

## Polluted River Friends of the Liesbeek

Water from the Albion Spring, adjacent to the Liesbeek, was used to supply the residents of Rondebosch and surrounding suburbs with their domestic water



supply when the water of the Liesbeek River became too polluted to serve as drinking water in the 1890s. The man who established the Cape Town and District Waterworks Company was Anders Ohlsson, who is better known for his role in the brewing industry. Later the spring was used to augment the water supply for the Cape Town Municipality, while the Steenbras Dam was being built in the 1920s. The spring was also the successful site of a number of mineral water companies, the last of which was Schweppes.

In the twentieth century, residential and industrial expansion was responsible for increased river pollution. By the end of the twentieth century the once extensive wetland was reduced to a few residual

reed beds near the Royal Observatory and along the Black River canal. Pollution is generated by the overflow from storm water drains which transported a considerable amount of rubbish and dirt from the streets, gutters and yards in rainy weather. This both pollutes the river and obstructed its flow. Factory effluents also pollute the river.



During the 1990s the public expressed a strong desire to rediscover the past and to conserve the cultural heritage of the Black and Liesbeek Rivers. As a consequence, an eight kilometre riverside trail along the Liesbeek River was developed and Friends of the Liesbeek, a non-Governmental organization, was formed. The Friends generate public awareness and community involvement in the welfare of the river by arranging talks, walks and displays on the river. The Friends also lobby developers and local government to protect and enhance the Liesbeek environment and to allow public access rights to the Liesbeek from its source to

the mouth. Some of the group's projects include hacking, weeding, litter collection etc. The Friends have also raised money to employ workers to remove pollution from the river.