



NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPE TOWN BRANCH OF THE SIMON VAN DER STEL FOUNDATION NO 1 2011

NUWE LEDE/NEW MEMBERS

Ons wil graag die volgende nuwe lede hartlik by die Simon van der Stel Stigting verwelkom:
We wish to welcome the following new members to the Simon van der Stel Foundation:

Mr & Mrs P Creer, Dr & Mrs M van Aarde and Mrs N Mills

DONASIES/DONATIONS:

Ons bedank graag vir die volgende donasies van lewenslede en gewone lede:
We are extremely grateful for the donations received from our life and general members:

Mr C Campbell, Mr E Spencer, Mr M Deacon, Dr H Brody, Mr R Jeffery, Mrs SE Collins,
Mrs MJ Neilson, Mrs A Lloyd and Miss C Beyers

OBITUARY

Alta Kriel, curator of Groote Schuur Manor House for the past 17 years passed away on Saturday, January 29, 2011 after a five-month battle with cancer. A funeral service was held at the Andrew Murray Church in her home town of Wellington on February 4th, 2011 and her ashes interred in the church Memorial Wall which Alta was instrumental in erecting with permission from SAHRA.

This was followed on February 8th by a ceremony in the gardens of the Groote Schuur Residence where Alta had been Curator since December 1993. One of the last projects that Alta planned in conjunction with the Estate Horticulturists was the restoration of the Groote Schuur Rose Garden. At the gathering guests were invited to donate rose bushes in her memory and the Simon van der Stel Foundation also honoured Alta's memory in this small way. The Alta Kriel Rose Garden at Groote Schuur will be a lasting tribute to a dear friend and revered colleague.

Alta is to be remembered for the vital role she played in preserving the collections of state homesteads not only on the Groote Schuur Estate but elsewhere in the country. Her extensive knowledge, insight and professionalism will be greatly missed in the museum fraternity.

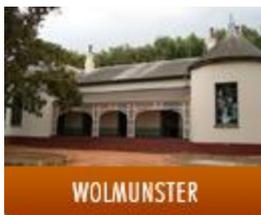
Anlen Boshoff

BOOKSHELF

The Villages of the Liesbeeck. From the Sea to the Source. Helen Robinson

The Liesbeeck River has supported human settlement for hundreds of years as it flows from its source on Table Mountain to the shores of Table Bay. It sustained nomadic herders of cattle and sheep in the earliest days and later immigrants built their homesteads along or near its banks, living there with their slaves and their descendents. The villages of the Liesbeeck were established on these simple foundations and Dr Helen Robinson traces their development into the multi-cultural residential and commercial centres that they are today. It is a story of change from a simple agrarian economy to a vital modern lifestyle, which was fuelled by the technological advances of the 19th century and came to fruition in the next 100 years. Above all, it is the story of a struggle for recognition by men, women and children against a background of hope and despair, of affluence and poverty, of ignorance and understanding. It is a significant segment of Cape history and an acknowledgement of all the people who made it.

Visit to Wolmunster and The Firs, Rosebank



In December, well known historical consultant Trevor Thorold will be showing us over the two adjacent houses in Rosebank, The Firs and Wolmunster. Wolmunster has just been restored and acts as accommodation for visiting senior lecturers to UCT, The Firs was the home of acclaimed South African artist Irma Stern and now houses the Irma Stern Museum, which we will be shown over by the curator.

Having completed the recent restoration of Wolmunster, Trevor is now looking at possibilities for The Firs and will be able to tell us what the plans are for the two houses. Both houses were sited backing onto Cecil Road with long gardens stretching down towards Main Road and stand on a portion of the farm Zorgvliet, which was bought by Mark Tracey in 1832 and sold off in small parcels. With the arrival of the railway these rural areas suddenly became commutable to Cape Town and appealed to well off professionals wanting to escape the increasingly built up city bowl. The plot which now contains Wolmunster was bought in 1834 by Carel Arnoldus Becker who named it after his home town in France. The house represents a perfect blend of the Cape Dutch and English styles and is one of the few surviving examples of a 'Gentleman's Residence' in the Southern Suburbs. U shaped it has two bow-fronted projections flanking the front stoep, as continuations of the back wings. Behind the house stands a pigeon-house, two storeyed with round headed openings similar to those of Cape warehouses. Later Wolmunster was the home of Attorney-General William Porter. The Firs, originally named Belmont, was built in 1842 on land bought by Nicolaas Wollaston Meyer again from Mark Tracey. The architect John Parker bought the house in 1898, removed the thatch roof and added the second storey. Irma Stern bought the house in 1927.

Information from Old Buildings of the Cape by Hans Fransen

Award of prestigious Simon van der Stel Foundation Gold Medal to Professor J.C. (Kay) de Villiers

Professor J.C. (Kay) de Villiers held the Helen & Morris Mauerberger Chair of Neurosurgery at the University of Cape Town and was an internationally recognised authority in his field. After qualifying in medicine at UCT he practised for four years in Swellendam before specialising in neurosurgery in London.

His special interest over many years has been in medical history and he founded The Cape Medical Museum at the Somerset Hospital and has been serving as Chairman of the Board of Management since 1988.



For many years he has researched the medical history of the Anglo-Boer War (1899 -1902). He has visited museums, libraries and cemeteries both in South Africa and overseas and this extensive research has culminated in the publishing of the definitive two-volume history entitled Healers, Helpers and Hospitals.

He has addressed many local history and other interested groups on aspects of the medical history and the Anglo Boer War.

Without doubt, he is the acclaimed authority on the medical history of the Anglo Boer War.

The Simon van der Stel Foundation, Cape Town hosted a cocktail function on Wednesday 19th January 2011 at the Cape Medical Museum, Portswood Road, Green Point. The National President of Heritage South Africa, Mr Len Raymond, presented the medal to Professor Kay de Villiers.

On the 28th of April Professor De Villiers was one of two recipients to be awarded the Mayor's Medal for cultural affairs by Cape Town Executive Mayor Dan Plato during an awards ceremony at the Civic Centre.

OUTDSHOORN

This year's weekend away will be to Oudtshoorn. Committee member, Anlen Boshoff (who grew up in the town), has put together a varied and interesting programme over 4 days in mid August. Local guides and heritage consultants will explain how the town developed, walk us around the central area and show us the interiors and exteriors of various homes and buildings. Accommodation has been booked at a central hotel and we sample several of the excellent local restaurants for evening meals.



Greylands and Welgeluk, two of the 'Feather Palaces' we will visit.

History

The area in which Oudtshoorn is situated was originally inhabited by the Bushmen, as evidenced by the many rock paintings that are found in caves throughout the surrounding Swartberg mountains.

The first European explorers of the area was a trading party led by a certain Ensign Shrijver, who were guided there by a Griqua via an ancient elephant trail in January 1689. The expedition reached as far as present-day Aberdeen before turning back and exiting the Klein Karoo valley through Attaquas Kloof on 16 March of the same year. However, it was only a hundred years later that the first farmers started settling in the region.

The first large permanent structure of the Klein Karoo, a church of the Dutch Reformed denomination, was first erected in 1839 near the banks of the Grobbelaars River. The village (and later town) of Oudtshoorn gradually grew around this church; it was named after Baron Pieter van Rhee de van Oudtshoorn, who was appointed Governor of the Cape Colony in 1772 but died on the voyage out. A small one-room school was opened in 1858, followed by the formation of a municipality and the founding of an Agricultural Society in 1859. During the same year work was also started on a larger church to replace the original small one.

Unfortunately, 1859 also signalled the start of a long and serious drought which severely depressed the national economy - by 1865 there was serious poverty. When the drought was finally broken by floods in 1869 the depression lifted and Oudtshoorn was transformed from a struggling village to a town of great prosperity.

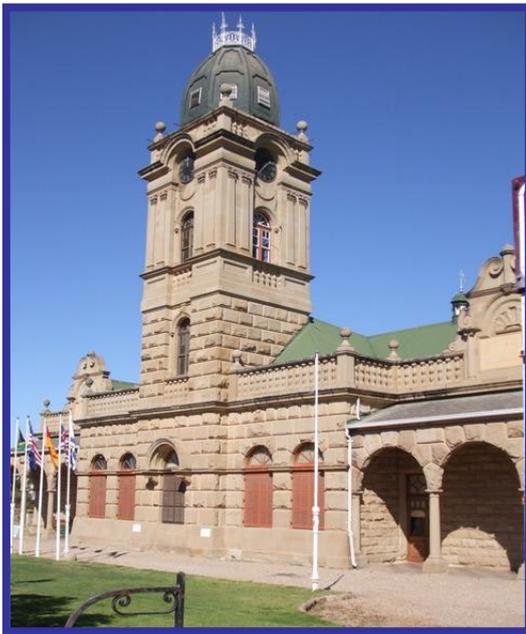
At one time there was a large Jewish immigrant population mostly from Lithuania and the town was known in the Jewish world as "Jerusalem of Africa".

The main reason for the large rise in prosperity was the ostrich, whose feathers had become extremely popular as fashion accessories in Europe; they were especially popular for use on hats. Between 1875 and 1880 ostrich prices reached up to GBP 1,000 a pair. The farmers of the region, realising that ostriches were far more profitable than any other activity, ripped out their other crops and planted lucerne, which was used as feed for the ostriches. The rising wealth also finally allowed for the completion of the Dutch Reformed Church - it was opened on 7 June 1879.

Owing to overproduction, the ostrich industry experienced a sudden slump in fortunes in 1885; the town's misery was compounded when it was hit by severe flooding during the same year, which washed away the nearby Victoria Bridge which had been built over the Olifants River only the year before.

The ostrich industry recovered only slowly and it was not until after the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902 that a second and bigger boom started. It was during this period that most of Oudtshoorn's famously opulent "Feather Palaces" were built. This boom peaked in 1913, before collapsing in 1914. As a result, the region's economy was ruined and most farmers returned to more traditional crops.

Wikipedia



CP Nel Museum. Die museum was oorspronklik die Hoër Seunskool. Dit is in 1907 amptelik ingewy en was in gebruik tot 1963 toe dié skool en die Hoër Meisieskool saamgesmelt het.

Die argitek was die Brit, Charles Bullock en hierdie sandsteen gebou is 'n goeie voorbeeld van die Koloniale-Victoriaanse styl wat verband hou met die sogenaamde tweede volstruisveer-oplewing wat vanaf 1900 tot net voor die Eerste Wêreldoorlog gestrek het. Die gebou is in 1981 tot Nasionale Gedenkwaardigheid verklaar.

Die museum het sy ontstaan te danke aan kolonel Charles Paul Leonard Nel, 'n suksesvolle sakeman en versamelaar van oudhede. Hierdie versameling was so

waardevol dat dit in 1938 spesiale erkenning van die destydse Histories Monumente Kommissie verkry het. Toe Nel in 1950 oorlede is, het 'n raad van trustee die administrasie van Nel se versameling oorgeneem. Dit vorm steeds die kern van die versameling in die CP Nel Museum wat in 1972 tot stand gekom het.

Anlen Boshoff

RESTAURANTS WITH HISTORY

Rhodes Memorial Restaurant Tea Garden - 021 687 0000

Booking advisable in season, on weekends and holidays

Commanding spectacular views the restaurant is under new continental management and has an improved versatile menu with attentive service.

Open daily from 9am to 5pm it offers breakfast, coffee and tea service, light meals and daily lunch specials.

On the day we were there, the specials were Malay curry & rice with pappadums and sambals served in attractive ethnic dishes at R65 and grilled Red Snapper, a generous portion of fish with a separate bowl of hot chips and a mixed salad and two sauces at R95.

Looking at orders passing our table, there were a number of attractive salads and generous ciabatto rolls with interesting fillings.

In winter there is a roaring fire inside. The restaurant is licensed and has outdoor seating on two terraces. On the main level, seating is on hard wooden benches with no backs. Down some steps on the lower level, seating is on chairs but the view is limited.

The tea-room was opened in the 1920's and retains its stone cottage atmosphere.

By advance arrangement wheelchair patrons or those with walking difficulties can be accommodated with special parking and no steps to be negotiated but the path is cobbled.

There is an upper parking area with a car guard.

All in all, well worth a visit.

While you are there, have another look at the imposing Memorial. Designed by Sir Herbert Baker, it was officially opened on the 5th July 1912 (Rhodes's birthday). The eight bronze lions are the work of JM Swan as is the bronze bust of Rhodes and the inscription above the head was written by Rudyard Kipling. The equestrian statue "Physical Energy" was sculptured by GR Watts. The 49 steps symbolises the years of Rhodes's life. The legacy that Rhodes left to Cape Town and its citizens, was the land he had accumulated and loved along the slopes of the mountain and which he gave to the country.

John Muir

HERITAGE SOUTH AFRICA SYMPOSIUM 2011

This year's symposium will be held in Johannesburg on 13th;14th;15th October. For further information please contact Pat Benbow-Hebbert at the Simon van der Stel office.