A HISTORY OF HARARE  Submitted by Neva Levings

History of the suburbs

The original settlers were promised 15 mining claims and farms measuring 3000 acres for participating in the occupation. Most opted to go prospecting, but after many went hungry in the first year as excessive rains resulted in supply lines being cut, a few decided to go farming. The issue of title was only resolved towards the end of 1891, so many sold the "right" to the land before Title Deeds were granted.

The authorities established a buffer zone between the farms and the developing town known as the Commonage, land which was reserved for recreational and institutional use such as Royal Harare, the Agricultural Research Station, Botanical Gardens, the Police Grounds as well as several schools. As the farms were subdivided, villages started to form around the main town, which were developed into Town Management Boards and civic centres.

As the boards formed, they took parts of the original farms into their boundaries. Highlands, for example, is not purely The Nursery and contains parts of Greendale and Rietfontein. By the time they were amalgamated into Greater Salisbury on July 1, 1971, there were eight boards, Marlborough was the last formed in 1967. This is how some of the names came about from the original farms or their subdivisions:

☐ The development of Harare’s most sought after suburb, Borrowdale, came much later than the rest due entirely to its distance from the CBD.

It is named after Henry Borrow), who was Adjutant to the occupation forces that came up in 1890. Five days before arriving at what was to become Harare,
The original 13 farms and rivers in the Harare area

Borrow wrote home from the banks of the Mupfure river: “The climate is simply superb ... there are splendid long open valleys here that one could plough to any extent. Every little hollow has a stream running down it.”

Borrow was in partnership with Frank Johnson, who was commander of the expedition force, and Maurice Heany, an American who was in charge of "A" Troop. Settler rights were granted to the firm of Johnson, Heany & Borrow over 55,000 acres over what became Borrowdale. In his book on early Harare, Tony Tanser says: “Of the three men, it was said that Johnson did the talking, Heany the thinking and Borrow the work.” Borrow built a dam on the Borrowdale Brooke river in 1892 – the first in Zimbabwe – which is still in existence today, and started to grow a variety of crops for the nascent town.
He joined the force that was to lead the attack against King Lobengula and was the first person to enter the ruins of Buluwayo. Borrow died on December 4, 1893, on the banks of the Shangani after being pinned down by Matabele forces. He wrote to his parents ahead of his departure: "Tomorrow we leave for what I look upon as a somewhat risky enterprise viz the subject of the Matabele. I think as we probably all do that we shall be entirely successful still I cannot help thinking that a great number of us will in all probability never return."

**Newlands** was named by Colin Duff, the Secretary for Agriculture in the 1920s, who had played for Western Province before heading north. When Gerhardt Van der Byl retired back to the Cape in 1927, he sold his farm Welmoed to the Salisbury Real Estate Co, a property vehicle owned largely by Scotsmen, who decided on the name **Highlands**, partly because it is one of the highest pieces of ground in Harare, but largely because they wanted to have a Scottish flavour about the project. The first road to be cut was called Argyle Drive.

A Certificate of Occupation was granted to a German, George Haupt, and **Greendale** farm was transferred to Haupt and Henry Spreaker trading as Haupt & Co on December 17, 1892. Haupt, an engineer from the Rhine Valley, was one of the first people to follow the occupation forces into the country. It is not known how the name came about, but 1890 saw considerable rainfall (Father Hartmann measured it at 63 inches, or about twice our normal mean average of 850mm a year) – a record that was only challenged by the 2008 rainy season.

Harry Sawenthal, who surveyed **Mabelreign** for the owner Edward Kermode, who was away at the time, registered the name Mabel Reign after his fiancée Mabel Mann, not knowing Kermode had already called it Spring Valley Farm. Kermode went back to the Isle of Man, never to return but in 1929 his son came out and subdivided the farm into **Meyrick** (his mother’s maiden name), **Monavale** (derived from Mona’s Isle), **Sentosa** (a Malayan word meaning “peaceful”) and **Greencroft**.

Little is known about the genesis of Farm No 10, which was called **Mount Pleasant**, as the original owner is not known. John Kiddle sold it to Mollie Colenbrander for £100 after owning it for only 5 days. However, because of water issues, no development took place until 1902 when it was acquired by the Cape Town property developer Alfred Blackburn, who also acquired and subdivided Avondale.

**Gun Hill** was the shooting range for the police. The hill was known as Bare before occupation, possibly a place where salt was produced. **Alexandra Park** was once part of the Commonage encompassing Hartmann Hill and was named in honour of Queen Alexandra to celebrate the coronation of Edward VII in 1902.

**Milton Park** was named after Sir William Milton, the much-respected Administrator from 1898-1914, who was known as the "Father of the Civil Service". The street names in the suburb are all former mayors. Strathaven is named after the area where the Meikles come from in Scotland.

The BSA Co Reserve is now **Pomona**, **Vainona**, and part of Mt Pleasant. It was necessary for the company to keep the grazing area for its transport cattle outside of the municipal area. In 1913, a Mr McLaurin took over a portion of the farm and called it Pomona after the largest island in the Orkney group. Later divisions were **Pendennis**, owned by John Dennis, and Vainona.

The settlers’ guide Frederick Courtney Selous named his farm Little England and built two huts overlooking the Mbvunze river so to claim his squatter rights. However, he had so many other interests and his agents let the farm to Jan Meyers, who renamed it **Rietfontein** due to the large number of reed-covered sponges at the headwaters of the Mbvunze. Having sold the plots on the edge of the Commonage, he disposed of the rest of the farm in 1911.
Chisipite is a subdivision of Rietfontein, and was farmed by the Jenkisons. The name means "overflowing spring", which is shown as an exaggerated fountain on the school badge. Robert Ballantyne grew potatoes on his Ballantyne Park farm and was MP for Highlands from 1948-1953 when he died while debating a motion on the floor of the House of Assembly.

Hatfield is named after the ancestral home of the Marquess of Salisbury. It was first settled by Robert Snodgrass and David Mitchell, two transport riders who made a lot of money selling whisky to the settlers in 1891. The partnership broke up shortly after another property, a subdivision of the farm Willowvale, which was given the name of Ardbennie, had been acquired. William Edward Webb was granted title to Prospect in 1894 although little is known of his activities.

Epworth is the birthplace in Lincolnshire of the founder of Methodism, Charles Wesley and his brother John. Epworth was one of the farms selected by Reverends Watkins and Shimmin for the Methodist Church. Zengeza was named after a relative of Chief Seke and is said to mean "a fighter who worries the poor people".

Cousins Robert and Herbert Warren, originally from the Eastern Cape, pegged their Warren farm. Herbert left the country in 1892 after Robert contracted blackwater fever and died in November 1891. Highfields was the name of the farm before it was designated as a township in 1935. Mbare was an early 19th Century resident in the area. Kambuzuma is reputedly a corruption of Cambitzi, as in KwaCambitzi, a Greek who had owned a store in the area.

William Harvey Brown named his farm, where Harare International Airport is now situated, Arlington after General Robert E Lee’s home. Harvey Brown, who was from Iowa, had joined the occupation forces to collect specimens for the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC.

Enterprise was the name of a mining syndicate. One of the party was interested in astronomy and the claims are named after celestial bodies: Arcturus, a star near the tail of the Great Bear, Virgo, Gemini, Orion, Neptune and Mars.

Avondale ... the oldest suburb.

Avondale is the oldest suburb in Harare and was settled by Edward O'Connell Farrell, the veterinary surgeon attached to the occupation forces. He named it after the estate belonging to the Irish nationalist Charles Stewart Parnell in County Wicklow, on the banks of the Avon, the virtues of which were extolled in the poem by Thomas Moore, “Meeting of the Waters”. Farrell had been manager on the estate, as well as a cowboy in the US ahead of his arrival in Africa in 1884. Over 40 when he signed up, Farrell was nicknamed “Daddy” by his fellow troops (the Commanding Officer Frank Johnson was only 24). After the arrival in September 1890, Farrell moved to what is now Avondale with the troop horses. With not much to do, he would have explored the ridge and have taken to the area, which was still inhabited by wild animals. Farrell summoned fellow settlers to the area within a few weeks of
arrival after a lion killed three horses. Jackals and vultures were picking at the carcasses when the hunting party arrived to track down the lion, probably in the vicinity of Kensington. Frank Johnson managed to shoot the beast, which measured ten feet six inches from nose to tail when skinned. Farrell was appointed by Johnson, Heany & Borrow as the manager of their proposed coach service to Beira. In October 1891, Farrell disposed of the right to Avondale to Augustine Stewart for £100. Farrell went on to take part in the Jameson Raid, after which he was repatriated to Ireland. He returned to the country and died in Bulawayo in 1910 of heart disease aged 64.

Avondale was given the Title 419 on April 29, 1893, and was sold by Stewart to James Kennedy in October 1893 for £250. Kennedy, the BSA Co accountant, let the farm to the Count Edmond de la Panouse, who with his wife Fanny supplied the growing town with milk and butter. Fanny had snuck into the country dressed as a boy called “Billy” when women were banned entering the country. The Count was not at the farm when the First Chimurenga broke out, and Countess Billy was alone. Seeing shadows outside the house, she fled down the road and hid behind a low wall around John Upington’s grave (see below). Lord Baden Powell, the founder of the Boy Scout movement, recorded this story in his diary when he sat next to her at a dinner at Ranche House on November 27, 1896. She left the country with her husband in 1900. Long thought to have passed away, she was tracked down in France in the 1960s and died shortly afterwards aged 94. The original farmhouse was at the top of Alice Lane, named after their child who died shortly after birth in 1899. The farm was then purchased by Alfred Blackburn in 1903 who subdivided it. In 1910 it was broken up into 25 acre plots, and the new suburbs of Emerald Hill and Kensington formed within the original farm boundary. The remainder of the original farmhouse was demolished in 1958 by Robbie Isaacson.

In 1901, a railway line was built out to the Ayrshire Mine at Chinhoyi with a stop at Avondale (pictured). The railway line ran along the Enterprise Road, through Gun Hill, along the top of the university, and along Broadlands Rd. The legacy to the Avondale station, which was pulled down in the 1950s, is “Halt Way”, which connects Broadlands to Lomagundi Rd.

Avondale School celebrates its centennial this year and is the oldest primary school in Mashonaland. Children at the school recalled how they were taken to the western side of the ridge to see the first plane coming in to land at Belvedere in 1920. Avondale was declared a village on June 15, 1911 and the management board existed until 1934 when it was amalgamated into the City of Harare. The vote to join the city was carried by a majority of 13 only after it was agreed residents would get electricity. The Shona name for the ridge at Avondale was said to be Chikwi (a bench of beaten earth).
The local Anglican Church contains the grave of the first white person to die after occupation. Born in Ireland, he was the younger brother of Sir Thomas Upington, one-time Premier of the Cape Province (1884-86), who gave his name to the town in the Northern Cape. Upington had accidentally shot himself while prospecting near Chinhoyi. The bullet had entered his left breast and exited his body near his collarbone. On his arrival back in town, BSA Co Dr James Lichfield, said the wound was “slight and not at all dangerous” and the wound appeared to heal. Upington, a Catholic, celebrated Christmas Mass and was on his way to rejoin the prospecting party when he dropped in to visit Farrell, who was living in a two-roomed oblong house along the main road to Lomagundi (Capt Graham's early map, above, marks out his lodgings). Severe infection had set in and he died at 5pm on December 27. The Catholic Priest Father Hartmann buried him to the “right of Farrell’s house”. The grave was originally surrounded by a low stone wall, which the Countess Billy hid behind during the First Chimurenga. The Anglican Parish Church minus the porch was built in 1910, ironically incorporating the grave of a Catholic.

**Lion Hunt in Avondale**

Hoste recounts:

"One day towards the end of September, a Mashona appeared trotting across the veldt holding a cleft stick in his hand with a letter stuck in it. He was duly passed along to me and on examining the letter I found it was addressed to Major Johnson in 'Daddy' Farrell's handwriting

"Farrell was camped a few miles north of our camp at a place which is now called Avondale with all the troop horses under his charge. As soon as I dismissed the men and handed over the job I was doing to Jack Roach and 'C' Company, I went over to the mess tent, taking the Mashona with me. There I learned that Johnson was out. However, Heany was in charge and on the spot, so I passed the sable Mercury on to him."

"When he read the note he handed it to me. It was to the effect that a lion had killed three horses the night before and that he, Farrell, thought it would probably come back to the kill at about sunset.

"'Now comes our chance,' said Heany. 'We'll also go to the kill, but we'll get there a little before sunset and be on hand to welcome the lion when he arrives.'"

"He looked me up and down sceptically. I had just come from working on the fort and was covered from head to foot in a fine film of yellow dust. 'You better go and polish yourself up a bit,' he said. 'Don't forget that you've been asked to meet the King of Beasts!'

"At about four o'clock that afternoon I returned and found Heany already saddled up and ready to go. I mounted Trumpeter and we rode off together for the horse kraal, each armed with a 500 bore express.

"We found 'Daddy' Farrell looking very worried. He told us that the dead horses were lying on the veldt about a mile away, all close together, and that he was of the opinion that it was the work of two lions. He gave us a Mashona to guide us to the place and we started off again.

"We reached the place some little time before sunset and stationed ourselves in a convenient spot about fifty yards down wind from the carcasses. Our horses were left in charge of the Mashona and hidden in a clump of bush about fifty yards to our rear. We snuggled down among the grass and shrubs. As our position was slightly higher than the spot on which the
carcases were lying, we got a fairly unobstructive view.

"Then came a tedious wait. For a long time nothing happened. Then some vultures and crows that had fled our arrival began to return. They circled cautiously above the carcases and after satisfying themselves that everything was in order they landed and hopped amongst the half eaten remains of the three horses. For a time they fought and quarrelled over the kill. Then the sun set and birds retired to some adjacent trees to sleep and digest their meal.

"For a long time we lay staring at the scattered remains of the horses lying abandoned on the empty veldt while the light steadily faded. Nothing moved. It was getting quite dark when a jackal appeared on the scene. Where he came from we didn't see. One moment the veldt was deserted; the next moment he was standing there, sniffing suspiciously at the carcases.

"When I was a kid,' Heany whispered in his soft Virginian drawl, 'I was always told that the jackal was the lion's provider. But I expect that when the lion turns up he'll provide the jackal with a clip under the jaw for messing his dinner about!"

"We hung on for as long as we could see the sights on our rifles, but after a bit we could neither see them nor the carcases, so we decided to go back to camp and return again at dawn.

"Next morning we saddled up at five o'clock with our party re-inforced by Pennefather and Johnson. We got away without delay and set off at a smart canter in the half light before dawn. The sun was just coming over the horizon when we came in sight of the place.

"The first thing we saw were some jackals, vultures and crows. The vultures and crows were dodging about in the trees and the jackals were in the act of skulking off.

"I was just beginning to think that we were going to draw blank once more when Johnson called out: 'There's the lion!'

"He was stealing away in a very cat-like manner, but as soon as he saw that we were after him he stopped and threw up his head. Standing like that, looking defiantly back at us over one shoulder, he looked every inch the 'King of Beasts'.

"No sooner than he stopped than Johnson, who was leading, pulled up, jumped off his horse and fired at him. He hit him behind the shoulder, upon which he jumped into a patch of high grass and remained there out of sight, snarling and growling.

"Fortunately we had a mongrel dog with us which ran round and round the patch of grass, barking and yelping until the lion got annoyed and sprang out of the grass at the dog. He missed him, but in coming out of cover he exposed himself and Johnson fired again, this time from the saddle. He hit him through the body and lion sprung into the air and fell back into the grass again.

"We waited for a bit, but heard nothing more of him. Finally we rode very gingerly up to the grass and peered in. He was lying on his side, dead. He was in splendid condition and from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail he measured ten feet six inches. We skinned him before going home to breakfast, hungry, but very pleased with ourselves."