



NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPE TOWN BRANCH OF THE SIMON VAN DER STEL FOUNDATION NO 2 2015

NUWE LEDE/NEW MEMBERS

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

Mr G Cooper, Mr J Leibman, Ms San Vivier

DONASIES/DONATIONS:

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

Mr R M Ravenscroft, Mrs T Dingley, Mr R Perfect

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Member

It has been a busy year for the committee and I trust you enjoyed the outings that were on offer. However, I do want to bring our financial situation under your attention.

For the past four years the Cape Town branch has become increasingly dependent on the Conservator Trust to provide funds to balance its books. The Conservator Trust was formed to provide funds for Heritage and Conservation **projects** in the old Cape Town Municipal area. In the Articles and Constitution there is no specific requirement for the Trust to fund the Cape Town branch but for the past few years the Trustees have been sympathetic to giving assistance towards **administrative costs**. As the amount required escalates each year, the committee needs to investigate ways to reduce unnecessary costs thereby ensuring more funds go towards projects.

In order to achieve an improvement to this situation we have decided as follows:

- In future all bookings must be fully paid for in advance.
- The surcharge for non-members has been increased to R25 pp.
- Bookings must be made by e-mail (to save telephone time). All members are requested to communicate via email please.
- Members who prefer to receive correspondence via snail mail will pay an additional annual fee of R20.
- A 25% cancellation charge is introduced to cover the Secretary's time in finding replacements from the waiting list if members cancel more than one week before the event. If members cancel within one week of the event the 100% loss of the booking still stands.

Finally, your help in encouraging friends to join the Foundation as members would help increase our income.

Wishing you a joyous holiday season and a very happy 2016.

Kind regards

Ian Pretorius

KALK BAY MILESTONE XVII

This is an important moment in which we celebrate the recovery of an element of Cape Town's lost transportation heritage: milestones. And it coincides with the bi-centenary of their installation along Main Road: milestones exactly like the one pictured below (located opposite the well-known Olympia Cafe Main Road Kalk Bay) were first placed along Main Road in 1814 – 1815 during the governorship of Lord Charles Somerset.

The reason stemmed from the decision by the British in 1814 to make Simon's Bay their naval station; that in turn necessitated the upgrading of Main Road from Wynberg through to Simon's Town. The roadworks were undertaken concurrently along three sections: Wynberg – Diep River, Diep River – Muizenberg, and Muizenberg – Simon's Town, with the Muizenberg – Simon's Town section being the most important because of the difficult terrain and poor quality of the road. So it got started first in June 1814. The whole programme was probably completed by August 1816.

With the roadworks came the milestones. Installation of milestones along main roads had become mandatory in the home country, Britain, fifty years earlier and the practice was adopted here. Their purpose was both to mark the edge of the road and also enable accurate estimation of distances, travel times and fares for services running between Cape Town and Simon's Town. They were probably designed by the famous engineer-surveyor Louis Michel Thibault and were most likely cut from slate quarried on Robben Island. It is known that British convicts awaiting transportation to Australia worked in those quarries and they may have been responsible for cutting and inscribing the stones. The original milestone appears clearly in a photo from the 1870s and may have survived here as late as the 1920s when major road improvements were undertaken. It may have been damaged or buried at this time, or perhaps even earlier. We were hoping it might be found during the recent roadworks and the contractors Civils 2000 searched diligently but in vain to find it.



A replica of the original Kalk Bay Milestone



Milestone XVII - Fishery Beach - Close up Kalk Bay - Western Cape Archives.jpg

Historic Photo of the Milestone (Western Cape Archives)

This milestone XVII is an accurate replica of the original and stands close to the original site. The stone is Malmesbury slate and probably came from the Strand Street Quarry. It stands about 1 m tall, has a 45 cm face-width, and is 18 cm thick. It weighs about 350 kgs. The lettering is Times Roman exactly as on the original. It stands 17 miles (27.4 km) from the

then-centre of Cape Town – the Town House on Greenmarket Square. The Town House was the seat of civil government until the City Hall was built in 1905.

The creation of this replica, and also Milestone XV at Muizenberg, was made possible by the efforts of a number of people. Paul Booth, City Engineers Department, secured the funding to cut and inscribe the stone; this was carried out by Trevor Cliff of Clift Granite, stonemasons of Paarl who had some blocks of slate in their yard. Installation was carried out by the road contractors Martin & East in conjunction with Andy Rush of Knight Piesold, project engineers.

Replicating the missing milestones has been a Kalk Bay Historical Association (KBHA) objective for the last 15 years and we are grateful to the City for its vision, Clifts for the craftsmanship for which they have been famous since 1905, and Martin & East for installing this stone.

With thanks to the Kalk Bay Historical Association for permission to reprint this article.

The previous article appeared in the Heritage Portal which regularly puts out very interesting newsletters. Check out the website:

www.heritageportal.co.za

Another interesting resource has been developed by Simon Liell-Cock through the City's Environmental Resource Management Department when specialists were commissioned to prepare a suite of interesting stories about places, buildings, sites, events and people in the Far South Peninsula, linked to the history of the area.

As these have been made available on the City's website he thought you might be interested in linking onto the URL below and reading up on them.

<http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/Pages/CitytellstimelesstailesCapeTownuniqueSouthPeninsula.aspx>

TWO DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THAT WE HAVE OBJECTED TO.

WINCHESTER MANSIONS HOTEL

The Winchester Mansions Hotel, the iconic Cape Revival Hotel building on Beach Road Sea Point, applied for the demolition of the c1880's Arcadia and its outbuilding next door. Demolition would make space available for a proposed 9 storey building as a modern five star grading extension to the hotel.



The Simon van der Stel Foundation opposed this application by stating that this group of historic buildings represents a very unique historic group in Sea Point, being rare survivors still in good condition and situated next to one another. Not only do these buildings occupy a substantial part of a city block, but it has the advantage of being highly visible due to its corner position and being surrounded by three roads.

These three very visible buildings contribute substantially to a historic Sea Point which mainly disappeared amongst high-rise modern blocks of flats. Furthermore, Arcadia retains most of its original fabric. This house and outbuilding,

together with the Winchester Mansions represent a very important visual and tangible evidence of the early development of Sea Point from a mainly single residential suburb, to the first low-rise block of flats (Winchester Mansions was one of the very first blocks of flats to appear in the Sea Point). These early blocks still reflected a domestic architecture, looking like a large mansion house.

In terms of Section 36(2) of LUPO 15 of 1985 "...regards shall be had to the preservation of the developed environment concerned". This application is in contravention of the above as it seeks the demolition of a historic building and its outbuildings.

The above application is also in contravention of the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 stipulating the protection of buildings older than 60 years.

The Foundation stated in its objection that this application is NOT in the interest of the public and will NOT add value to the neighbourhood as mentioned in the applicant's report. The permanent loss of a heritage resource and the resultant negative impact on its neighbour, the other historic landmark building, namely the Winchester Mansions is not supported.

It was argued in our objection that responsible tourism, embracing and protecting our unique heritage, must be promoted in Cape Town. A five star facility, which will be very unique in the world, can easily and successfully be achieved by retaining our precious heritage resources.

At the meeting of the Heritage Western Cape Appeals Committee held on the 24th November 2015, the application was refused on the grounds of being unsympathetic to the main building. The idea that a building of lesser value historically and aesthetically could be sacrificed for the benefit of a building of greater value was also rejected. So many thanks to our chairman for his well versed objection.

AANSOEK OM SLOPING EN HERONTWIKKELING VAN SASNEV

Die Stigting Simon van der Stel het met groot verbasing verneem van 'n aansoek om die sloping van die SASNEV gebou in die tuindorp Pinelands. Sasnev is die gesellige ruimte waar ons lesings aangebied word en waar ons AJV plaasvind, Die aansoek behels die herontwikkeling van die erf om kantore, woonstelle en winkels te huisves.

Aansoek is onder andere gedoen vir die Opheffing van Titelvoorwaardes en die hersonering van die perseel. Stigting het beswaar aangeteken teen gemelde aansoek aangesien die Titelbeperkings juis in plek geplaas is om die integriteit van die Tuindorp gedagte te beskerm: 'n medium digtheid woonomgewing met beperkte gemeenskapsfasiliteite en besighede. Daar is ook bepaalde boulyne wat aan Pinelands 'n meer landelike karakter verleen – aansoek word gedoen om die boulyne te oorskry.

Stigting het in sy betoog aangevoer dat die aansoek onwenslik is en 'n negatiewe invloed op die unieke Tuindorp sal uitoefen. Die beoogde gebou sal te groot en hoog wees, naasliggende residensiele eiendomme sal benadeel word en die impak van die groot gebou sal die unieke stedelike landskap skade berokken.

Ander redes wat aangevoer is teen die aansoek is dat die beoogde hoogte van 17 meter vir die nuwe gebou nadelig sal uitwerk op die historiese gebied aangesien geen sulke geboue hier voorkom nie.

Ten slotte is betoog dat die aansoek teenstrydig is met ontwerpbeginsels en beplanningsbeleid vir die Tuindorp, dat die erfenis oorlegsone juis in plek geplaas is om Pinelands te beskerm teen sulke onsensitiewe aansoeke.

Ian Pretorius

So far SASNEV are still taking bookings for the meeting rooms so we have scheduled our winter lecture series and AGM to be held at their premises but will notify members if this should change. If anyone has suggestions as to where we could move to, should it become necessary, please let Pat know by e-mail. All suggestions are welcomed.

BOOKSHELF



The Royal Observatory at the Cape of Good Hope
History and Heritage

I. S. Glass

The Royal Observatory has been part of Cape Town for nearly two hundred years. It is the oldest scientific institution in South Africa, if not in all of Africa. Now the headquarters of the South African Astronomical Observatory, it is treasured for its science as well as for its special architecture. The extensive SAAO collections of instruments and historical images have been drawn upon to present a vivid account from its foundation in 1820 to the present day. Outlined are the Observatory's history, buildings, astronomical achievements, conservation and heritage issues and its natural setting between the Liesbeek and Black rivers. 80 A4 pages with 138 illustrations (73 in colour).

Price: R150. Available from the author: glass.ian@gmail.com and from SAAO (Thembela Matungwa: tm@saa.ac.za). Also at SAAO open nights on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month.

Dr Ian Glass was born in Ireland and educated at Trinity College Dublin and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has worked for most of his career at the South African Astronomical Observatory, specialising in the infrared. He is the author of several books.

Dr Glass will be giving us a talk and leading us on a tour of the Royal Observatory on the 24th February after which we will be able to look at the historic Valkenberg farm buildings next door and enjoy a pub lunch at the Fig Tree restaurant.