



NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPE TOWN BRANCH OF THE SIMON VAN DER STEL FOUNDATION NO 1 2017

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:

Ms Heidi Drew, Mr & Mrs L Parker, Mrs Karen Higgs, Dr JT Mets

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 MP Deacon, Mr R Thorp, Mr M Ravenscroft, Mrs SE Collins, Mr J Rennie, Ms C Beyers, Mrs MF Arnold

A VISIT TO THE LODGE DE GOEDE HOOP.

Visit by Van Der Stel Foundation on Monday 15th May 2017.

23 members of the society including several guests greatly enjoyed touring this hidden and rather unknown architectural treasure.

The original foundation stone of the Temple was laid in 1801 and includes the work of the three famous contributors to architecture at the Cape. The architect Louis Thibault, the Builder Hermann Schutte and the Sculptor Anton Anreith. So often VDS tours a building or property and one of the three was involved in its construction or decoration. All three were Masons and members of the Lodge.

Grand officer Ken Marcus led the group through a detailed history of the founding of the Lodge and its complete destruction by fire. In 1892, the neighbouring Society Rooms, used as a Vaudeville theatre, were set alight when stage scenery caught fire from acetylene lamps and sparks blew across to the Lodge totally burning it to the ground. This incident was very well documented in the Press and the Fire Brigade much applauded for their efforts at the time.



Then followed a wonderful talk by Ken in the inner Temple. He detailed Masonic rites and customs and details of past and present membership. The former exclusion of women and the inclusion today. He outlined the extreme good

works conducted by Masons worldwide at all times and illuminated the largely unknown persecution of Masons in Victorian- inter-war Europe accounting for the rather "secret" aspect of the society's operation

Keith Martin then talked of the histories of Thibault, Schutte and Anreith whilst also describing the statues destroyed in the fire and later rebuilt. In the Inner temple these are "Wisdom", "Strength" "Beauty" and "Hope". Three of Anreith's original statues remain in the Meditation Chamber and were not touched by the fire. They are the supine sculpture of Hiram Abif (Hiram was architect of King Solomon's Temple and is a reminder of our mortality), In the Master's Chamber there is "Grief" and beyond this in the Robing Room "The Figure of Silence". They are absolutely beautiful...

The group was then entertained to drinks and delicious snacks in the Refectory where Ken was thanked for such a detailed, informative and entertaining tour. Each member received a copy of the guide book.

At the entrance to the Lodge is an inscription indicating the ethos of Masonry.

It reads

"If your curiosity leads you to us – Retire
If you revere only rank and riches-
Depart you are not one of us
If you expect to be enlightened in spite of your errors and frailties -
You will not feel at home in our midst;
If you do not trust us – Do not proceed;
If your heart and intentions are pure – Be Welcome!"

Keith Martin

A VISIT TO THE CASTLE OF GOOD HOPE

The Simon van der Stel Foundation was invited to view the restored murals at the Castle of Good Hope on Wednesday, 23 November 2016. It was at short notice and not every member could be informed. We were also limited to only 15 people. Nevertheless those of us who were fortunate to make it, had a once in a lifetime experience as many of the rooms we saw will not be opened to the general public in future. And talking about rooms, we were amazed at how many rooms and nooks and crannies there were and realised that it is actually a real castle.

It is impossible to share everything we saw and experienced in two and a half hours we were there, but I shall try and describe some of the highlights. We were fortunate to have the most delightful 'novice tour guide ' in the form of Philip Barratt. In 1988 Philip, freshly out of the Michaelis Art School, was assigned to restore the murals. As they started re-plastering some walls, they noticed different blotches of colour on the walls, and after closer investigation discovered that they were friezes and murals. Under the auspices of Gawie Fagan the restoration of the Castle took place. After many years the work had started fading and Philip was called back.

Looking at the friezes above the dados and under the ceiling one may wonder why you need an artist to do the work but on closer investigation and under the guidance of Philip one realizes that they are all works of art as they are painstakingly perfectly done and not only that but they are painted three dimensionally. Taking in consideration how the light fell in from the windows dark and light lines would be used. Only by touching a completely flat wall do you realise how your eyes have deceived you (and how fantastically they were done) as it looks like bulges and panels on the walls. Some of the panels were painted to look like marble. A flower design on the chimney above one of the fireplaces was in such a bad state of repair that they had to drill holes in it and from the bottom up they injected a bonding liquid and slurry into the cavities to reinforce it.

Not only did we see many rooms with a multitude of different murals and friezes but we also went to an old kitchen with old Dutch ovens. The most enthralling things were the wells inside the kitchen and a lovely hand pump to pump the water into the forerunner of the modern sink. At night the kitchen was locked by a semi-barred door to keep the slaves from helping themselves to the proviant. The Castle reflects some of the history of the country. Therefore some restorations were taken back to how the Dutch had built it and some parts left with the changes the English brought about. The cast iron fireplaces were built by the English as according to Philip the Dutch Calvinists believed in a stoical lifestyle of simplicity and being uncomfortable and not in such luxuries as warming themselves in front of a fireplace. The outer walls of the castle with its five bastions were built first and gradually over time, in different phases and time periods, the buildings were erected against the outer walls.

Another interesting feature we were shown was the silhouetted heads of different commanders of the castle painted up along a staircase and also on the landing. These were also done over time. Some are in quite a bad state and need sponsorship to be restored.



A visit to the restored jail with strange inscriptions like “ Mrs Reese’s Hotel lodgings for single gentlemen’ carved above the cells, was one of the last venues we visited. The inscriptions are on the outside of the cells as the English turned the wood around at some stage.

We ended up on the wall of the Castle with a beautiful view from the Katzenellenbogen bastion towards Table Mountain. We proceeded to the next bastion, the Buuren overlooking the parade. Philip entertained us with a lovely story but it may be a state secret as it has never been recorded or reported on. I therefore dare not divulge it.

After our tour we hope Philip (pictured left) will have enough confidence to conducting more tours as he has a natural gift to present information in a most delightful way. A big thanks to Philip for a great informative outing and all the extra time he spend with us.

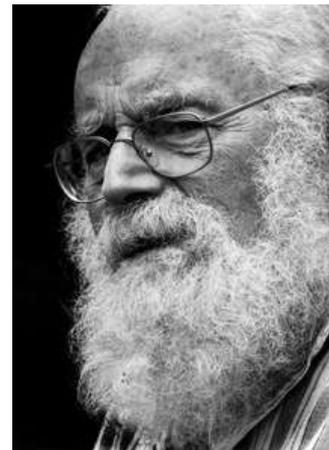
If you want to hear Philip’s story, watch the space and learn about it when he starts running his own formal tours.

Nicci Hoal

Bruynzeel House

On the 30th March I, like many of our members lucky enough to get to Stellenbosch, was completely bowled over by our visit to Bruynzeel House and wanted find out more about the architect, Aart Bijl. I thought I would share the information that I was able to glean from the internet.

Aart Bijl was a partner in a small architecture practice, Bijl Green and Todeschini, and had just returned from a year in the Netherlands to gain experience when, in 1960 / 61 they were approached about the Bruynzeel project. While he had been away the practice had already done some speculative work on timber hyperbolic paraboloid roofs for petrol stations, the Cape Town harbour entrance, and designed some, much more modest, timber framed houses. In his own words: “I undertook a lot of investigation into this form of roof, for the size that would be required for a house. And I explored the possibilities of manipulating of its geometry to provide a reasonably calm interior to a house. What turned out to be striking about a hyperbolic paraboloid, apart from its overall shape over a square plan, was that any way you tilt it there will always be two straight horizontal lines at right angles to each other, and you can determine where they occur by controlling the amount of tilt. By having an unequal tilt I was able to use the horizontal lines to differentiate between large and small room spaces, and have horizontal tops to room dividers such as walls and cupboards. Each room space could then have a ceiling that showed a symmetrically curved portion of the hyperbolic paraboloid. You might say the Bruynzeel house was designed from the roof downwards, which is quite unusual.”



The roof itself was quite easy to construct and covered in copper sheeting with yellowwood for the ceilings. The problems came in with the anchoring to the supports and here they had trouble with the engineers who were brought in. The architect felt that their calculations were wrong and devised his own scheme – which did not go down well! However when the roof

was in place and the scaffolding being dismantled he, and a colleague, Flip Green, stood under the roof to show their confidence in his solution.

Sadly, in 1961, the practice became a casualty of the downturn in the economy after the Sharpeville massacre they and decided to close down. At this stage Munnik, Visser and Black were brought in to oversee the final stages of the house build.

Aart Bijl was born in the Netherlands, in Voorburgh in 1935 and his parents moved to South Africa the following year. He has had a lifelong battle with bone tuberculosis. He was taken to London for treatment and after his mother died there his father came to London as well. Aart was educated in London up to university level but studied architecture at UCT where he came under the influence of Pius Pahl, reputedly the last architect to qualify at the Bauhaus before it closed, and where he was mentored by Mies van der Rohe. The architecture practice of Bijl Green and Todeschini was formed in 1959. In 1962 Aart met and married Valerie and they moved to London but after finding the regulations too restricting in the London architectural world he moved the family to Edinburgh in 1965 to join the Architectural Research Unit (ARU) in the Department of Architecture at Edinburgh University becoming the Edinburgh University Reader, in the Department of Architecture, Director of the EdCAAD Research Unit from 1968 to 1995 and a pioneer in CAD (computer aided design) with strong links to AI and CS. His name is honoured in the 'Aart Bijl Student Prize' for outstanding leadership in learning and in welfare of the student body. The following year their daughter was born.

In 1989 he was invited to Japan by a computer company and became a visiting professor at the Tokyo University in 1989. Aart is now retired and living in Scotland.

Andrew Jones

DID YOU KNOW ?

Simon van der Stel Foundation / ABSA Bank Account

Every time you :

- deposit a cheque at the tellers in the bank – **SVDS is charged.** (For your cheque deposit of R200 we pay R35 - the rates vary according to the amount deposited)
- Deposit a cheque at the ATM – **SVDS not charged.**
- Cash deposits in the bank – **SVDS is charged.** (For your R400 cash deposit we pay R30 - there is however a base and additional fee depending on the amount)
- Cash deposits at ATM - **SVDS is charged.** (A lower rate than inside the bank).

The only transactions which draw no charges, are those made via electronic payments/ Internet banking.

As we are desperately trying to keep our monthly expenses to a minimum, we would encourage all members who have access to internet banking to please use this method of payment .

If you do not have access to electronic banking, consider asking a friend who is a member to assist?



BOOKSHELF

Nina van der Westhuizen has compiled a beautifully illustrated and well researched history of this fascinating West Coast town.

Starting with the history of the area from the Portuguese explorers who were the first visitors from Europe and detailing all the old farms that were formed from the original Groene Kloof. The development of the town of Darling is covered as are the many interesting families who have settled here and often stayed.

On the 2nd September you can join us for a day in the area visiting some of the farms mentioned in the book, the excellent museum in Darling and have some lekker country food at the Marmalade Cat.

There are excellent wine farms in the area and Flower Season should be in full swing.