



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## Health and demography in late 19th century Kimberley : a palaeopathological assessment

Merwe, A.E. van der

### Citation

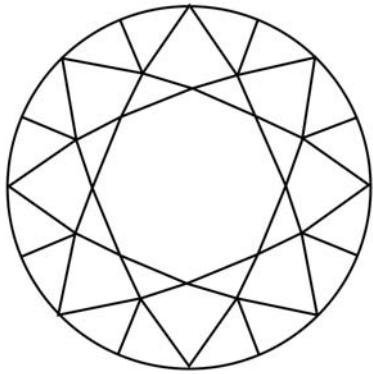
Merwe, A. E. van der. (2010, September 8). *Health and demography in late 19th century Kimberley : a palaeopathological assessment*. Barge's Anthropologica, Leiden. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/15931>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/15931>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



## CHAPTER 7

---

# **Dental Health of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Migrant Mineworkers from Kimberley, South Africa**

Modified from article published as:

Dental health of 19<sup>th</sup> century migrant mineworkers from Kimberley, South Africa

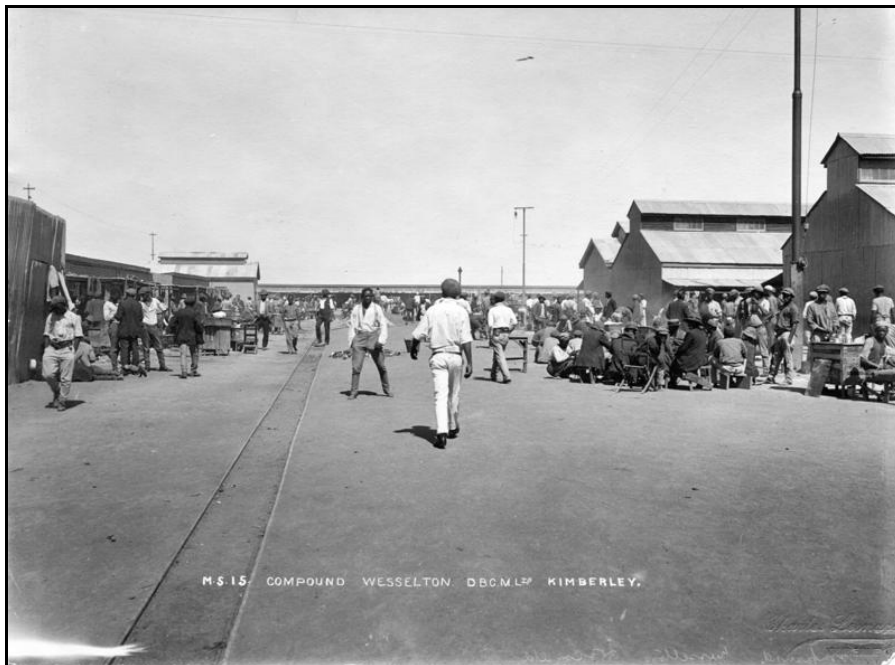
A.E. Van der Merwe, M. Steyn, G.J.R. Maat

*International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* (2010)

DOI: 10.1002/oa.1143



**Migrant mine workers 1886**  
(McGregor Museum Kimberley Photography nr.7581)



**Wesselton Mine compound, early 1900**  
(McGregor Museum Kimberley Photography nr.834)

## **Abstract**

Dental health may deteriorate in populations exposed to economic growth as a result of easier access to refined carbohydrates and sugars. Such changes affected migrant labourers working in Kimberley, South Africa, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A rescue excavation salvaged several skeletons from pauper's graves dating from this period, and the purpose of the study was to assess their dental health to determine whether it concurs with historical statements suggesting that the skeletal population sample consisted of migrant labourers with limited access to a healthy diet. According to historical sources, their diet mainly consisted of ground carbohydrates with occasional meat.

The permanent dentition of 79 males and 13 females (most between 20 and 49 years of age) were examined. Carious lesions were observed in 57% of males and 46.2% of females with an average of 2.7 and 3.8 carious teeth per mouth respectively. The anterior teeth were significantly less affected than the posterior teeth. Periodontal granulomata ('abscesses') were observed in 17.7% of males and 15.4% of females, and periodontal disease affected 40% of those investigated. Antemortem tooth loss (AMTL) was recorded in 29% (N=27) of the sample with an average of 3.5 teeth lost per mouth.

It was concluded that the prevalence of dental caries, periapical granulomata and periodontal disease as well as the pattern of AMTL observed, concurs with dietary descriptions for paupers in historical documents. The relatively low prevalence of carious lesions can be ascribed to the limited time migrant labourers spent in Kimberley and the labour restrictions they had to comply with during their stay in the compounds.

## 7.1 Introduction

Teeth are often recovered during archaeological excavations due to their hard and robust structure, thus becoming a valuable source of information during the investigation of skeletal material. Several characteristics can be investigated, such as the prevalence of carious lesions, antemortem tooth loss, dental wear, enamel hypoplasia and supernumerary teeth, all of which add to our understanding of the diet, oral hygiene, stress levels and habitual activities of past populations (Hillson, 1979; Roberts & Manchester, 1995; Hillson, 1998; Ortner, 2003).

Various studies have been conducted on the dental health of both living and skeletal population samples of black South Africans. As would be expected, these studies indicated that the prevalence of dental pathology changes as populations progressed from a traditional hunter-gather diet, to an agricultural diet, and then to a diet high in refined carbohydrates and sugars (Staz, 1938; Cleaton-Jones, 1979; Morris, 1992; Steyn *et al.*, 2002; L'Abbé *et al.*, 2003; L'Abbé *et al.*, 2005). Thus, it is clear that a decrease in dental health, specifically an increase in dental caries, is caused by changes in subsistence patterns often associated with economic growth and industrial advances. Such an economic change resulting in the rapid availability of sugars and machine ground carbohydrates (maize meal in particular) to originally rural African communities also occurred during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Kimberley, South Africa, with the discovery of diamonds.

The 1871 discovery of diamonds on Colesberg Kopje in South Africa, resulted in many people rushing to mark their claims. By 1899, population numbers had increased dramatically and it was estimated to include 16,300 Europeans and 28,200 black individuals (Stoney, 1900).

It is stated in historical documents that the majority of black mineworkers in Kimberley were migrant labourers. Males left their families in the rural areas, within and outside the borders of South Africa, and came to Kimberley for a limited period of time to work on the diamond mines. During their stay they were housed in closed labour compounds (Turrell, 1984; Roberts 1976; Worger 1987). The compounds were developed to improve security and limit the theft of diamonds, while increasing productivity by restricting and controlling the movements of labourers. Although the compounds were intended to provide adequate shelter and supply in the nutritional needs of all labourers, the living conditions in these camps were poor (Turrell, 1984; Jochelson, 2001). After their

labour contracts expired, workers returned to their rural families (McNish, 1970; Roberts, 1976).

Several complete skeletons were exhumed from damaged, unmarked graves alongside the fenced Gladstone cemetery in Kimberley, South Africa in 2003. Historical documents indicated that these graves dated to between 1897 and 1900. They were pauper's burials of individuals who had passed away in the Kimberley and surrounding hospitals (Swanepoel, 2003). Several skeletal lesions suggestive of scurvy, tuberculosis, treponemal diseases, violent trauma and congenital abnormalities were observed during the investigation of the remains (Van der Merwe *et al*, 2010a, b, c).

It can be assumed that food sources were initially very limited and low-cariogenic in nature when diamonds were first discovered in the district of Kimberley, since refined carbohydrates and sugars would have had to be brought all the way from large South African towns such as Durban and Cape Town. However, as the mining community grew economically, resources increased and Colesberg Kopje turned into a city. This probably resulted in much easier access to refined carbohydrates and sugars for the resident community, although this increased prosperity was probably slow to reach the migrant labourers. Therefore, the aim of this study was twofold: 1) to assess the prevalence of dental caries, antemortem tooth loss and enamel hypoplasia, as well as bony evidence of periodontal disease and periapical granulomata and -cysts in the skeletal population sample, and 2) to determine whether the dental health is consistent with what is known from historical documents. The majority of black individuals in Kimberley were migrant workers, housed in mining compounds, with restricted to no access to dietary products outside of their housing facilities. As briefly described in the historical documents, the diet of black labourers in Kimberley was comprised mainly of machine ground carbohydrates (mealie meal) and occasional meat (Harries, 1994). Therefore, they experienced limited exposure to dietary factors which may be associated with increased economic prosperity, such as an increase in the consumption of refined carbohydrates and sugars.

## 7.2 Materials and Methods

A total of 86 males, 15 females and 6 individuals of unknown sex were available for study. Standard anthropological techniques such as the assessment of changes to the sternal ends of the ribs, changes to the pubic symphyses, ectocranial suture closure, as well as

general cranial and pelvic morphology and discriminant functions were used to determine the age and sex of all individuals exhumed from the trench (e.g., De Villiers, 1968; Krogman & İşcan, 1986; Hillson, 1998; Oettlé & Steyn, 2000; Asala, 2001; Franklin *et al.*, 2005).

The permanent dentition of 79 males and 13 females were examined under good lighting for signs of dental caries, antemortem tooth loss and bony evidence of periapical - granulomata and -cysts, periodontal disease and enamel hypoplasia (EH). The 92 individuals examined were comprised of 12 (13%) sub-adults (11 – 19 years), 52 (57%) young adults (20 – 34 years), 25 (27%) middle aged adults (35 – 49 years), one (1%) old adult (50+ years) and two (2%) individuals who could only be described as being adult.

Due to the possibility of post-depositional damage to the teeth mimicking early stages of lesion development, a carious lesion was only recorded when a clear cavity was present. The location of carious lesions was recorded according to tooth type as well as to the surface of the tooth primarily affected by the lesion. Multiple lesions on one tooth were treated as a single occurrence.

Calculations described by Lukacs (1989) and Henneberg (1991) were used to analyze the dental caries data. The following was calculated:

- a) individual caries frequency - the frequency of individuals presenting with carious lesions divided by the total number of individuals investigated;
- b) caries intensity - the number of carious teeth observed divided by the total number of teeth investigated;
- c) mean number of carious teeth per mouth - the total number of carious teeth observed divided by the total number of individuals presenting with teeth affected by dental caries; and
- d) caries intensity per tooth type - the number of carious teeth present on a specific type of tooth divided by the total number of that specific tooth observed.

Percentages were calculated separately for each sex.

Unfortunately, the antemortem loss of teeth has a great influence on the accuracy of the intensity of dental caries within a population and can cause the underestimation thereof (Lukacs, 1995). Therefore, using a method described by Lukacs (1995), antemortem tooth loss was taken into account and a "corrected" intensity for dental caries within this population was also calculated.

Further statistical analyses included Chi-square tests to determine if there were significant differences in the prevalence of carious teeth between males and females, between various tooth types, between the observed caries intensity and corrected caries intensity, as well as to test for comparability with results obtained from other studies. Comparisons between population groups were done only for the data obtained for males in this study, as so few females were present in the Gladstone population sample and significant difference exists between the dental health of males and females in other studies, which would result in skewing of the data should it be pooled.

The prevalence of dental caries observed in the Gladstone sample was compared to studies by Oranje *et al.* (1935) and Staz (1938). Both investigated the difference in the prevalence of dental caries between living individuals following a traditional rural-, mine-based and urban diet. Although there are often difficulties in comparing results obtained from living to skeletal sample populations, these specific studies were well suited for several reasons. Firstly, they were comprised of samples of young male individuals contemporary to the Gladstone skeletal sample. The studies were also cross sectional and similar to this study, the prevalence of dental caries was, calculated by determining the caries frequency, caries intensity and the average number of carious teeth per mouth in those affected (the DMFT/S\* index was not used). Other comparative samples included skeletal remains from Maroelabult, Koffiefontein and Venda, of which only results obtained for young adult males (19 – 40 years) were used for comparison (Steyn *et al.*, 2002; L'Abbé *et al.*, 2003; L'Abbé, 2005).

Antemortem tooth loss (AMTL) can be recognized by the resorption of the alveolar bone tissue, socket filling and mesial drift (Turner, 1979; Lukacs, 1989). It should be noted that teeth lost just before death will show no signs of alveolar resorption and therefore these may be interpreted to have been lost postmortem (Turner, 1979). Methods described by Lukacs (1989) and Henneberg (1991) to assess antemortem loss were used in this study. The following calculations were done:

- a) individual AMTL frequency – the total number of individuals who lost one or more tooth antemortem divided by the total number of individuals investigated;

---

\* Index recommended by the World Health Organization to express dental caries in clinical practice taking decayed (D), missing (M) and filled (F) teeth into consideration in relation to each specific tooth (T) or tooth surface (S) (Oral health surveys: basic methods. Geneva: World Health Organization, 1987)



- b) AMTL intensity – the total number of teeth lost antemortem divided by the total number of teeth present in the sample before AMTL;
- c) mean number of teeth lost antemortem per individual – the total number of teeth lost antemortem divided by the number of individuals affected by AMTL; and
- d) prevalence of specific tooth types lost antemortem – the total number of a specific tooth type lost antemortem divided by the total number of the specific teeth present before AMTL.

The frequency of bony evidence of periapical granulomata and -cysts, chronic periapical abscesses and periodontal disease was also documented. Although these pathological conditions do not by themselves inform investigators about the specific questions under investigation, such as the diet of the population, they do add to the general picture of dental health of the sample being studied and therefore can often aid in explaining patterns observed in the prevalence of dental caries and AMTL observed in study populations.

A periapical granuloma could be recognized by the formation of a small bony cavity around the apex of the tooth root. Bony lesions resulting from granuloma formation are rather small - approximately 2-3 mm in diameter with allowance made for the portion of the cavity which is filled by the root tip. Similar lesions, but larger in size, result from periapical cysts. These develop through the replacement of granulation tissue by fluid, which is present in the periapical granuloma. When left untreated, the bony cavity where the cyst is located will slowly increase in size. Chronic periapical abscesses were recognized by evidence of infectious bony cavity formation connected to the exterior bone surface or a sinus by a small fistula (Dias & Tayles, 1997).

Bony evidence of periodontal disease was characterized by loss of the height of alveolar bone surrounding the teeth due to resorption of the alveolar processes. This is often accompanied by an inflammatory bone response resulting in a limbus along the alveolar edges (Hillson, 1998; Dias & Tayles, 1997; Ortner, 2003)

Dental enamel hypoplasia (EH) was recorded for each individual on all permanent teeth present. As enamel hypoplasia can manifest as horizontal lines, vertical grooves, pits and areas of missing enamel (King *et al.*, 2002), the type of hypoplasia was also specified.

In cases where more than one defect was present on the tooth surface, it was still recorded as a single event. The frequency of enamel hypoplasia (EH) was calculated as the

proportions of individuals displaying the defect in relation to the total number of individuals examined. No attempt was made to calculate the intensity of EH per tooth type (the number of teeth affected by enamel hypoplasia from a specific tooth type divided by the total number of that specific tooth type examined), or to measure the distance between the hypoplastic lesions and the cemento-enamel junction, as this fell beyond the scope of this study (Hillson & Bond, 1997; Reid *et al.*, 2000).

## 7.3 Results

### 7.3.1 Dental caries

As can be seen in Table 7.1, 57% of males and 46.2% of females presented with one or more carious lesions. An average of 2.7 and 3.8 carious teeth per mouth was calculated for males and females respectively. It was concluded that an average dental caries intensity of 5.3% was present for males and 5.7% for females. No significant differences existed in the intensity of carious lesions between males and females ( $\chi^2 = 0.085$ ,  $p$ -value  $> 0.5$ ).

Using the method described by Lukacs (1995), a 'corrected caries intensity' was calculated for males and females to compensate for teeth lost antemortem due to dental caries. As a consequence, the caries intensity increased by 3% for males, totalling 8.3%, and 1% for females, totalling 6.6%. A significant difference existed between the observed dental caries intensity and the corrected caries rate for males ( $\chi^2 = 16.203$ ,  $p$ -value  $< 0.001$ ), but not for females ( $\chi^2 = 0.322$ ,  $p$ -value  $> 0.5$ ). Since none of the comparative studies available for South African populations used the caries correction factor, these results were not used in further comparative analyses.

The caries intensity was also calculated per tooth type. In general, carious lesions affected anterior teeth (incisors and canines) significantly less than posterior teeth (premolars and molars) ( $\chi^2 = 57.295$ ,  $p$ -value  $< 0.01$ ), as was expected. This is due to the difference in morphology of these teeth, with posterior teeth having fissures and crevices to which cariogenic substances can much easier adhere than on the smooth surfaces of the anterior teeth (Hillson, 1996).

The second molars were significantly more affected by carious lesions than any of the other teeth ( $\chi^2$  varies between 7.2 and 52.6,  $p$ -value  $< 0.01$  for all), followed by the third molar, first molar and second premolar, although intensity differences between these teeth were not significant (see Table 7.2). The canine was the least affected tooth. No

significant difference in the distribution pattern of carious teeth was observed between males and females (see Table 7.2).

**Table 7.1** Summary of prevalence of dental caries as observed in the Gladstone skeletal sample.

Variables	Caries frequency <sup>1</sup>			Lesions per mouth <sup>2</sup>			Caries intensity <sup>3</sup>		
	n	nia	%	nia	nta	c/m	nt	nta	%
Male	79	45	57.0	45	122	2.7	2291	122	5.3
Female	13	6	46.2	6	23	3.8	405	23	5.7
Total	92	51	55.4	51	145	2.8	2696	145	5.4

<sup>1</sup>total number of individuals affected by dental caries/total number of individuals present.

<sup>2</sup>total number of carious teeth/total number of individuals affected by dental caries.

<sup>3</sup>total number of carious teeth/total number of teeth present.

n=total number of individuals investigated, nia=total number of individuals affected with dental caries, nta=total number of teeth affected by dental caries, c/m=average number of carious lesions per mouth, nt= total number of teeth present.

**Table 7.2** Caries intensity sorted by sex and tooth type. No significant differences observed between males and females.

Tooth	Male			Female			Total			$\chi^2$
	n	na	%	n	na	%	n	na	%	
I1	275	2	0.7	51	2	3.9	326	4	1.2	3.622
I2	279	4	1.4	51	2	3.9	330	6	1.8	1.495
C	293	1	0.3	52	0	0.0	345	1	0.3	0.178
PM1	298	10	3.4	52	3	5.8	350	13	3.7	0.721
PM2	294	16	5.4	52	2	3.8	346	18	5.2	0.228
M1	280	19	6.8	52	6	11.5	332	25	7.5	1.423
M2	291	44	15.1	50	7	14.0	341	51	15.0	0.042
M3	281	26	9.3	45	1	2.2	326	27	8.3	2.523
Total	2291	122	5.3	405	23	5.7	2696	145	5.4	0.085

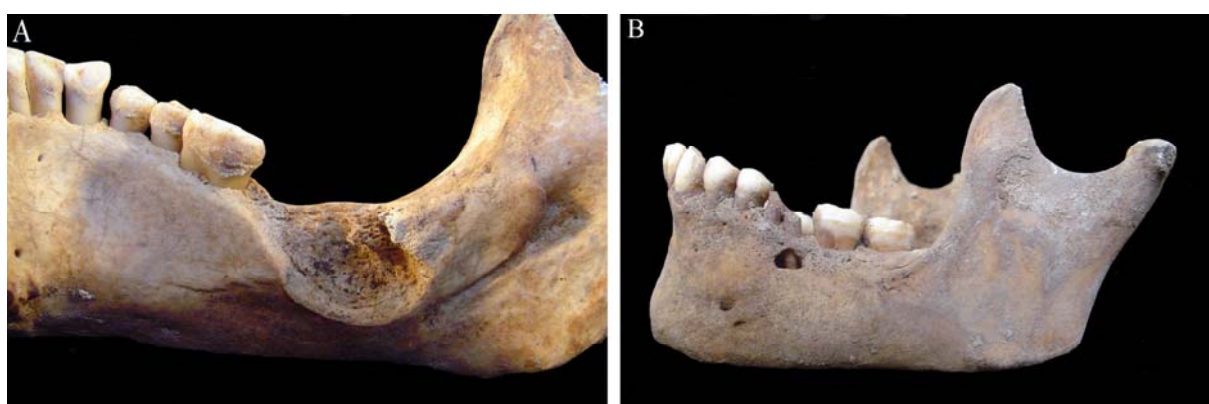
n=number of teeth investigated, na=number of teeth affected by carious lesions.

I=incisor, C=canine, PM=premolar, M=molar.

### 7.3.2 Periapical granulomata, -cysts and chronic periapical abscesses

Periapical granulomata and -cysts (see Fig. 7.1) were observed in 17.7% (N=14) of males and 15.4% (N=2) of females, with no significant difference existing between the

sexes ( $\chi^2 = 0.042$ ,  $p$  –value  $> 0.75$ ). A total of 19 periapical granulomata, eight periapical cysts and two chronic periapical abscesses were observed in 16 individuals, with the majority presenting with two or more lesions. In general, posterior teeth (26 of the 29 cases) were significantly more affected than anterior teeth ( $\chi^2 = 36.483$ ,  $p$  –value  $< 0.001$ ). The first molar was significantly more affected by granuloma formation than the incisors, canines and second premolars, with ten of the 29 lesions observed ( $\chi^2$  between 9.08 and 6.7,  $p$  –value  $< 0.05$  for all), followed by the second molar and first premolar with five lesions each. Only one periapical granuloma was found associated with the canines and incisors and four third molars were affected.



**Figure 7.1** Possible periapical cysts/abscesses affecting a) right mandibular second and third molars in female (33 – 43 years old) and b) left mandibular first molar in 25 – 30 year old male.

### 7.3.3 Bony evidence of periodontal disease

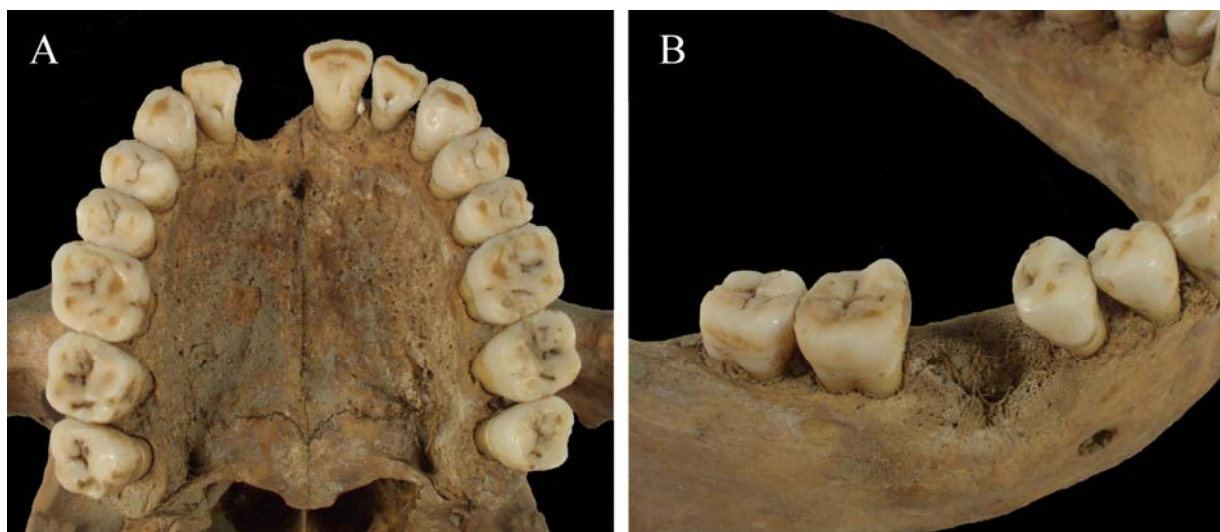
Bony evidence of periodontal disease was noted in 39.5% (N=30) of males and 53.8% (N=7) of females. No significant differences were observed in the prevalence between males and females ( $\chi^2 = 0.94$ ,  $p$  –value  $> 0.2$ ). In previous research, it was found that 16 individuals possibly suffered from scurvy. Of these, seven showed signs of periodontal disease (43.8%) (Van der Merwe *et al.*, 2010c).

It should be kept in mind that scurvy, which was well documented in the sample population, often results in chronic gingivitis, which in turn will result in periodontal disease (Dias & Tayles, 1997; Hirschmann & Raugi, 1999; Pimentel, 2003). However, no significant difference existed in the prevalence of periodontal disease between individuals suffering from scurvy and those who did not. It should be noted that periodontal disease also develops due to neglected oral hygiene, which would have had a big influence on the prevalence of this condition in all individuals.

### 7.3.4 Antemortem tooth loss

Antemortem loss of one or more teeth (see Fig. 7.2) was observed in 30.4% and 23.1% of males and females respectively (see Table 7.3). This yielded an antemortem tooth loss (AMTL) intensity of 3.8% for males and 1.7% for females. Individuals who suffered from AMTL lost an average of 3.5 teeth per mouth. No significant difference existed in the prevalence of individuals affected by AMTL between males and females ( $\chi^2 = 0.287$ ,  $p$ -value  $> 0.5$ ). However, a significant difference was present in the AMTL intensity between males and females, with males being significantly more affected ( $\chi^2 = 6.974$ ,  $p$ -value  $< 0.01$ ).

As can be seen in Table 7.4, AMTL of the first molar (6.2% in total) was significantly more prevalent than the AMTL of any other tooth type ( $\chi^2$  values between 5.74 and 9.38,  $p$ -value  $< 0.02$  for all when testing the frequency of AMTL of M1 against all other tooth types). However, in females, the second molar was most often affected by AMTL, whereas males showed most frequent loss of the first molar. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that only three females were affected by AMTL, making any conclusions regarding the



**Figure 7.2** Antemortem tooth loss of right maxillary first incisor (a) with complete resorption of alveolar bone and b) antemortem tooth loss of right mandibular first molar shortly before death in a male, 30 – 40 years of age. Alveola only partially remodelled.

distribution of AMTL among females impossible. The rest of the molars and incisors followed the first molar, all being almost equally affected. Canines (1.7% in total) and premolars (1.4% and 2.5% respectively) were the least affected by AMTL.

**Table 7.3** Summary of prevalence of antemortem tooth loss (AMTL).

Sex	AMTL frequency <sup>1</sup>			AMTL per mouth <sup>2</sup>			AMTL intensity <sup>3</sup>		
	n	nia	%	nia	nta	AMTL/m	nt	nta	%
Male	79	24	30.4	24	90	3.8	2381	90	3.8
Female	13	3	23.1	3	5	1.7	410	5	1.2
Total	92	27	29.3	27	95	3.5	2791	95	3.4

<sup>1</sup>total number of individuals with one or more teeth lost antemortem/total number of individuals present

<sup>2</sup>total number of teeth lost antemortem/total number of individuals present

<sup>3</sup>total number of teeth lost antemortem/total number of teeth present

n=number of individuals investigated, nia=total number of individuals with one or more teeth lost antemortem, nta=number of teeth lost antemortem, AMTL/m=average number of teeth lost antemortem per mouth, nt=number of teeth present before AMTL.

**Table 7.4** Antemortem tooth loss per tooth type.

Tooth	Male			Female			Total		
	n	na	%	n	na	%	n	na	%
I1	287	12	4.2	52	1	1.9	339	13	3.8
I2	290	11	3.8	52	1	1.9	342	12	3.5
C	299	6	2.0	52	0	0.0	351	6	1.7
PM1	303	5	1.7	52	0	0.0	355	5	1.4
PM2	303	9	3.0	52	0	0.0	355	9	2.5
M1	302	22	7.3	52	0	0.0	354	22	6.2
M2	304	13	4.3	52	2	3.8	356	15	4.2
M3	293	12	4.1	46	1	2.2	339	13	3.8
Total	2381	90	3.8	410	5	1.2	2791	95	3.4

n=total number of teeth present before AMTL, na=total number of teeth lost antemortem.

I=incisor, C=canine, PM=premolar, M=molar

### 7.3.5 Enamel hypoplasia

Enamel hypoplasia (EH) was noted in 15.2% (N = 14) of individuals (see Table 7.5). Of the 14 individuals with lesions, two showed evidence of pitting enamel hypoplasia (see Fig. 7.3a) while 12 exhibited cases of linear enamel hypoplasia (see Fig. 7.3b). No significant difference exists between the prevalence of this defect in males and females ( $\chi^2 = 0.664$ , p-value > 0.25).

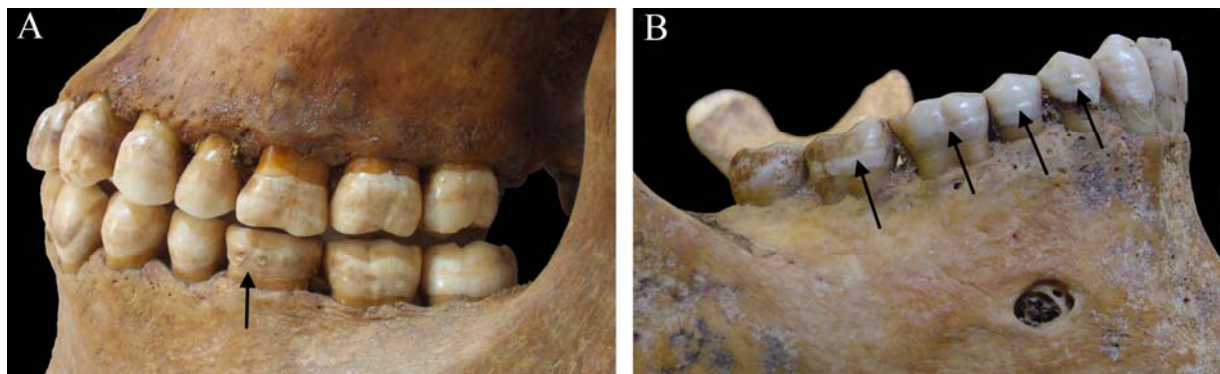
**Table 7.5** Summary of the prevalence of enamel hypoplasia

Sex	n	na	%
Male	79	13	16.5
Female	13	1	7.7
Total	92	14	15.2

n=total number of individuals

na=total number of individuals affected by enamel hypoplasia.

Due to the skewed demographic composition of the skeletal sample and the fact that the population was historically documented to have been migrant workers who most likely did not develop EH in Kimberley, it was decided not to analyse the enamel hypoplasia results any further.



**Figure 7.3** A) Teeth of a 22 – 28 year old male with pitted enamel hypoplasia, as indicated by arrow. B) Linear enamel hypoplasie (arrows) as seen in a 50 – 60 year old male.

## 7.4 Discussion

By 1898, diamond mining in Kimberley progressed from a single diamond found on a hill by an opportunistic private prospector, into a huge industry. Colesberg Kopje became Kimberley and the mine became the property of the De Beers Consolidated Mines (Kretschmer, 1998).

When mining activities commenced in Kimberley, all black labourers were given accommodation and food by their employers and were free to walk around town at will.

However, in 1885 a decision was made that the labourers should be confined to closed compounds for the duration of their contracts at the mine. Several reasons were put forward for this confinement, including prevention of unlawful diamond trading which would reduce the amount of diamonds stolen from the mine, limiting access to alcohol, ensuring workers would be fit for work each day, and the provision of an adequate food supply, which according to the authorities, was sure to instil health benefits (Roberts, 1976). Unfortunately, living conditions and diets in these camps did not live up to these expectations, with historical governmental and hospital documents indicating that death and disease were regular occurrences in the overcrowded compound sheds (Stoney, 1900; Jovhelson, 2001).

Historical documents indicated that the diets of mine workers housed in the compounds mainly consisted of maize meal and occasional coarse meat. There were also times when no food was supplied to workers and they were responsible for buying and preparing their own meals. However, these meals usually did not consist of much more than maize meal and sauce as the workers were not earning much and only certain foods could be purchased at the compound shop (Harries, 1994). Thus, the diets of these individuals are historically recorded to have been high in machine ground carbohydrates, low in animal proteins and low in fresh fruit and vegetables (Grusin & Samuel, 1957; Seftel *et al.*, 1966).

According to historical documents, migrant labourers came from all over South Africa and neighbouring countries to labour in the mines. Although differences in the diets between these traditional groups can be expected based on differing geographical locations and associated agricultural practices, all most likely followed a traditional agriculturalist diet, as most rural villages were located several days travel by foot from the nearest urban settlement from which supplies could be obtained (Oranje *et al.* 1935, Jovhelson, 2001). Such traditional diets were most likely high in self produced ground carbohydrates and vegetables, occasional meat and naturally occurring fruit, with limited access to varied amounts of machine ground carbohydrates and sugars, based on the socio-economic status of the rural group (Oranje *et al.* 1935).

As can be seen in Table 7.6, the Gladstone population had a much higher caries frequency (57%) when compared to a group who followed a traditional agricultural diet, such as the 'Primitive Xhosa' (36%), who consumed mainly whole cooked maize with no to occasional access to sugar ( $\chi^2 = 12.6$ , p-value < 0.05) .



**Table 7.6** Prevalence of dental caries among various other South African young male skeletal populations.

	n	nia	nt	nta	Caries frequency %	Caries intensity %	Carious teeth/ mouth	Chi- square	Source
Gladstone	79	45	2291	122	57.0	5.3	2.7		this study
<b>Agricultural-traditional</b>									
Primitive Xhosa	465	167	-	385	35.9	-	2.3	12.6*	Oranje <i>et al.</i> , 1935
Maroelabult	23	13	582	26	56.5	4.5	2.0	0.001	Steyn <i>et al.</i> , 2002
<b>Mine labourers</b>									
Mine Xhosa	90	50	-	217	55.6	-	4.3	0.03	Oranje <i>et al.</i> , 1935
Koffiefontein	24	21	1016	76	87.5	7.5	3.6	7.6*	L'Abbé <i>et al.</i> , 2003
<b>Agricultural-urban</b>									
Urban Negro	331	298	9178	1312	90.0	14.3	4.4	134.8*	Staz, 1938
Venda	-	-	305	35	-	11.5	-	17.92*	L'Abbé, 2005

\* p-value < 0001, significant difference between previous study and results from Gladstone.

n=number of individuals investigated.

nia=total number of individuals with one or more tooth lost antemortem.

nt=number of teeth present before AMTL.

nta=number of teeth lost antemortem.

**Table 7.7** Prevalence of dental caries as observed in groups following agricultural-traditional diet with varying amounts of sugar and refined carbohydrates.

					Caries frequency	Caries intensity	Carious Teeth/ mouth	Chi- square	Source
	n	nia	nt	nta	%	%			
Gladstone	79	45	2291	122	57,0	5,3	2,7		this study
<b>Diet variation in primitive Xhosa</b>									
No/occasional sugar	60	17	-	67	28	-	3,9	11.3*	Oranje <i>et al.</i> , 1935
Regular sugar	61	42	-	129	69	-	3,1	1.5	Oranje <i>et al.</i> , 1935
Unground maize	190	51	-	108	27	-	2,1	22.1*	Oranje <i>et al.</i> , 1935
Machine ground maize	157	75	-	166	48	-	2,2	1.8	Oranje <i>et al.</i> , 1935

\* p-value < 0.05, significant difference between previous study and results from Gladstone.

n=number of individuals investigated.

nia=total number of individuals with one or more teeth lost antemortem.

nt=number of teeth present before AMTL.

nta=number of teeth lost antemortem.

In contrast, the caries intensity of the Gladstone skeletal population (5.3%) was significantly lower than that seen in populations with agricultural-urban diets such as the Venda (11.5%) and 'Urban Negro' (14.3%) ( $\chi^2 = 17.9$  and  $134.8$  respectively,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$  for both). These diets were most likely characterized by high quantities of refined carbohydrates and sugars, causing a dramatic increase in the number of individuals affected by dental decay.

The caries frequency, as was observed in the Gladstone skeletal sample, was statistically comparable to what was also recorded for the 'Mine Xhosa' (55.6%) ( $\chi^2 = 0.03$ ,  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ), a contemporary living mining population of similar age distribution, as well as the caries frequency of the skeletal sample from Maroelabult (56.5%) ( $\chi^2 = 0.001$ ,  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). Interestingly, there were also no statistical difference in the caries frequencies between the Gladstone skeletal sample and the 'Primitive Xhosa', who followed a diet consisting mainly of ground maize ( $\chi^2 = 1.8$ ,  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ) with regular consumption of sugar ( $\chi^2 = 1.5$ ,  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ) (see Table 7.7).

It is of interest that the prevalence of dental caries is lower in the Gladstone sample when compared to the Koffiefontein population (87.5%), since both of these groups are late 19<sup>th</sup> century diamond mine workers. This difference may be due to the small sample size of the Koffiefontein skeletal sample, with only 36 skeletons being recovered and the teeth of only 24 individuals being available for investigation, or it could be that sugar and maize were more easily accessible to workers in the compounds where they were being housed.

The results and comparisons made for the prevalence of dental caries in the Gladstone sample suggest a diet similar to what has been described in the historical documents, and probably reflects a group of people who were experiencing changes in their eating patterns. The frequencies fit a diet high in ground carbohydrates with easier access to sugar than those following a strict agricultural-traditional diet such as the 'Primitive Xhosa', but definitely with more restricted access to sugar than those populations that were not limited to products available in the mining compounds, such as the Venda and the 'Urban Negro' (Oranje *et al.*, 1935; Staz, 1938; L'Abbé, 2005).

As previously mentioned, the prevalence of dental caries also varies between groups following an agricultural-traditional diet with regards to their socioeconomic status and geographical location, as these two factor will influence whether refined carbohydrates and sugars were affordable and whether access to a larger town from which to obtain these products was available on a regular basis (Oranje *et al.*, 1935). This is most likely the

reason why the prevalence of dental caries in the Gladstone sample was comparable to that observed in Maroelabult. Skeletal remains in the Maroelabult sample are believed to have been those of farm workers, most likely resulting in regular access to the products in question (Steyn *et al.*, 2002). It should be kept in mind that there is still a significant difference between groups following agricultural-traditional and agricultural-urban diets and thus, although the prevalence of dental caries increases in the agricultural-traditional diet groups when their socioeconomic status changes, it does not reach the high levels observed in those groups residing in urban areas (Oranje *et al.*, 1935; Staz, 1938). Accordingly, it can be suggested that, as was mentioned in historical documents, the majority of individuals investigated in the Gladstone study did not permanently reside in Kimberley. The migrant labourers were caught halfway between a traditional agricultural diet, which was followed in their rural homes, and the agricultural urban diet associated with the social and economic growth in Kimberley.

It can be suggested that the prevalence of carious lesions observed in this study was low for a carbohydrate rich diet as described in historical documents. This may be explained by the young age of most individuals within this sample, a traditional, less cariogenic diet when away from the mines, limited access to cariogenic food when working on the mines, or high fluoride levels in the drinking water (Sealy *et al.*, 1992). Investigations showed that the fluoride concentrations of naturally occurring water in and around Kimberley are between 0.1 mg/l and 0.9 mg/l and within the optimal concentration levels to aid in the prevention of carious lesions (Silverstone *et al.*, 1981). However, it should be considered that most individuals within this sample most likely did not originate from Kimberley and therefore may not have been exposed to optimal levels of fluoride in their drinking water during the period of tooth development. It has been suggested that, apart from the antibacterial function of fluoride in drinking water, the absorption of fluoride into the enamel of adult teeth may also aid in the prevention of dental caries. However, the absorption of fluoride into adult tooth enamel is dependant on the length of exposure, concentration levels, age of the individuals, as well as the different tooth surfaces under investigation (Tanaka *et al.*, 1993; Li *et al.*, 1994; Hirose *et al.*, 1996). It has accordingly been shown that the difference in absorbed enamel fluoride between groups exposed to water from a naturally fluoridated area and those from a non-fluoridated area is not significant and its influence in the prevention of dental caries is negligible (Li *et al.*, 1994).

The young age of the sample in conjunction with a low cariogenic diet is therefore a plausible explanation for the low caries rate, even though the sample population were working in an economically expanding environment with easier access to refined carbohydrates and sugars.

The first permanent molar is known to be the tooth most often affected by carious lesions in populations with a diet mainly consisting of refined carbohydrates and sugars (Henneberg, 1991). In general, it can be said that molars are the most affected, followed by premolars, incisors and canines (Hillson, 1998; Henneberg, 1991). The same distribution of carious lesions was observed in this study. Posterior teeth (molars and premolars) were significantly more affected by carious lesions than anterior teeth (incisors and canines). However, the highest prevalence of carious lesions was found on the second molar, and not on the first, as described by Henneberg (1991). This can most likely be explained by the pattern of antemortem tooth loss in the Gladstone skeletal sample, where the first molars were mostly affected, skewing the distribution of dental caries.

In order to compensate for antemortem tooth loss, a 'corrected caries intensity' was calculated. This method functions on the assumption that all teeth lost antemortem were due to the effects of either dental caries or dental wear (Lukacs, 1995). As was seen in the study done by Lukacs (1995) on the Harappa population, an increase in caries intensity was observed with the calculation of the 'corrected caries intensity'. The correction factor doubled the caries intensity in the Harappa sample (from 6.8% to 12.1%), but only a small increase in intensity was observed in this study (from 5.4% to 8.1%). The reason for only a slight increase can be associated with the relatively low intensity of teeth lost antemortem (3.4%). It is obvious that with a low intensity of antemortem tooth loss, the teeth present will be representative of the prevalence of carious lesions within the skeletal population sample.

Large carious lesions, severe periodontal disease, advanced dental attrition and trauma are usually responsible for antemortem tooth loss (Bonfigliolo *et al.*, 2003). In this population, in which very little attrition was observed, the antemortem loss of teeth can most probably be ascribed to carious activity.

Although a high prevalence of periodontal disease (in some cases probably as a result of scurvy) was observed within this sample, it could not be associated with the AMTL observed. The Gladstone skeletal sample presented with an average of only 3.5 teeth lost antemortem per individual affected by AMTL. It should be mentioned here that 63% of

those affected by AMTL lost only one or two teeth and that the average number of teeth lost antemortem was skewed by a single individual who was edentulous. By excluding this individual, the average number of teeth lost becomes even lower with an average of 2.5 teeth lost antemortem. Furthermore, the loss of consecutive teeth, which would be expected in cases where periodontal disease is responsible for the AMTL, was only observed in nine individuals (33%). Thus, although periodontal disease cannot be excluded as a possible cause of the AMTL observed in this population, the pattern of AMTL does suggest that tooth loss was, in the majority of cases, the result of dental caries.

A study by Lukacs (1992) showed that the antemortem loss due to dental caries mostly affects molars, with anterior teeth such as incisors and canines seldom being affected. An opposite pattern of tooth loss is observed in cases where teeth are willingly extracted for decorative or ritualistic purposes. When extractions are done for cosmetic purposes, the antemortem loss of anterior teeth is most often seen, since these teeth are the ones that are most visible (Morris, 1998). It has also been shown that carious lesions most often affect the first molar. This is probably because this is the first permanent molar to erupt and it is exposed to cariogenic factors longer than the other molars (Henneberg, 1991; Steyn, 1994). The frequent loss of the first molar seen in this study is possibly indicative of tooth extraction following dental caries (to alleviate pain) or natural avulsion due to severe carious activity. It is suggested that teeth were most likely not willingly extracted for decorative purposes, since the prevalence of AMTL of anterior teeth would then have been much higher (Morris, 1989).

Dental trauma cannot be excluded as a reason for AMTL within this population. It can be suggested, however, that it did not have a significant influence since anterior tooth loss was not commonly observed.

The high prevalence of bony evidence of periodontal disease and periapical-granulomata and -cysts also supports the hypothesis that this population had a diet consisting mainly of refined carbohydrates with access to sugar, as the prevalence of these conditions can be expected to increase as dental health (cariou lesions) and dental hygiene decrease. Very little dental wear was observed in this population, and the majority of periapical-granulomata and -cysts formed as a result of periodontal disease and advanced stages of dental caries.

## 7.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the prevalence of dental caries observed in the Gladstone skeletal sample suggests a diet relatively high in machine ground carbohydrates, although most probably not highly refined carbohydrates, and concurs well with the historical accounts of a diet dominated by agricultural products such as maize meal. It probably also reflects the changing circumstances of the people in question, as they were caught somewhere in between their traditional eating habits and the more refined foods commonly associated with urban living. The young age of individuals within this population, the limited amount of time they spent in Kimberley as migrant labourers before returning to their traditional low cariogenic diets, as well as the restricted access labourers housed in the compounds had to products sold outside of the compound walls, all influenced the caries intensity observed in this sample population.

The antemortem loss of teeth observed in the Gladstone skeletal population is most likely the result of carious dental activity and periodontal disease associated with poor oral hygiene, although AMTL due to scurvy and dental trauma can not be excluded. No pattern suggesting dental mutilation was observed in this population.

The high prevalence of bony evidence of periapical granulomata, cysts and periodontal disease observed in this study supports the hypothesis of a carbohydrate rich diet and poor oral hygiene. Very little dental wear was observed, and the majority of periapical granulomata formed as a result of periodontal disease and advanced stages of dental caries.

## References

- Asala, S.A. 2001. Sex determination from the head of the femur of South African whites and blacks. *Forensic Science International* 117:15-22.
- Bonfigliolo, B., Brasili, P. and Belcastro, M.G. 2003. Dento-alveolar lesions and nutritional habits of a Roman imperial age population (1st-4th c.AD): Quadrella (Molise, Italy). *Homo* 54:36-56.
- Cleaton-Jones, P. 1979. Oral health of South African Black (Xhosa) mine recruits. *Oral Epidemiology* 7:288-291.
- De Villiers, H. 1968. Sexual dimorphism of the skull of the South African Bantu-speaking Negro. *South African Journal of Science* 84:118-124.

- Dias, G. and Tayles, N. 1997. 'Abscess cavity' - a misnomer. *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 7:548-554.
- Franklin, D., Freedman, L. and Milne, N. 2005. Sexual dimorphism and discriminant function sexing in indigenous South African crania. *Homo* 55:213-228.
- Grusin, H. and Samuel, E. 1957. A syndrome of osteoporosis in Africans and its relationship to scurvy. *Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 5:644-650.
- Harries, P. 1994. *Work, Culture and Identity. Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, 1860 - 1910*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- Henneberg, R.J. 1991. Dental caries. In: *Encyclopedia of Human Biology*. Dulbecco, R. (ed.). San Diego: Academic Press, pp.805.
- Hillson, S.W. 1979. Diet and dental disease. *World Archaeology* 2:147-162.
- Hillson, S.W. 1998. *Dental Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hillson, S. and Bond, S. 1997. Relationship of enamel hypoplasia to the pattern of tooth crown growth: a discussion. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 104:89-103.
- Hirschmann, J.V. and Raugi, G.J. 1999. Adult scurvy. *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* 41:895-909.
- Hirose, M.N., Tange, T., Igarashi, S., Hirose, Y. and Nakagaki, H. 1996. In vivo fluoride profiles at different sites of buccal and lingual enamel surfaces obtained by enamel biopsy of human maxillary first permanent molars in young adults. *Archives of Oral Biology* 41:1187-1190.
- Jochelson, K. 2001 *The Colour of Diseases, Syphilis and Racism in South Africa 1880 - 1950*. New York: Palgrave.
- King, T., Hillson, S. and Humphrey, L.T. 2002. A detailed study of enamel hypoplasia in a post-medieval adolescent of known age and sex. *Archives of Oral Biology* 47:29-39.
- Kretschmet, T. 1998. *De Beers and Beyond: The History of the International Diamond Cartel*. London: London Business School.
- Krogman, W.M. and İşcan, M.Y. 1986. *The Human Skeleton in Forensic Medicine*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Springfield: Charles C Thomas.
- L'Abbé, E.N., Henderson, Z.L. and Loots, M. 2003. Uncovering the nineteenth-century typhoid epidemic at the Koffiefontein Mine, South Africa. *World Archaeology* 35:306-318.
- L'Abbé, E.N. 2005. *A palaeodemographic, paleopathologic and macrophologic study of the 20th century Venda*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Pretoria.



## Chapter 7

Li, J., Nakagaki, H., Tsuboi, S., Kato, S., Huang, S., Mukai, M., Robinson, C. and Strong, M. 1994. Fluoride profiles in different surfaces of permanent molar enamels from a naturally fluoridated and a non-fluoridated area. *Archives of Oral Biology* 39:727-731.

Lukacs, J.R. 1989. Dental paleopathology: methods for reconstructing dietary patterns. In: *Reconstruction of Life from the Skeleton*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. İşcan, MY (ed.). New York: Alan R.Liss, pp. 261.

Lukacs, J.R. 1992. Dental paleopathology and agricultural intensification in South Asia: new evidence from the Bronze Age Harappa. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 87:133-150.

Lukacs, J.R. 1995. The 'caries correction factor': a new method of calibrating dental caries rates to compensate for antemortem loss of teeth. *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 5:151-156.

Maat, G.J.R. and Van der Velde, E.A. 1987. The caries-attribution competition. *International Journal of Anthropology* 2:281-292.

McNish, J.T. 1970. *The Glittering Road*. Cape Town: C. Struik.

Morris, A.G. 1989. Dental mutilation in historic and prehistoric South Africa. *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library* 43:132-134.

Morris, A.G. 1992. *The Skeletons of Contact. A Study of Protohistoric Burials from the Lower Orange River Valley, South Africa*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Morris, A.G. 1998. Dental mutilation in Southern African history and prehistory with special reference to the "Cape Flats Smile". *Journal of the South African Dental Association* 53:179-183.

Oettlé, C. and Steyn, M. 2000. Age estimation from sternal ends of ribs by phase analysis in South African blacks. *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 45:1071-1079.

Oranje, P., Noriskin, J.N. and Osborn, T.W.B. 1935. The effect of diet upon dental caries in the South African Bantu. *The South African Journal of Medical Science* 1:57-62.

Ortner, D.J. 2003. *Identification of Pathological Conditions in Human Skeletal Remains*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Academic Press.

Pimental, L. 2003. Scurvy: historical reviews and current diagnostic approach. *American Journal of Emergency Medicine* 21:328-332.

Reid, D.J. and Dean, M.C. 2000. Brief communication: the timing of linear hypoplasias on human anterior teeth. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 113:135-139.

Roberts, B. 1976. *Kimberley Tubulent City*. Capetown: Pioneer Press.

- Roberts, C. and Manchester, K. 1995. *The Archaeology of Disease*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Stroud: Alan Sutton.
- Sealy, J.C., Patrick, M.K., Morris, A.G. and Alder, D. 1992. Diet and dental caries among later stone age inhabitants of the Cape Province, South Africa. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 88:123-134.
- Seftel, H.C., Malkin, C., Schmaman, A., Abrahams, C., Lynch, S.R., Charlton, R.W. and Bothwell, T.H. 1966. Osteoporosis, scurvy and siderosis in Johannesburg Bantu. *British Medical Journal* 1:642-646.
- Staz, J. 1938. Dental caries in South Africa. *The South African Medical Journal* 3:1-63.
- Steyn, M. 1994. *An Assessment of the Health Status and Physical Characteristics of the Prehistoric Population from Mapungubwe*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Witwatersrand.
- Steyn, M., Nienaber, W.C., and Meiring, J.H. 2002. An assessment of the health status and physical characteristics of an early 20th century community at Maroelabult in the North West Province, South Africa. *Homo* 53:131-145.
- Stoney, W.W. 1900. *Report of the Medical Officer of Health, Kimberley, for the Year 1898*. Unpublished report.
- Swanepoel, S. 2003. *Gladstone Cemetery, 1880s to 1900s*. Archival report.
- Tanaka, M., Moreno, E.C. and Margolis, H.C. 1993. Effect of fluoride incorporation into human dental enamel on its demineralization in vitro. *Archives of Oral Biology* 38:863-869.
- Turner, C.G. 1979. Dental anthropological indications of agriculture among the Jomon people of Central Japan. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 51:619-636.
- Turrell, R. 1984. Kimberley's Model Compounds. *The Journal of African History* 25:59-75.
- Van der Merwe, A.E., Maat, G.J.R. and Steyn, M. 2010a. Histomorphological observations of pathological lesions on the anterior tibiae of individuals from a 19<sup>th</sup> century mining community in Kimberley, South Africa. *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* DOI: 10.1002/oa.1026.
- Van der Merwe, A.E. Steyn, M. and L'Abbé, E.N. 2010b. Trauma and amputations in 19<sup>th</sup> century miners from Kimberley, South Africa. *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*. DOI: 10.1002/oa.1035.
- Van der Merwe, A.E., Steyn, M. and Maat, G.J.R. 2010c Adult scurvy in skeletal remains from late 19<sup>th</sup> century mineworkers from Kimberley, South Africa. *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* DOI: 10.1002/oa.1037.

## Chapter 7

Worger, W.H. 1987. *South Africa's City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*. Craighall: AD. Donker.