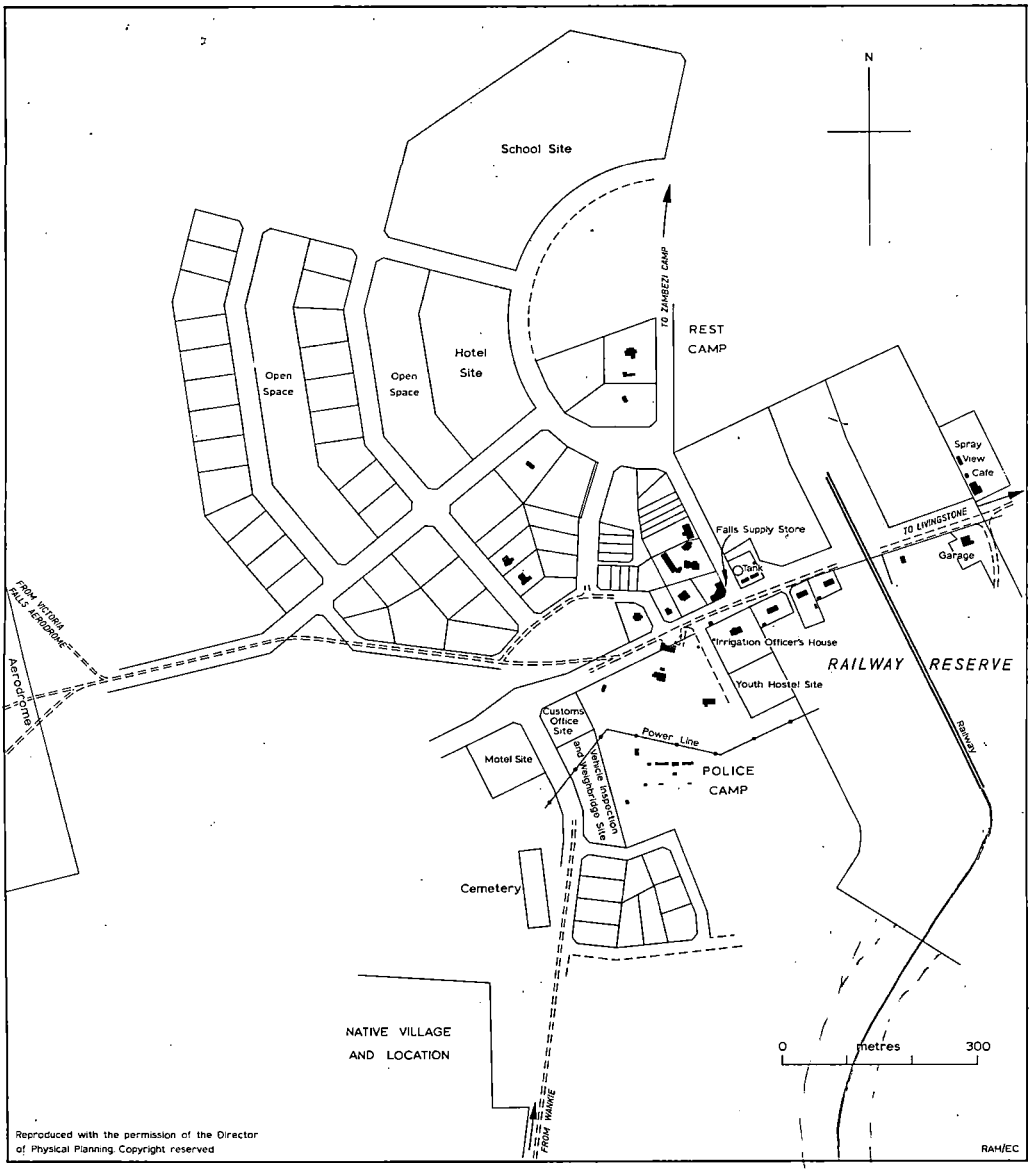


Figure 4: Victoria Falls: Layout of Residential and Business Stands, 1953

(Fig. 4), the Falls Supply Store had started business as a general dealer supplying the village. In addition, the Sprayview Cafe had been constructed east of the Railway Reserve. A conspicuous feature of the 1953 plan is the limited private development which had taken place during the fifty years since the first European inhabitant, Percy Clark, settled in the area and set up his curio shop.

Little further development took place until the mid 1960's when major political changes caused significant growth in the village. Until this time, the residents of Victoria Falls were primarily railway or government employees with a few individuals involved in tourism. Financial, commercial and social services for the village were provided by Livingstone. Moreover, a large proportion of the visitors to the Falls arived via the international airport at Livingstone and the majority of the tourist facilities were provided there. With the closure of the border between Rhodesia and Zambia, Victoria Falls was forced to become self-sufficient and also to provide a far wider ranger of tourist facilities if the tourist market was not to be lost to Zambia. The village grew rapidly and by 1967 development included a hotel, a cassino, camping and caravan grounds, a boat club, restaurant, garages, a school, shops and a new airport, 24 kilometres south of the village off the Bulawayo road. This rapid growth necessitated the establishment of a Local Board to administer the village and this was later raised to the status of a Town Council. Further financial, commercial and tourist services were established during the 1970's. Light manufacturing and repair industries developed on the site of the original township and there was an extension of the residential area in the northern part of the village. Two business areas developed, one around the site of the Falls Supply Store and the other in the Railway Reserve, adjoining the site of the Sprayview Restaurant (Figs. 5 and 6). At the present time, with a population of over 3 000[1], Victoria Falls offers a wide range of services and is classified as a medium sized Rhodesian service centre (Heath, 1977).

THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF VICTORIA FALLS

The rapid growth of Victoria Falls during the last decade has caused considerable planning problems. It is of paramount importance that the immediate vicinity of the Falls should be altered as little as possible if its natural qualities are to be preserved. Conservation needs, however, may conflict with the need to provide facilities for tourists and in recent years there has been a proliferation of tourist services along the river bank upstream from the Falls. Co-ordinated and rational development is best achieved by a common development plan for the village and the surrounding area. In 1973, an Outline Plan was produced by the Department of Physical Planning in the Ministry of Local Government and Housing (Fig. 7). This plan aims to provide for the longterm needs of the village. The areas of the land use zones designated by the Outline Plan are listed in the Table below.

[1] The 1969 Rhodesian Census of Population lists Victoria Falls as having a total population of 3 450 comprised of 2 880 Africans, 567 Europeans, 3 Asians and 4 Coloureds.

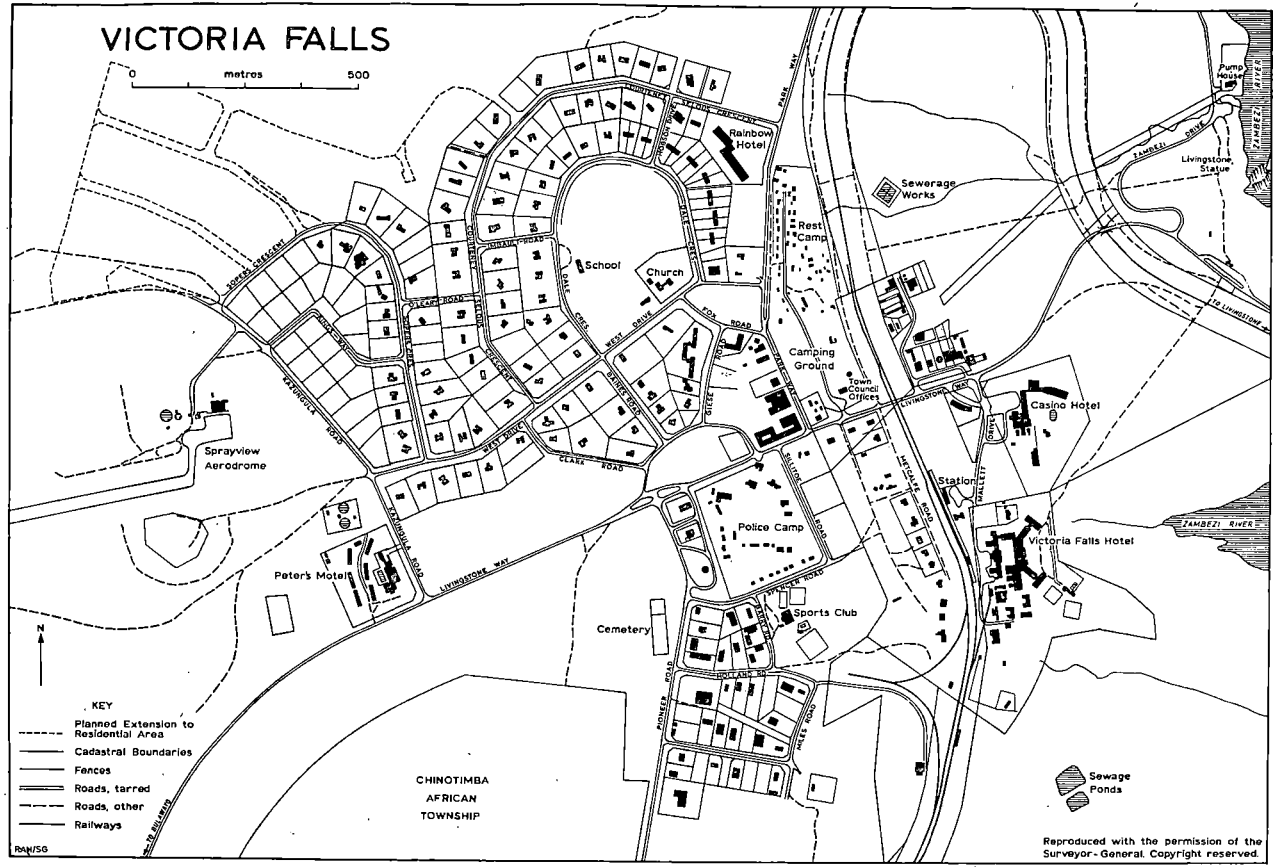


Figure 5: Victoria Falls; Topo-cadastral Map, 1972 (partially revised, 1977).

Figure 6: Victoria Falls: Land Use, 1977

AREAS OF MAJOR LAND USES IN THE SCHEME AREA ZONED OR RESERVED IN TERMS OF THE OUTLINE PLAN FOR VICTORIA FALLS

Land Use	Proposed Area (ha)
Residential Zone	245
Business Zone	11
Light Industrial Zone	39
Special Tourist Amenity Zone	60
Special Residential (Hotel) Zone	37
Rural Zone	445,5
Public Open Space (includes Zambezi River)	905
Private Open Space	121
Government Reservation	20,5
Local Authority Reservation	3,2
African Housing and Amenities	335
Primary School	6,2
Railway Operational Purposes	58,8

SOURCE: Outline Plan. Written Statement. Victoria Falls Planning Scheme Area. Ministry of Local Government and Housing. Department of Physical Planning. 1975.

The major features of the Outline Plan are as follows:

(i) a greatly increased area has been allocated to the African township;

(ii) the Railway Reserve has been reduced in size;

(iii) the original township area, which did not prove popular as residential land, has been designated a light industrial zone;

(iv) government and local authority areas are located around the police camp;

(v) business areas are on old residential stands to the north of the police camp and in what was formerly the north eastern portion of the Railway Reserve;

(vi) the northern residential area has been enlarged and it is planned to use the site of the original aerodrome for residential purposes;

(vii) areas allocated for tourist accommodation have been clearly defined;

(viii) an attempt has been made to contain the area allocated for tourist amenities on the banks of the Zambezi upstream from the Falls;

(ix) areas designated as public and private 'open space' in the vicinity of the Falls and the Zambezi river are restricted permanently against building development, with the exception of buildings which are essential for the administration of these areas.

This plan would seem to meet the future needs of the village and the tourist industry upon which it depends.

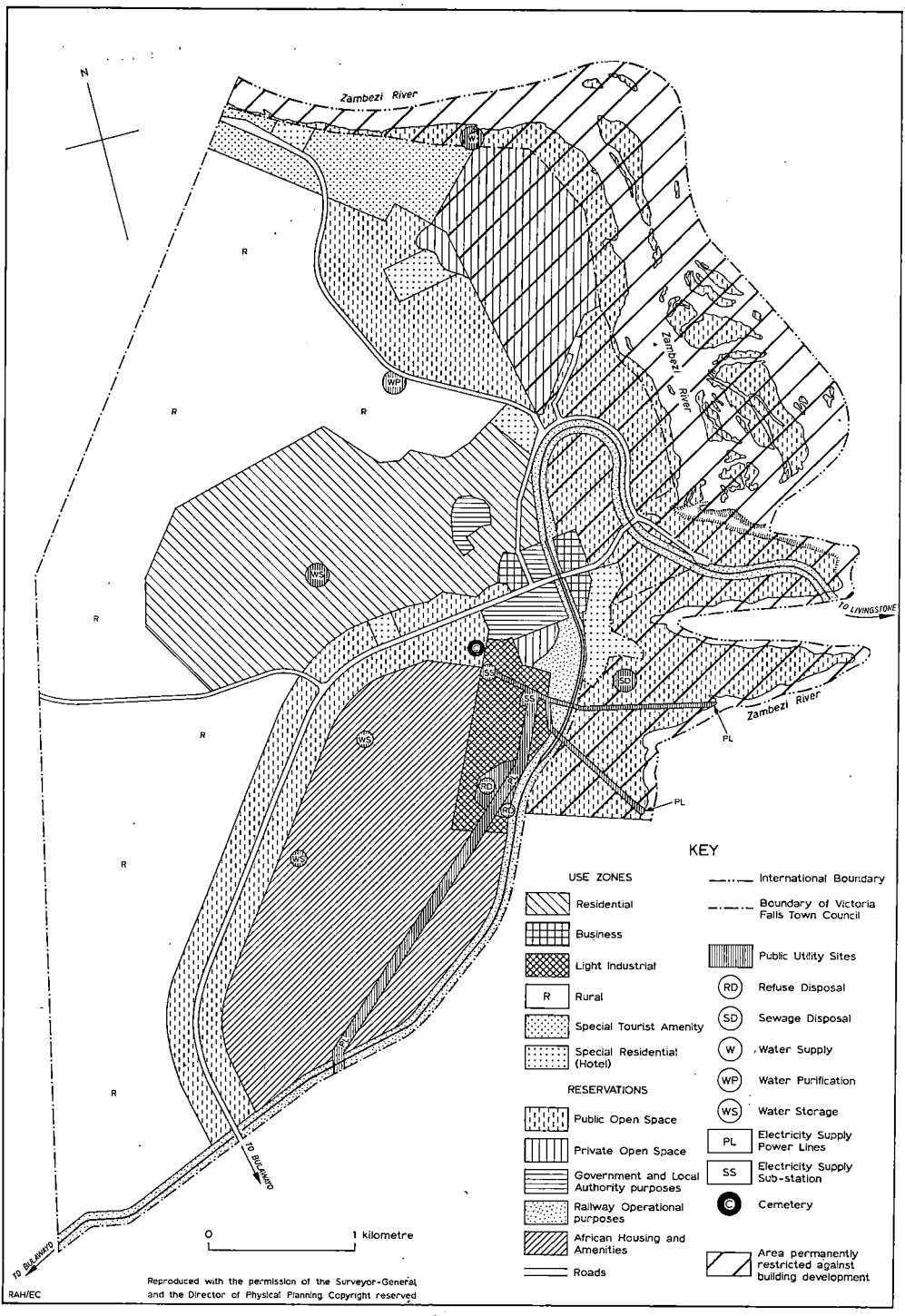


Figure 7: Victoria Falls Planning Scheme Area: Outline Plan, 1973. Adapted from Department of Physical Planning Plan No. 22/4/24/...

CONCLUSION

The original siting and initial growth of the Victoria Falls Village was largely due to the decisions of a few individuals. Development during the first fifty years was restricted largely to the area within the Railway Reserve. Several plans, drawn at different times indicate that the growth of the settlement was extremely slow until the mid 1960's. Invariably plans were adjusted to include existing development, rather than to guide the growth of the village. It is only with the changing political and economic circumstances of the past decade that rapid growth has occurred and with it the necessity for a formal development plan. The rate of growth may well decrease in the future but the village is likely to continue to grow as visitors continue to be attracted to the Falls. The 1973 plan will, hopefully, control and contain future development and minimise the environmental impact of tourist activities. It would be unfortunate if the trend, which has characterised the village throughout this century, of planning reflecting individual enterprise rather than guiding and controlling it, should be allowed to continue.

REFERENCES

CLARK, J. D. 1975. Stone Age Man at the Victoria Falls. In *Mosi oa Tunya: A Handbook of the Victoria Falls*. pp. 28-47 ed. Phillipson, D. W. Longmans. London.

CLARK, P. M. 1936. *The Autobiography of an Old Drifter*. George G. Harrap, London. Rhodesiana Reprint Library Vol. 26. Books of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, 1972.

CLARK, V. 1972. *Prominent Residents of Victoria Falls*. Baobab School Newsheets Jan.-Dec. 1972. Parent-Teachers Association. Victoria Falls.

HEATH, R. A. 1977. Rhodesian Service Centres and their Spheres of Influence. Unpublished thesis. University of Rhodesia.

MUBITANA, K. 1975. The Traditional History and Ethnography. In *Mosi oa Tunya: A Handbook of the Victoria Falls*. pp. 59-72 ed. Phillipson, D. W. Longmans. London.

PHILLIPSON, D. W. 1975a. The Victoria Falls and the European Penetration of Central Africa. In *Mosi oa Tunya: A Handbook of the Victoria Falls* pp. 73-87 ed. Phillipson, D. W. Longmans. London.

PHILLIPSON, D. W. 1975b. The Early History of the Town of Livingstone. *In Mosi oa Tunya: A Handbook of the Victoria Falls*. pp. 88-104 ed. Phillipson, D. W. Longmans. London.

RHODESIA. Central Statistical Office. Census of Population. 1969. Government Printer. Salisbury.

RHODESIA. Ministry of Lands. Department of the Surveyor General. Copies of early plans of Victoria Falls.

RHODESIA. Ministry of Local Government and Housing. Department of Physical Planning. Copies of early plans of Victoria Falls.

RHODESIA. Ministry of Local Government and Housing. Department of Physical Planning. 1975. Outline Plan and Written Statement. Victoria Falls Planning Scheme Area. Unpublished report.

SOUTHERN RHODESIA. British South Africa Police. Collected correspondence concerning Victoria Falls police camp. National Archives. Salisbury.

SOUTHERN RHODESIA. Ministry of Lands. Collected correspondence concerning Victoria Falls. National Archives. Salisbury.

SOUTHERN RHODESIA. Ministry of Works. Collected correspondence concerning Victoria Falls. National Archives. Salisbury.

VOGEL. J. O. 1975. The Iron Age Archaeology. In *Mosi oa Tunya: A Handbook to the Victoria Falls*. ed. Phillipson, D. W. Longmans.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I should like to thank Mr. Victor Clark, of Victoria Falls, for his assistance in the research for this paper and for allowing me access to Percy Clark's scrapbooks and papers.



This work is licensed under a
Creative Commons
Attribution – NonCommercial - NoDerivs 3.0 License.

To view a copy of the license please see:
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/

This is a download from the BLDS Digital Library on OpenDocs
http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/

Institute of Development Studies