**Tolstoy Farm**

Site of communal farm from 1910 to 1913, established at Lawley, about 23km south of Johannesburg, on land owned by Kallenbach, now lies within an **‘unplanned’** (cf Murray, this site) landscape to the south of Johannesburg, surrounded by the apartheid ‘Indian’ township of **Lenasia**, Lawley train station, the **Corobrick** factory, shack lands, site of various land invasions, on porous **dolomite**, surrounded by the remains of now disused mines, and disintegrating farms or smallholdings, and in one case, what looks like a suburban home.

Kallenbach had purchased the land and donated it to the movement – he had done the same thing with **Phoenix** farm in the then Natal, which was established some years earlier, in 1903.

In its day, the farm was 1000 acres in extent, and planted with fruit trees. There were existing buildings, and the community built a couple more. Essentially, the farm was conceived as a place to most cost-effectively support and accommodate the families of the (mostly) men and (some) women who were being held in prison as a result of their participation in the **satyagraha campaigns of resistance** that were led by Kallenbach and Gandhi, and which reached their height during that period. According to Hunt & Bhana, Lelyveld and others, Gandhi was actively involved in making sure all the inhabitants followed a strict, minimalist diet in accordance with his belief in **celibacy** and **physical and bodily self-restraint**; he also ran the **school** for the children on the farm, again taking this opportunity to practice aspects of his philosophy of physical labour, bodily discipline, strength and forbearance, believing in the efficacy of instilling these values from a young age.

It has been well recorded that Gandhi and Kallenbach eschewed reliance on modern forms of transport and would regularly **walk** the 23km to the city when they had business to transact there. This could be as much as **three times a week**, and they would typically begin the journey well ahead of sunrise. This feature of Gandhi’s sojourn at Tolstoy Farm is commemorated through the **Gandhi Walk**, which is held annually in Lenasia.

The Tolstoy Farm land has been the site of several attempts at heritage memorialisation, and these layers can be read off the site at present. For me, the most poignant and idiosyncratic is the line of white-painted stones marking out the legend **Gandhi Tolstoy Farm** inscribed on the hillside behind the farm. Notwithstanding its location a short distance from one of southern Africa’s largest cities, in many ways the economic powerhouse of Africa, what remains of Tolstoy Farm retains some of its ambience of separateness and distance from the busy metropolitan heart of the city.

Notes to Google maps:

Location of Tolstoy Farm (marked on maps as Lawley Farm) in relation to the city of Johannesburg and its surrounding neighbourhoods: 1. ‘Gandhi Tolstoy Farm’ marked out in painted stones and arrayed on a hill overlooking the memorial plinth and peace garden; 2. yellowish oblong mine dumps mark the layout of the gold-bearing ‘reef’ from which the Witwatersrand takes its name; 3. the proliferation of mines along its length; the residential areas and neighbourhoods surrounding the city of Johannesburg proper, showing the divide between the exclusive northern suburbs and the expanse of the south, and the line of the reef as a buffer zone between them; 4 + 5. Present dimensions of site of Tolstoy Farm in context and detail.

Notes to archival images:

6. Community group image is from 1910: Free to use from Gandhiserve.com, with full caption provided:

7. Gathered in front of the plinth (Gandhiserve.org: Photographer unknown): Members of the Tolstoy Farm collective, purchased by Kallenbach and donated to the movement in 1910. Standing from right: L. Ramsamy, Ponsamy, L.M. Morgan, Venugopal Naidoo, C.K.T. Coopoo Naidoo and K. Devar. Sitting: Pragjee Desai, Rajee Naidoo, Joseph Roypen, Hermann Kallenbach, M.K. Gandhi, Mrs. P.K. Naidoo, Mrs. Lazarus, Mrs. C.K. Thambie Naidoo. Third row: Bala, Bhartasarathy, Naransamy and Puckry Naidoo (all sons of Thambie Naidoo).

**Images:** Jill Weintroub 2018