

Major P.J. Pretorius and the decimation of the Addo elephant herd in 1919-1920: important reassessments

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Between June 1919 and August 1920, the largest population of elephants in South Africa at the time was reduced from about 130 to 16 individuals by one man, Major P. J. Pretorius. Conflict between farmers and the elephants over dwindling water resources, coupled with the threat that the elephants posed to the future agricultural development of the region, precipitated the Provincial Administration's extermination order. Major Pretorius' figure of "120-odd" elephants killed during the year is reasonably accurate and the fate of the animal products is traced. Most of the skins were processed, by Pretorius himself, to make whips. A few specimens can be traced to local and overseas museums. Because records of the sex and age of animals killed by Major Pretorius have either been lost or were never detailed, reconstruction of the Addo elephant herd before the decimation, is difficult. Finally, details of the alleged public debate are discussed. It is concluded that it was probably a handful of individuals that convinced the Provincial Administration to spare 16 animals. The Rev J.R.L. Kingon as well as Major Pretorius himself are two key figures in the debate. There is little evidence to confirm the view that a public outcry, in the modern sense of the word, stopped the killing. Six photographs are included as an appendix. They show Major Pretorius at work in the Addo Bush.

Key words: African elephant, *Loxodonta africana*, conservation, hunting, arid savanna, culling, ivory trade.

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Introduction

Before European occupation of South Africa from 1652 onwards, elephants ranged throughout most of the subcontinent, in numbers "quite likely to have been in the order of 100 000 animals" (Hall-Martin 1992). However, excessive exploitation of elephants for ivory, skins and meat during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries resulted in their near extinction in the region. By the end of 1920, Hall-Martin (1992) estimates there were only 120 individuals left in South Africa. These were confined to just four populations in the Kruger National Park, northern Natal, the Knysna Forest and the Addo Bush of the eastern Cape.

This account deals with the decimation of the Addo elephants which, at the beginning of 1919, represented South Africa's largest population. It is concerned primarily with the

period from June 1919 to July 1920. During these 13 months the Addo elephant population was reduced from about 130 to 16 individuals by one man, Major Philip Jacobus Pretorius, in the contractual employ of the Provincial Administration of the Cape of Good Hope.

The decimation of the herd during this period has been documented by others (e.g. Stokes 1941; Meiring 1959; Hall-Martin 1980; Pringle *et al.* 1982). However, most have relied on Pretorius' own account (Pretorius 1947) for much of the detail. Although his book (published posthumously), represents the most extensive description of the incident it was written many years after the event (Abel *et al.* 1939). It was probably also embellished by one or more "ghost writers" to make it more palatable for public consumption (Abel *et al.* 1939).

I have, where possible, used primary sources of information such as personal correspondence between Major Pretorius and others, newspaper articles and minutes of the Provincial Administration's meetings to provide some detail on the following main themes: (a) the reasons for the near extermination of the herd; (b) the decisions taken by the Provincial Administration about the Addo elephants; (c) the number of elephants killed; (d) the amount earned by Major Pretorius for his efforts; (e) the fate of the elephant products and (f) the alleged public outcry which halted the extermination of the herd.

Although unsuccessful, I also tried to use historical information to reconstruct the sex and age structure of the 1919 herd. I reasoned that if this were possible to do then such knowledge would undoubtedly provide biologists and conservators with important insights into the effect of small founder population sizes on the phenotypic expression of individuals in later populations.

I have cited newspaper articles by date, in the text only, and have abbreviated the Eastern Province Herald to EPH.

All photographs were taken by Dr Homer L. Shantz. He visited South Africa as part of a U.S. Department of Agriculture expedition to Africa "to collect suitable plants, seeds etc of economic importance for trial in the United States" (EPH 18 October 1919). Dr Shantz visited Major Pretorius at his camp at Kenkelbosch in September 1919. He returned to Africa in 1956 with Dr Billy Turner and together they produced one of the first photographic studies of vegetation change in Africa (Shantz & Turner 1958).

Reasons for the near extermination of the herd

Calls for a solution to the problem of the Addo elephants began long before 1919 (EPH 20 June 1919). Farmers in the area had suffered damage, particularly to property, probably since they began settling in the area

during the mid-19th century. Although they complained bitterly about the damage to their crops and fences it was the destruction of their dams by the elephants which elicited the most discontent (EPH 19 June 1919). In this region of low (300-500 mm/annum) and unpredictable rainfall a dependable water supply was essential for sustainable agriculture. In a single evening, the elephants were capable of destroying a full season's water supply thus effectively forcing the farmers, with their cattle, off the land.

There had also been some loss of life. "In at least three cases (four is believed to be the correct number) the victims have been Europeans, and there are about a dozen cases of natives being killed" (EPH 18 June 1919). All the cases of reported "European" deaths, however, occurred while the victims were hunting, either the elephants or other animals, in the Addo Bush (EPH 18 June 1919). The death, in about 1830, of "one Thackwray ... one of the last of the professional ivory-hunters" was, in addition, a case of sheer stupidity (Bryden 1889). In a bid to win a bet, Thackwray had attempted to chalk a cross on the flank of an elephant in the Addo Bush before shooting it. He apparently chalked the cross but only wounded the animal, which later crushed him (Bryden 1889; Stokes 1941).

Citing the threat to life and property as a reason for exterminating the elephants is not that simple. Many farmers were apparently granted land in the Addo Bush during the mid-19th century at a much reduced and nominal cost, precisely because there were elephants in the region (EPH 1 August 1919). However, at least two farmers denied this saying there was "not an atom of truth" in the accusation that they received the land for "a few shillings a morgen" (EPH 30 August 1919). They did not disclose the money and discount involved, if any, in the purchase of their land. Thus, although these farmers dismissed the issue in the local press (EPH 30 August 1919) it may be worth investigating further.

Several factors appear to have influenced the Provincial Administration in its decision to exterminate the herd. Conflict between the farmers and elephants over a dwindling and relatively unpredictable water resource base on the one hand, and the potential threat that the elephants posed to the region's agricultural development on the other, finally precipitated the decision. The following arguments support this view.

First, the Addo elephant population had probably doubled since farmers first settled in the region. Although these elephants had been hunted relentlessly in the first part of the 19th century (Bryden 1889), they were relatively well protected by the dense Addo Bush itself. They had escaped the extermination that had befallen elephant populations elsewhere in South Africa in the 19th century (Bryden 1889; Pretorius 1947; Hall-Martin 1980, 1992; Pringle *et al.* 1982). Several reports suggest that the elephant population in the Addo Bush was between about 60 and 70 individuals in the 1860's (EPH 3 March 1920; Bryden 1889). By 1919 the numbers had increased to between 100 and 150 individuals (Rand Daily Mail 20 September 1916; Anonymous 1918a; Pretorius 1947). The region simply could not sustain so many elephants when demands on dwindling water supplies were also being made by increasing numbers of domestic cattle.

Second, in good or even average rainfall years the problem would not have been as acute. However, the first two decades of the 20th century were characterised by a series of severe droughts in the eastern Cape (EPH 31 October 1919; Vogel 1988). The scant water supply that the Addo farmers had preserved in their dams was critical for their survival. Any encroachment on this supply by the elephants was resented bitterly. However, in the entire Addo region it was only the Sundays and Coerney rivers that provided a perennial supply of water. Not only had the severe drought conditions dried up most of this supply but also the farmers had by 1919 occupied and cleared the banks of the rivers. It thus

became dangerous for the elephants to use these traditional sources and they turned increasingly to using water from the dams around isolated homesteads, particularly under cover of darkness. This conflict over water during the drought years demanded a solution.

Finally, the fate of the elephants in the Addo Bush is inextricably linked with that of the agricultural development of the region, an excellent account of which is provided by Meiring (1959). The fertile alluvial soils of the valley had been farmed from the early 19th century. However, a dependable supply of irrigation water was essential if the area was to be developed further. From 1883 onwards, but especially from the turn of the century, the local business and farming community worked hard to develop the Sundays River Valley into a regional agricultural power. The Strathsomers Estate Company was established in 1903. The Koornhaans Drift scheme was completed in 1912. Both the Cape Sundays River Settlements, under the chairmanship of Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, and the Sundays River Irrigation Board were established in 1917. Also, work on the Lake Mentz dam had begun in 1917; a year of unparalleled optimism in the valley (Meiring 1959). These newly-created companies demanded a large and continuous supply of settlers and capital investment in the region. However, efforts at management and extension were frustrated by the continual deprivations of the elephants. The development of the valley was threatened as a result (FitzSimons 1925). There was also some suggestion that the canal itself, upon which the irrigation scheme depended, was at risk along its entire length by the mobility and physical destructiveness of these animals (EPH 9 February 1920). "They assume that the irrigation canals are intended for their benefit and in taking their baths they destroy the banks and dams" (Times 8 July 1919). The threat to life and property in the region, represented by the elephants, had to be reviewed. At the time in the eastern Cape the position was clear. "Civilization and the needs of man were bound to

extend, and sooner or later elephant and man would meet in ever-increasing antagonism. The farmers have all along maintained that the only solution to the difficulty was to exterminate the herd” (EPH 20 June 1919).

Decisions of the provincial authorities

As early as April 1916 the fate of the Addo elephants was discussed in the Provincial Council (Anonymous 1916). The minutes mention nothing of exterminating or even reducing the herd. Instead, they contain a proposal for the complete preservation of the herd within the farms “Mentone” and “Strathmore” in the Addo Bush. These farms had been proclaimed a forest reserve as early as 1869 (Stokes 1941). It was proposed that this area be provided with a permanent water supply and that it be declared a game reserve, under Act 11 of 1909, for the exclusive use of elephants and other wild game. For reasons not disclosed, but probably because it was too costly, this proposal was shelved. However, it clearly formed the blueprint for the later creation of the Addo Elephant National Park in 1931 (Pringle *et al.* 1982).

The farmers of the area did not agree that preservation of the herd was an option and began opposing this view. In September 1916 they called for at least a reduction of the herd (Rand Daily Mail 20 September 1916). By 1919, the Uitenhage and P.E. Farmers Association held the view that the only effective solution to the problem lay in the complete extermination of the elephants (EPH 10th May 1919; EPH 11th June 1919; EPH 30th August 1919). They were to retain this view even after the herd had been reduced to probably less than 30 individuals (EPH 1 July 1920).

In March 1918, following further complaints, the issue was again raised in the Provincial Council (Anonymous 1918b). A five person select committee on elephants in the Addo Bush Forest Reserve was appointed to investigate the problem. Their report was delivered

to the Provincial Council on 24 April 1918 (Anonymous 1918a).

Briefly, the committee acknowledged that the elephants represented a significant threat to life and property and would certainly retard the future agricultural growth of the region. They suggested there were only two possible solutions to the problem: “either extermination of the entire herd, or its reduction to such a number as will on the one hand be sufficient to ensure preservation, and on the other hand not too large for confinement within the reserve” (Anonymous 1918a). The committee saw any other plan, such as domestication or relocation as unfeasible. To their credit they state that the committee “is extremely averse to recommending extermination” and the reasons for this position will be discussed later. However, the committee’s opposition to extermination was not irrevocable. They suggested that this was a national concern. Therefore, the Union Government should provide the necessary funds to both secure the perimeter of the forest reserve, at an estimated cost of £20 000 (Anonymous 1918a), as well as provide a permanent water supply. Failing this then “there is no alternative but extermination” (Anonymous 1918a). The committee concluded that the matter was very sensitive and that a commission of investigation into the problem be considered.

There is no evidence that a commission of investigation was appointed. It is also not known whether the Provincial Administration approached the Union Government for financial assistance in the matter. Instead, perhaps perceiving a cheaper solution, Major Pretorius, the noted big game hunter and celebrated war hero, was asked to cull the herd (Pretorius 1947; Meiring 1959).

Pretorius entered into contractual agreement with the provincial authorities on 25 November 1918 (Anonymous 1919a). Although the full terms of the contract are unknown, only a reduction of the herd was considered at first (Anonymous 1919a). However, on 1st April 1919, the Administrator of the Cape in per-

son, Sir Frederic de Waal, moved that the whole herd be exterminated (Anonymous 1919a).

By June 1919, Major Pretorius had completed his initial survey. On 12 June 1919, Pretorius shot and wounded his first animal (EPH 17 June 1919). The deliberations of the Administrator and the Provincial Council between June 1919 and January 1920 are difficult to determine and no record of them is available. However, by January 1920 the administration had decided to preserve a small number of animals. In terms of a new contractual agreement between the Provincial Administration and Major Pretorius, formulated between December 1919 and January 1920, and announced in the Provincial Council minutes of 29th March 1920, 16 animals were to be left on the forest reserve (Anonymous 1920a). This was the final number left by Pretorius when he departed from the Addo Bush in early August 1920 (EPH 4 August 1920).

It is not clear as to why the Provincial Administration decided to preserve a remnant of the herd following its earlier intent on complete eradication. Although details of the public and professional response to the killing will be discussed later, it probably was this, as well as the opinion of Major Pretorius himself, that persuaded the Provincial authorities to spare 16 animals.

How many elephants were shot?

Elephants in the Addo area had been hunted for centuries before 1919 (Bryden 1889; Gonne 1919; Skead 1987). The selection of large-tusked individuals by ivory hunters had, by 1919, left a herd of tuskless or small-tusked individuals (Hall-Martin *pers. comm.*; Peringuey 1920a; Pretorius 1947). Despite this obvious historical disturbance, reconstruction of the 1919 herd would be interesting for comparisons with the current herd. For example, if the sex, size, age and tusk mass of individuals of the June 1919 population were determined then the effect of the

small founder population of 16 individuals on phenotypic and genotypic traits in the current herd could be more accurately established. Biologists and conservators need such knowledge in order to develop effective and sustainable management plans for targeted species. The value of historical ecology as a quantitative research tool would also be established.

Reconstruction of the 1919 herd, however, is difficult. First, Pretorius was not sure of the number of elephants that he had killed (Pringle *et al.* 1982). Second, there is also uncertainty about the initial total. Skead (1980) suggests that a game census of 1910 or 1912 placed the number of elephants at a very high estimate of 290 in the Alexandria and Uitenhage districts. The local press was inconsistent and in general supported the sentiments of the local farmers and developers. It thus tended to over-estimate the number of elephants and placed the total at one time or another between 150 and 300 individuals (EPH 19 June 1919; EPH 26 July 1919; EPH 6 August 1919). When Pretorius departed from Addo in August 1920, leaving 16 individuals, the local press acknowledged there were “approximately 126 elephants divided into three herds” at the start of the campaign (EPH 4 August 1920). Early estimates and several personal observations confirm that the herd numbered between 100 and 150 individuals in June 1919 (Bryden 1889; Anonymous 1918a; Gonne 1919; EPH 3 March 1920; EPH 17 March 1920). Pretorius’ own estimate of about 130 individuals (Anonymous 1920a), is reasonably accurate.

Pretorius claimed to have killed a “hundred and twenty-odd” Addo elephants (Pretorius 1947). Pringle *et al.* (1982) suggests that Pretorius reported killing 90 to the Administrator. The local press clarifies this discrepancy (EPH 4 August 1920). Pretorius recovered the carcasses of 90 animals. For the remainder that he shot, which totalled 110 and not 120-odd (EPH 4 August 1920), “it was impossible to reach the spots where the animals fell and died” (EPH 4 August 1920).

How much reliance can be placed on the figure of 90? Reports in the local press, of the number of elephants killed during Pretorius' campaign, are too fragmentary to be used to reconstruct the herd (Table 1). However, Pretorius' total of 90 carcasses retrieved was probably correct since he was encouraged by Dr Peringuey, Director of the South African Museum, to keep accurate records. When the museum heard that the extermination of the herd would proceed, they approached Pretorius for some of the spoils for themselves as well as for the British Museum. Needing measurements of specimens before their dismemberment, the South African Museum had provided Pretorius with copies of a sketch of an elephant (Peringuey 1919a) (Fig. 1). This diagram indicated the number of the specimen and which specific measurements were required for its accurate re-assembling. In addition, Mr Drury, the South African Museum taxidermist, accompanied Major Pretorius during the initial phase of the campaign. His task was to teach Major Pretorius, not only how to skin the animals for taxidermic purposes, but also how to take accurate

measurements. There is some doubt whether Pretorius ever, in fact, acquired these skills (Peringuey 1920b).

Despite these precautions, it is not clear whether Pretorius measured every carcass that he retrieved, particularly those killed before January 1920. Under the terms of the initial contract between Major Pretorius and the Cape Provincial Administration, the elephants killed before January 1920 remained the property of the Cape Provincial Administration. Pretorius may thus not have been that diligent in the details of his record-keeping, since he initially stood to gain little directly in monetary terms. After January 1920, however, the spoils became the property of Pretorius (Anonymous 1921). He knew that if he was to sell the specimens to museums then there would have to be an accompanying diagram with each specimen. Thus, he may have been more accurate in his deliberations after January 1920.

Despite local reports that "Major Pretorius has collected a wealth of data, some of which

Table 1
Progress of Major Pretorius' campaign to exterminate the Addo elephants from June 1919 to August 1920 as extracted from reports in the local newspaper, the Eastern Province Herald

Date	Number killed	Comment
17 Jun 1919	–	Wounded young male, presumed died later.
26 Jul 1919	5	Sexes not given.
27 Aug 1919	3	Plus another wounded and nine month old calf captured. Both presumed died later. Sexes not given.
16 Sep 1919	2	Two captured calves die.
8 Oct 1919	4	Two bulls, two cows.
11 Dec 1919	15	Captured additional three. Two (?all) subsequently died. Most of those shot were males.
11 Dec 1919	5	Two bulls, three cows from 1 - 11 December.
19 Dec 1919	6	Three bulls, three cows, presumably since 11 December.
20 Jan 1920	4	Adults, no sexes given.
	44	SUB-TOTAL (plus 6 either captured or wounded and presumed died later) from June 1919 to 20 January 1920.
6 Mar 1920	–	Pretorius declares that he has killed 75 elephants to date.
15 Jun 1920	3	Announcement that herd has been reduced by 78 individuals.
4 Aug 1920	–	Announcement that the "Great Addo Hunt" has ended with 110 animals killed, 90 carcasses retrieved and 16 animals left alive in the Addo bush.

is calculated to set the scientific world agog” (EPH 15 June 1920), such information was never made available, in a single collection, to the scientific community. Perhaps Pretorius did measure and sex every individual that he shot during the 13 months. However, even Peringuey, who was aware of the progress of the extermination, and had initially encouraged Pretorius to collect such data, was disappointed. He bemoans the fact that “scientific observations could not be carried out regarding the size, proportion of sexes, and especially the dentition of the 90 animals that were slain” (Peringuey 1920a). It is possible that the animosity, which developed later between the two men, prevented Pretorius’ records from being secured by the scientific community.

I have been able to trace only five diagrams of the herd that was decimated by Major Pretorius. These have been preserved in the South African Museum archives (Fig. 1). They consist of two males with tusks, two tuskless females and a tuskless male juvenile captured by Major Pretorius in September 1919. These represented the specimens apparently destined for the South African Museum, for the British Museum and for the Tring Museum owned by Lord Rothschild at the time.

Pretorius submitted the diagrams together with specimens that he sold to South African and overseas establishments. It is unlikely, however, that these records have been preserved. The diagram of the Kaffrarian Museum specimen, for example, was sent to the taxidermist in England (Gerrard & Sons 1920) and later, presumably discarded.

Pretorius himself did not have the diagrams in his possession when writing his book. In their letter to the South African Museum, Abel *et al.* (1939) request information concerning the dates and dimensions of the elephants that Pretorius had shot and which were held by the Museum. Also, reference is made to a burglary in which Pretorius “lost a great number of original documents”. Unfortu-

nately, unless a reasonably complete set of these diagrams has been preserved in the various museums’ archives it will be impossible to reconstruct the herd. This is disappointing, particularly since it is not impossible that accurate records were made by Pretorius but that through carelessness, personal conflict or a host of other unknown factors these records have been lost to science forever.

Finally, despite the difficulty in reconstruction, there is little evidence to doubt the figures provided by Pretorius, putting the size of the initial herd at 130 and the total number of animals killed during 1919-1920 between 90 and “120-odd”.

How much did Major Pretorius receive for his effort?

The task of exterminating the herd was a long and dangerous one. Since Major Pretorius was one of the few people who had the ability and experience (Pretorius 1947) to do it, he could probably have commanded a high price for the job. How much money did Pretorius make from his venture?

Although he suggested that “people must not run away with idea that I am making a good thing out of the hunt” (Pretorius 1920a), there is some evidence that Pretorius acquired a considerable sum of money from his effort.

Unfortunately, the terms of Pretorius’ initial contract with the Administration are not known. However, the amount budgeted for the extermination of the Addo elephants in the Provincial Administration’s 1919/1920 budget, was £1 800 (Anonymous 1919b). At the time, the Provincial Secretary’s annual salary was £1 100, a senior clerk’s annual salary was £410 and that of a secretary, a little more than £100 per annum (Anonymous 1919b). Also, Pretorius’ transport and equipment costs, including that of a new .475 Jeffries rifle (Fig. 2), were paid for by the Provincial Administration (Pretorius 1947). His living expenses were also negligible since he and his wife camped in the Addo

Bush itself for the duration of the campaign (Pretorius 1947) eating their share of elephant meat (Fig. 3).

One of Pretorius' few expenses was labour, to assist in bush clearing, water transportation and the skinning and transport of dead elephant products. In a letter to Peringuey, Pretorius (1920a) complained that he had to spend £5 a month for each labourer (wages and food) and that they stole an additional £2 from him every month as well! The low wages, together with the physically exhausting work, saw to it that Pretorius' labourers deserted him on occasion (EPH 21 February 1920; Pretorius 1947).

In terms of the new contract signed with the Provincial Administration, probably in late 1919 or early 1920, Pretorius claims to have been granted a further £1 000: £500 initially and a further £500 on completion of the hunt (EPH 21 February 1920). Pretorius later complained that the Administration had reneged on their deal giving him only £386 at the end of the hunt (Pretorius 1920a). The Provincial Administration's records, however, suggest that for the period 1920/1921 they had budgeted £2 000 for the extermination of the Addo herd (Anonymous 1920b). This discrepancy is hard to explain. Either Major Pretorius deliberately misquoted his fee in the local press and to Dr Peringuey to mollify his critics or the additional £1 000 included transport and accommodation costs. Finally, the total cost of extermination quoted in the Provincial Council minutes was £6 126 (Anonymous 1921). It is difficult to imagine where the bulk of this money ended up if did not go either directly or indirectly to Major Pretorius himself. No other hunter was ever involved in the campaign. At the time, this was a considerable sum of money. It is ironic that over the same period, the Provincial Administration spent just £100 on what it termed "Game Preservation" (Anonymous 1919b; Anonymous 1920b).

The figures above do not include the money earned by Pretorius from the sale of the ele-

phant products to local and overseas museums. As is shown later, this probably amounted to at least an additional few hundred pounds, including £75 from the Kaffrarian Museum (Pretorius 1920b) and £152 from the British Museum (Harmer 1920a; Peringuey 1922). The amount of money Pretorius made from the sale of elephant products to American institutions is not known.

In conclusion, it is proposed here that, despite Pretorius' protestations, he is likely to have emerged from the hunt with considerable wealth.

What happened to the spoils of the hunt?

Although ninety dead elephants represented a large and valuable resource that required appropriate disposal, the fate of the dead animals is traced only with difficulty. However, a knowledge of their destination may be important for scientists who, using reasonably modern technology such as gel electrophoresis, may wish to ask questions concerning the genetic variability and regional relationships of the herd. Also, if scientists had access to the skulls of the Addo elephants, then it may be possible, from a knowledge of the mandible width, to determine the sex and age of the individual and ultimately the sex and age structure of the 1919 herd (Viljoen 1990). Besides these obvious scientific applications there also exists, I believe, a moral obligation to determine the ultimate fate of these creatures.

What happened to the carcasses? The local press suggests that Pretorius had extensive plans for the initial disposal of the elephants (EPH 4 June 1919). There was obvious value in the ivory, which in December 1919 was given by Pretorius as 57 shillings per lb on the London Market (Pretorius 1919a). Disposal plans for other elephant parts included the transport of elephant meat to feed "the natives in mine compounds on the Rand," the transformation of the offal into poultry meal and the conversion of elephant hides and

skins into “curios such as umbrella stands etc.” (EPH 4 June 1919).

However, the disposal of the material was far from a simple matter and Pretorius quickly abandoned his initial elaborate scheme (EPH 11 June 1919). The “Museums of the world” (EPH 11 June 1919) became his targeted, and only, outlet. However, to transport the skins and bones of the slaughtered animals from the dense and impenetrable thicket demanded considerable organisational efforts and dedicated and well-paid labour. The material, especially the hide, was often either damaged during transportation or attacked by “grubs of the bacon-beetles” (Peringuey 1919b; 1919c). In some cases, bones were either lost or allegedly stolen en route. This obviously led to conflict between institutions that wanted complete, attractive and large display specimens.

It was the Provincial Administration’s initial belief that they would be able to subsidise Pretorius’ extermination fee from the sale of the elephant products, particularly ivory (EPH 8 July 1919; Peringuey 1919c). However, the prices that were initially quoted to the local museums by the Cape Provincial Administration of £100 to £125 each for “larger specimens” (Mansergh 1919) were exorbitant (see also EPH 8 July 1919). Not surprisingly, the museums, which received only between £750 and £2 000 each in annual subsidy from the Administration (Anonymous 1920b), were outraged that the specimens should be sold to them at that price. Dr Peringuey (1919d) warned the Administration that “if this decision is maintained, there will be the edifying spectacle [sic] of the Museums of the Union being prevented from obtaining specimens of a race of animals that it is intended to obliterate ... we shall thus see repeated appearance of the Blaauwbok, of the Quagga, etc., now unrepresented in the Museums of the union, save for a foal”. Major Pretorius had exclusive rights to all elephant products after 1920 and the museums were to find his prices far more acceptable. However, only the South African and Kaffrarian muse-

ums, of the local museums, did in fact, purchase specimens.

Most of the animals were killed between June 1919 and early March 1920 (Table 1). However, few of these ended up in museums. By January 1920, Pretorius had only dispatched a total of four specimens to the South African Museum (Peringuey 1919b, 1919c) and there is no record of any others being sent to other institutions.

On 21 January 1920 Pretorius wrote to Dr Peringuey (Pretorius 1920c) telling him of the new contractual arrangement with the Administration. Initially, when he realised that he would have control of the material, Pretorius cut up every skin in his possession “into whip or ox reams [sic].” He also apparently, gave liberally of the skins to interested parties (Peringuey 1920c).

In January 1920 Pretorius realised, either that this was “the last of this unick [unique] hurd [sic] of elephants” and thus needed preservation in the museums, or that he could add a few pennies to his coffers. Whatever the reason, Pretorius “started to make specimens again” in January 1920 (Pretorius 1920c). He wasted no time in developing a saleable commodity. He did this by arranging the slain animals into groups of three: an adult male and female and a juvenile of either sex. The group of three was quoted at £100 without the ivory. If this was to be included in the specimens, then Pretorius offered a discount price of 40 shillings per lb. If interested parties could not afford the group arrangement, then Pretorius was willing to sell a complete skeleton of a large animal for £14. Records indicate that the South African Museum agreed to the transaction as well as the Kaffrarian Museum and both retain Addo elephant material from the time (Table 2). The Kaffrarian Museum appeared to have paid £75 for a tuskless adult female and juvenile female which they received in late January or early February 1920 (Pretorius 1920b, 1920d). The Kaffrarian Museum had to pay an additional £168 to have the specimens transported

to England and mounted (Gerrard & Sons 1921).

The South African Museum also acted for the British Museum in securing a group of three specimens. Initially the transaction was handled smoothly and negotiations between Peringuey and Pretorius were cordial and helpful. However, the material eventually received by the South African Museum, was disappointing. The skins were damaged in some instances, and the skeletons were incomplete and tuskless (Peringuey 1920d). Also, the tusks sent by Pretorius with the specimens, did not fit the skulls (Peringuey 1920e). Pretorius also apparently changed his asking price and the museum refused to accommodate him. After much correspondence, a letter, from Pretorius' lawyers, was sent to Peringuey (Budler & Meintjies 1921). Eventually the matter was settled and three specimens consisting of skins and skeletons were sent to the British Museum in late October 1920 (Peringuey 1920b). This apparently included one of the two Knysna elephants shot by Pretorius in Knysna in early July 1920 (Harmer 1920b; Pretorius 1920e).

The Knysna expedition is interesting since it places Major Pretorius' culling motives in broader perspective. Although Pretorius had undertaken the trip to Knysna ostensibly to "see if that race is the same as this of the Addo Bush" (Pretorius 1920f) he clearly had an ulterior motive. Pretorius knew that the British Museum wanted a large tusked bull for its display and the Addo elephant specimens had either already been dispatched elsewhere, did not measure up to size, or were tuskless. In his telegram to the Provincial Secretary requesting permission to visit the Knysna Forest (Pretorius 1920f) Pretorius explained his reason for visiting the forest as primarily scientific. He stated: "I reckon these [Addo] elephants have been in this bush for at least fifteen thousand years and it would be of great interest for science and I can prove this fact if I can see the Knysna elephants. I propose going there on my own expense and photograph [sic] the elephants there. Of

course it may be necessary to shoot one to prove the fact." He does acknowledge that any Knysna elephants shot will be the property of the Provincial Administration. However, in the course of events Pretorius, shot not one but two Knysna elephants, sold one to the British Museum and charged the South African Museum for the specimen's railway transport costs between George and Knysna.

Whatever the reason for Pretorius' trip to Knysna, relations between him and Peringuey deteriorated rapidly. Peringuey suggested that Pretorius had mis-measured the Knysna bull which was did not stand "12 feet high with fine tusks" (Pretorius 1920e) but rather only "9 ft 3 inches ... very far from the 12 feet" (Peringuey 1920d). Pretorius (1920g) responded indignantly: "Your mistake about a 9 feet 6 elephant are intiraly [sic] ronng [sic]. The anemal [sic] was mesured [sic] by 2 foresters in my present [sic]."

The correspondence between Dr Peringuey and Major Pretorius over the sale of the Addo and Knysna elephant products is as voluminous as it is acrimonious. In the end Dr Peringuey regretted that he had ever volunteered to act as a broker for the British Museum and for his part, Major Pretorius felt exploited by Dr Peringuey and the museums in general. Pretorius maintained that the South African Museum had illegally held onto some of his (Pretorius') material. When Peringuey died in 1924, Pretorius wrote to the Museum demanding the return of four tusks. The Museum eventually complied (Gill 1926).

The fate of the majority of animals is not known. Table 2 shows that only a handful of specimens exist in South African institutions and three in the British Museum. When Pretorius left Addo in August 1920 he had with him a considerable number of skeletons, skins and tusks in bags which he transported to the Transvaal. His relationship with Peringuey had soured greatly and he could no longer rely on Peringuey as a broker, to arrange the sale of this material to other overseas institutions. Pretorius then turned to Mr

Table 2
*Current distribution of Addo elephant specimens
 shot by Major P. J. Pretorius from June 1919 to July 1920*

Institution	Accession Number	Description
S.A. Museum	ZM 15735	Male skin. Tusks now missing.
	ZM 15736	Female skin and skull.
	ZM 15737	Juvenile. Damaged skull and skin.
	ZM 15738	Juvenile skin.
Kaffrarian Museum	KM 10830	Mounted female adult.
	KM 10831	Mounted female calf.
British Museum (Natural History)	BM(NH) ZE. 1937.5.20	Subadult female skin and skull. Addo Bush. 15 June 1920.
	BM(NH) ZE. 1937.5.20	?Subadult male skin and skull. Knysna Forest. 11 July 1920.
	BM(NH) ZD. 1939.4808	Juvenile skin and skull, sex unknown. Addo Bush ?1920.
	BM(NH) ZD. 1979.1730	Infant male skin. Knysna Forest. c.1920.

Haagner of the National Zoo in Pretoria. The rest of the material was sent to an untraced institution in the United States for an undisclosed amount (Peringuey 1921). Despite receiving correspondence from the following seven United States institutions, which have a history of acquiring such specimens at the turn of the century, I have been unable to trace the North American material: The Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Field Museum of Natural History, National Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution), San Diego Natural History Museum, Museum of Comparative Zoology (Harvard University), Museum of Zoology (University of Michigan), Museum of Vertebrate Zoology (University of California, Berkeley).

A public outcry stopped the killing?

Nearly all who have written on the Addo elephants suggest that a public outcry halted the massacre. For example, Meiring (1959) suggests that “fortunately for the survival of this herd, public opinion began to veer round towards compassion for the elephants and an outcry arose not only in South Africa but in

all parts of the world, to save them.” Similarly, Hall-Martin (1980) suggests that the publicity surrounding Pretorius’ campaign elicited “sympathy for the surviving elephants both from Pretorius himself and the general public.” Finally, Pringle *et al.* (1982) state that “the Provincial Administration bowed to popular opinion” and preserved a remnant of the herd.

While there undoubtedly was some sympathy for the plight of the elephants, as has already been noted, there were also continued calls for their extermination. The role of five main groups in the debate needs to be established. These groups are: (1) the Provincial Administration; (2) local farmers and the Uitenhage and P.E. Farmer’s Association; (3) the public and the local press; (4) professional individuals and bodies such as the museums and scientific groups and (5) Major Pretorius himself.

The provincial administration

Decisions taken by the Provincial Administration concerning the fate of the Addo ele-

phants changed more than once over a period of just a few years and have already been discussed briefly. Initially the Administration favoured preservation but, with increasing pressure from the local farming community began to support a policy which included the reduction of the herd by at least 40 animals (EPH 20 June 1919). This changed to one favouring complete extermination and then back again to a policy of thinning the herd by 60 (EPH 11 December 1919), 75 (EPH 28 January 1920) and 105 elephants (EPH 13 February 1920). Finally, the Administration supported the idea of preserving 16 animals (EPH 6 March 1920; Anonymous 1920a).

Unfortunately, there is little in the minutes of the Provincial Administration meetings to indicate the main influences on these decisions, especially the decision to preserve a remnant of the herd. The Administration was wary of public and professional opinion. For example, the Report of the Select Committee on Elephants in the Addo Bush Forest Reserve (Anonymous 1919a) stated that "The deliberate extermination of these elephants would upon grounds of deeply felt general sentiment, and in the interests of science be received by not only very high and influential circles in South Africa but by the general feeling of the civilized world with condemnation as a step reflecting no credit upon South Africa." However, as discussed later, there were few letters of protest and few organised public or professional responses to the extermination that could be traced. The decisions of the Administration probably were strongly influenced by "very high and influential circles in South Africa." However, I could not find records of such meetings and conversations. Individuals who possessed strong personal influence over the Administrator in this regard could not be traced.

The farmers

Unlike the Provincial Administration, the Uitenhage and P.E. Farmer's Association position did not change at all during the campaign. This organisation wanted the entire

herd exterminated and saw such action as the only lasting solution to the problem (EPH 30 August 1919; EPH 9 February 1920). Comments in the local press suggest that influential individual farmers of the region, such as C. Walton and William and J. T. Harvey also advocated extermination of the herd (EPH 4 June 1919; EPH 20 June 1919; EPH 3 March 1920).

Many farmers were derisive of individuals who advocated protection of the elephants. For example, at a meeting of the Uitenhage and P.E. Farmer's Association on 29 August 1919, "Mr Mackay thought it high time that people who wrote such a lot of nonsense to the paper, and those people in England even who held public meetings over the fate of the poor elephants, should be made aware of the correct state of affairs" (EPH 30 August 1919). In fairness, however, when it was decided to preserve 16 members of the herd, some farmers of the region played an important role in securing the elephant's survival (Pringle *et al.* 1982).

The ignorance of the Uitenhage and P.E. Farmer's Association about scientific matters is important since it influenced their call for complete extermination. In response to the S.A. Society for the Advancement of Science's resolution, discussed later, the Uitenhage and P.E. Farmer's Association meeting resolved (EPH 30 August 1919) that they "make a special request to the Provincial Council that the local museum be granted a free gift of a bull, a cow and a calf elephant, as they are of the opinion that in this way the scientific value of the Addo Bush elephant will be preserved." It is unlikely that this community would have adopted such a resolution had they been better informed of scientific and conservation perspectives which existed even in 1919.

The public and the press

Previous writers on this theme have emphasised that it was a public outcry which halted the slaughter. In the modern era, the term

“public outcry” suggests at least extensive correspondence in a sympathetic local press, petitions to local government and perhaps even staged protests against the killing. In 1919, however, cultural circumstances were different. While it may be unfair to judge events at that time from modern perspectives, it is still interesting to trace the form and extent of the public debate.

Although the presence of a public outcry is often alluded to in newspaper articles between June and August 1919 (EPH 20 June 1919; EPH 26 July 1919; EPH 1 August 1919; EPH 30 August 1919) I have not been able to trace specific records of any such public protests. In addition, not a single letter, objecting to the extermination of the Addo elephants, exists in the pages of the largest local daily circulation newspaper, the Eastern Province Herald, from January 1919 to August 1920. Although there is one letter protesting the death of a baby elephant that Major Pretorius had exhibited in Port Elizabeth in September 1919 (EPH 20 September 1919), its objection is not extended to the destruction of the herd itself. The only objection to the killing, published locally, is a letter in an untraced newspaper written in August 1919 under the nom de plume “Anti-slaughter” (see EPH 30 August 1919). It is quoted extensively in this issue of the Eastern Province Herald but only as a backdrop for the angry response it elicited from the farming community.

It is difficult to support Stokes’ (1941) contention that “the time came when the South African Press urged cessation of the slaughter at Addo.” Except a single article in the Johannesburg Star published in July 1919 and reported in detail by the Eastern Province Herald (EPH 26 July 1919), all other correspondence opposing the destruction, that I could trace, is contained in two London newspapers (Times 8 July 1919; The Morning Post 21 October 1919) and an article in the United Empire (see Gonne 1919). All these articles suggest further investigation of the problem before the elephants are summa-

rily exterminated. Employing a delightful turn of phrase Gonne (1919), for example, appeals, “in the name of ‘British cricket’, for a discussion of the whole matter [of the destruction of the elephants], to which experience might be invited.” Similarly, the Times article suggests that prominent figures such as Prime Minister Botha and General Smuts “may find the time to take the necessary steps to preserve this invaluable heritage” (Times 8 July 1919). In addition, all newspaper articles of protest were published at the beginning of Major Pretorius’ campaign. I could not trace any articles published in 1920, that urged the cessation of the killing.

It is difficult to understand the general apathy towards the fate of the Addo elephants that existed in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage at the time. There were at least 10 articles or letters in the Eastern Province Herald, in 1919-1920, either highlighting the plight of draught animals, such as donkeys (EPH 24 January 1919; EPH 27 June 1919), or objecting to the shooting of birds by schoolboys (EPH 22 May 1919; EPH 16 August 1919). The “general public,” therefore, were not unsympathetic towards animals and the penalties for abusing domestic and draught animals were severe. For example, a “coloured” man, Jerry Wilson, was fined two pounds or one month’s hard labour for throwing a stone at an attacking dog and cutting its nose (EPH 24 January 1919). “Every animal, the same as every human being, shall have a fair chance” declared the magistrate when Wilson was sentenced. This protection, unfortunately, applied only to domestic animals. “Wild animals,” were different and the Addo elephants, in particular, fell into a special category. They were repeatedly described in the local press as “ferocious” (EPH 18 June 1919), “outlaws” (EPH 20 August 1919) and “thieves of the worst kind” (EPH 30 August 1919). Their only value lay in their ability to provide labour for human kind as their Indian cousins had done, but their capture and training presented an insurmountable obstacle, despite numerous crackpot suggestions (e.g. Gonne 1919). It was also still too early in our

country's history to view these animals as conservation commodities and the idea was actively rejected. "There is, it may be noted, no case made out for the preservation of the herd for the pleasure of animal lovers, for no man in his senses would venture to enter the Addo Bush to sight the wild elephant since he would have to crawl within a few yards before he could even dimly see the outline of an animal, and then if he were scented his farther interest would be blotted out in a charge" (EPH 26 July 1919).

From a modern perspective, the public response to the destruction of the Addo elephants was a rather muted affair. However, at the time, a few, widely-dispersed articles may have sufficed to label such protest as a "public outcry".

The scientific community

In 1919, nearly all of the country's scientists were employed by the museums and government institutions scattered around the Union. Although most of the academics were probably opposed to the extermination of the herd, only the response of Dr E. Warren (1919), the Director of the Government Museum, Natal in Pietermaritzburg has been preserved. Just before Major Pretorius began shooting the elephants he wrote to Dr Peringuey. "The destruction of the Addo Bush elephants would be a crime, and I can scarcely credit the rumour that the Government will permit it. I very strongly disapprove of the drastic action which is being taken, and months ago I wrote to everyone I could think of (yourself; Forestry Department, Transvaal; Game Protection Society, Transvaal; Sir M. Beck, National Society, Cape; Hewitt, Miss Wilman, and on one occasion I happened to have an opportunity to mention the matter to His Excellency." The active response of others in the scientific community is not known and the personal influence that people such as Dr Peringuey wielded with members of the Provincial Administration is difficult to gauge.

There is one person, the Rev. J. R. L. Kingon, however, who realised that the survival of the elephants was closely linked to an organised and vocal opposition by the academic institutions of the time. Perhaps more than anyone else it is he who advertised the problem within academic circles. He did this on at least two occasions. First, he attended the monthly Board meeting of the P.E. Museum on 2 June 1919 and raised the question of the proposed extermination of the Addo elephants (EPH 3 June 1919). As a direct result of this action, the P.E. Museum Board sent a resolution to the Administrator calling for the preservation of a small herd "for the benefit of posterity" (EPH 3 June 1919) and "on sentimental grounds" (EPH 8 July 1919). Second, he also travelled to King William's Town on 7 July 1919 to raise the matter with the scientists attending the annual meeting of the South African Society for the Advancement of Science (EPH 8 July 1919). Rev. Kingon's cause was enthusiastically supported by the scientific community and another resolution, "protesting against the total extermination of the elephants of the Addo Bush" was passed (EPH 10 July 1919; EPH 1 August 1919). The matter was further referred to the zoological section of the society and a report on the problem was taken by a small deputation of scientists to the Administrator (EPH 8 July 1919; EPH 1 August 1919).

While this is pure speculation, it is not impossible that Rev. Kingon could also have written the 'Anti-slaughter' (see EPH 30 August 1919) and Times articles (Times 8 July 1919) mentioned previously since they were both the work of one or more local correspondents. More convincingly, the main arguments contained in the two letters are very similar. They also comply closely with the tenor of the draft resolution compiled by Rev. Kingon and read to the S.A. Society for the Advancement of Science (EPH 1 August 1919).

It is not known whether the scientific community would have developed the organised

response it did without the efforts of Rev. Kingon. However, he was able to prompt at least two of the most influential academic institutions of the time into action. This suggests that he played a key role in influencing decisions taken by the Provincial Administration concerning the Addo elephants.

Major Pretorius

The most important influence on the fate of the Addo elephants, however, was probably Major Pretorius himself. Despite the generous support that the local press gave to him and his campaign, and despite the general tenor of his autobiography, he appears to have been opposed to the complete extermination of the herd from the start (EPH 18 May 1919). In correspondence with Peringuey, just after he had begun shooting the Addo elephants (Pretorius 1919b), he states "of course I am still trying my utmost best to save as many elephants as I possibly can by other means." He then outlines details of a trap that he was having made in the Railway workshops at Uitenhage to enable him to "transfer at least ten fairly large-sized elephants to the Knysna Forest ... I have all hopes to be able to save fifty elephants which can be used for Zoological purposes or other experiments can be made with these animals for farming purposes, I myself am going to keep at least two elephants for ploughing purposes and am quite sure that they can be used for such work." Peringuey (1919e) replied that he was "so glad to read that you (Pretorius) hope to be able to transfer after their capture at least ten fairly large-sized elephants to the Knysna Forest. If you succeed in doing so you will deserve the thanks of all lovers of animals for you will have thereby saved the herd from extinction." Because the forest was under Union Government control, Peringuey urged Pretorius to get consent from Colonel Mentz, Minister of Lands to transfer the animals.

In reply to Dr Peringuey's letter Pretorius (1919c) noted, "You can rest assured that some of the herd will be saved, as I have told

you all along, namely, should it be impossible to make a reserve here ... the only way which remains is to transfer about fifteen of the large ones ... to the Knysna Forest. I will talk matters over with Colonel Mentz ... either to make a reserve here and keep about twenty five elephants, or to transfer fifteen over to the Knysna Forest." Peringuey (1919b) replied on 15 October 1919. "I know that you have seen Colonel Mentz and I hope that you have brought him round to your point of view of preserving some of the young elephants."

There is further evidence that Major Pretorius' did not favour the extermination of the herd. In a letter to Dr Peringuey, (Pretorius 1920c) he objected to the new regulation espoused by the Administration in which 50 or 60 elephants were to be left and the rest were to become free game, to be shot at by the farmers if they left the forest reserve. Pretorius obviously spoke for the elephants when he wrote "Now that has finish [sic] the Addo elephants for ever and with in [sic] 12 month [sic] there will not be one left, as the Farmers are very much enoied [sic - annoyed] with the elephants so they have send [sic] in a Petition to exterminate all and in case the Govt [sic] won't do so then they are going to get some one [sic] to do it or do it themselves [sic]."

An important question to ask is why Pretorius decided that 16 elephants and not 25 or 55 should be left. It is likely that he calculated this number based on the size of the forest reserve where he hoped the elephants could be persuaded to stay (EPH 21 February 1920). In this there is further evidence of his sympathy for the elephants and his desire to see at least some of them protected. In an open letter to the Administrator, and published in the local press (EPH 21 February 1920), Pretorius offered, after his campaign, to give his services "free for one month" to "keep the sixteen elephants on the Reserve and at the same time train two native keepers to look after the elephants".

Several influential people visited Major Pretorius during his 13-month campaign. This must have provided him with an important means of directly altering decisions about the elephants at the highest level. For example, Colonel Mentz's visit (EPH 9 October 1919) must have been a crucial one in the history of the Addo elephants.

In conclusion, it is ironic that the person who physically decimated the Addo elephant population should emerge also as arguably the most important factor in their survival. In the absence of a vocal general public and organised conservation lobby the fate of these animals rested on the decisions and influence of a handful of individuals. Although Dr Peringuey, Dr Warren, Rev. Kingon and Major Pretorius are undoubtedly amongst this small group, the efforts of other individuals cannot be traced with certainty and will remain a mystery.

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Appendix 1

(Pages 41-44).

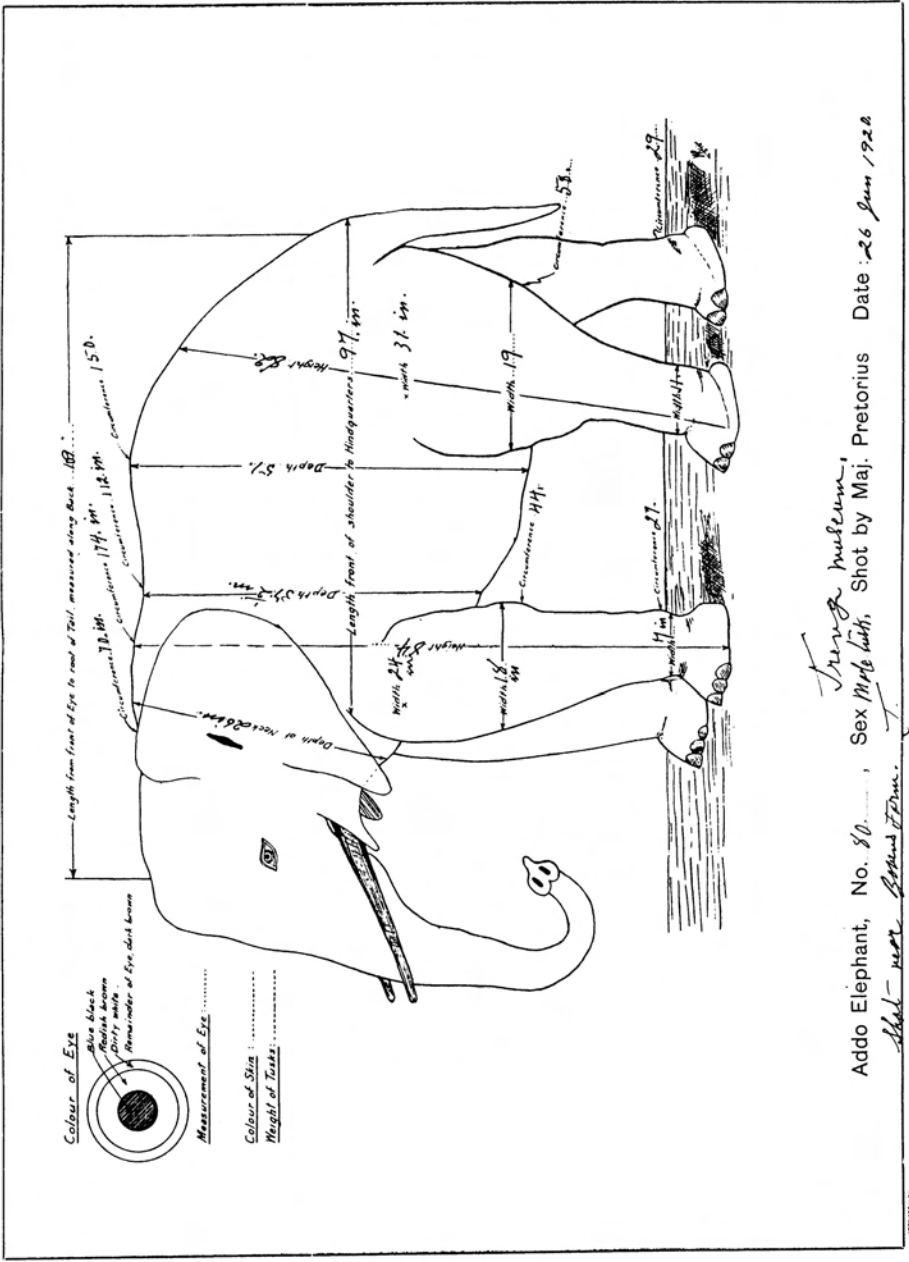


Fig. 1. Sketch of an elephant that Dr Peringuey, Director of the S.A. Museum had made for Major Pretorius (Peringuey 1919a). Pretorius was encouraged to record the measurements of all specimens that he shot, especially those destined for the museums of the world. This specimen, number 80, was shot on the 26 June, 1920 "near Bowens Farm". It is a male, with tusks, that Major Pretorius had hoped would be sold to the "Tring" Museum, London, then owned by Lord Rothschild.



Fig. 2. Major Philip Jacobus Pretorius armed for an elephant hunt. Leather suit and .475 cordite Express rifle, "a treasure of a gun" (Pretorius 1947). Addo bush in the background. (Photo: H. L. Shantz, No. 36191, K-1-1919, 5 September 1919).



Fig. 3. Major and Mrs Pretorius (nee Susanna Nel) and Major Pretorius' secretary, Miss Agnus Godfrey at left. Major Pretorius is reported to have said "I would rather have my wife at my side in the Bush than any average man" (EPH 21 June 1919). (Photo: H. L. Shantz, No. 36176, J-11-1919, 4 September 1919).



Fig. 4. At breakfast in elephant camp. Major Pretorius (extreme right), Mrs Pretorius (second from right at back), Miss A Godfrey (third from left). Other visitors are unnamed. (Photo: H. L. Shantz, No. 36195, K-5-1919, 5 September 1919).



Fig. 5. Miss A Godfrey, Major Pretorius' secretary sitting on top of a dead elephant. Shantz' caption to the photograph reads: "Major Pretorius is writing a history of his experience while hunting elephants here in the Addo Bush. Miss Agnus Godfrey is his Secretary". (Photo: H. L. Shantz, No. 36216, M-1-1919, 9 September 1919).

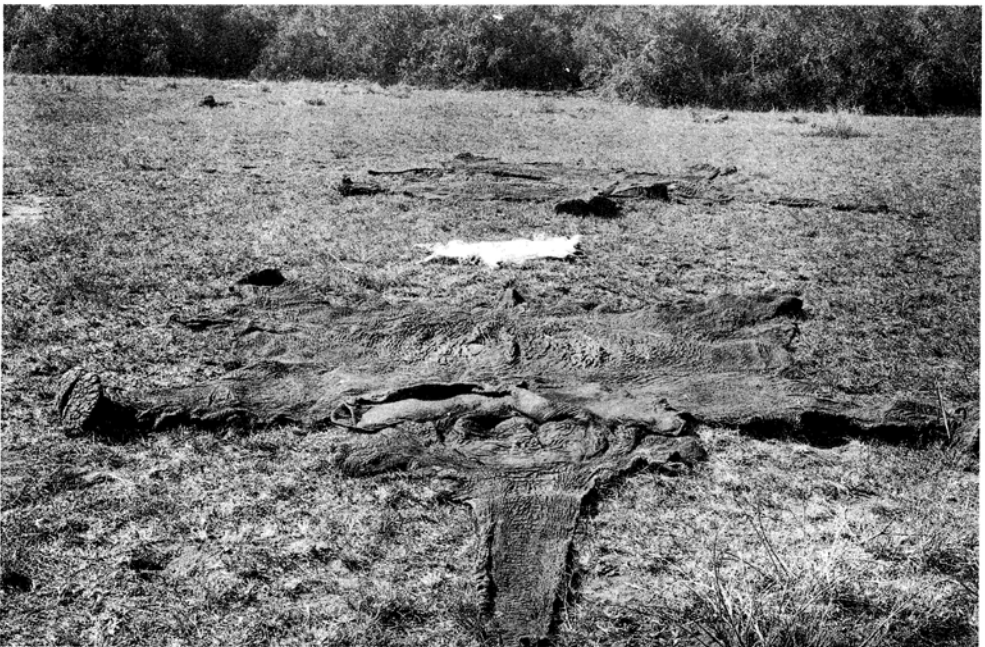


Fig. 6. This picture was published as Fig. 4a in Shantz and Turner (1958). "Kenkelbosch, just back of and to left of elephant camp shown in Figure 3a. Picture shows grassy open area with elephant skins spread to dry". The caption concludes with a list of the dominant plants in the photograph. (Photo: H. L. Shantz, No. Ja-10-1919, 5 September 1919).