



VASSA Bulletin 2: 18 June 2009

To subscribe email: markbowen@xsinet.co.za

Welcome to the second edition of the Vernacular Architecture Society's regular online bulletin.

Thank you very much to those members that sent such positive and reassuring feedback. Naturally, a publication such as this takes a while before it takes on a life of its own and we'll slowly but surely adapt it to suit our member's needs and interests.

Upcoming outing 27 JUNE: A HILL, A HEIGHT, A VLEI & A GIFT. We visit four 19th century farms in the southern part of the Swartland with Joanna Marx. Enquiries 021 761 6102 Members only, please see the monthly newsletter for full details.

Pat Kramer and her daring team of adventurers are presently doing a recce for our September outing to Prince Albert. This promises to be a real treat and a "must do" outing for Vernac members.

Upcoming talk 21 JULY at 20:00 at the Athenaeum. Historian and author, Mike Walker, is a legend along the Kalkbay and St James coastline and has a number of books to his credit on the history of the area from Muizenberg to Kalkbay. Both "Coastal Memories, Muizenberg – St James - Kalkbay 1870 - 1920" and "St James, A Century by the Sea 1850 – 1950" are fascinating books. I also believe that he may have brought out a more recent book which I'm sure will be equally as interesting!

Report back on last talk Veronica Wilkinson gave the Vernacs a fascinating talk on the beautiful sandstone Khmer temples in South East Asia. It was really interesting to see architecture which is unconnected to the western traditional. Veronica has let me have some notes relating to her talk which are in digital format, please let me know if you want me to e-mail you a copy.

Report back on last outing see last issue

BREAKING NEWS

VASSA Publications There is huge excitement in the society as Antonia Malan and her team have released the latest and much anticipated VASSA Journal. A really big thank you to Antonia, the contributors and

those that put in all the work behind the scenes for what is yet another amazing edition. The journal presents research projects undertaken by members and the selection criteria for articles extremely stringent. It is a scientific journal which is respected worldwide and has a wide range of readers in many fields. (If someone has their research published in the journal you know they've done a really good job!). Buy your copy at the next meeting and show your friends and fellow members that you appreciate their hard work. R25.00 per copy

VASSA Journal No. 21 June 2009

Rietfontein: a farm in the North Onder-Bokkeveld: *Nigel Amschwand*
The Liesbeeck River: its importance and its problems: *Yvonne Brink*
Doornboom in Heidelberg, saved at last: *Hans Franssen*
The Namaqualand stockpost: *Lita Webley*

Readers contributions (new) Thank you to Annemarie Van Zyl for this contribution which follows on from the presentation that Maureen Archer gave us at the AGM regarding the building of a petrol station in a sensitive part of historical Graaff Reinet.

“Hi Mark

What I wanted to put in is a true account of a similar issue in the 60's, when Total wanted to demolish the old slave church in Graaff-Reinet to make way for a garage. Anton Rupert intervened personally, offering to buy back the church from Total. He took the matter to their head office where he resorted to some gentle blackmail when he realised that he was getting nowhere. He apparently suggested that it would be a shame if all the hundreds of Rembrandt reps on the road those days never filled up at a Total station again, and that sealed the deal! Today the old slave church is the Hester Rupert art museum, named after Anton's mother. The story is told in his biography, published a few years ago, so I would imagine that all matters of sueing will be sorted out by now!

I just found it fascinating that it is once again a petrol company threatening Graaff-Reinet's heritage. Like history repeating itself, just a pity Anton Rupert's no longer around. Regards Annemarie”

Lifts offered or required to outings Drop me an e-mail if you need a lift or are offering a lift to an outing. Hopefully somebody reading this bulletin is able to assist.

DIY member outings This section of the bulletin has the potential to be great fun! The idea is for members or interested parties who are keen to do related but not official outings to meet up with others who have

similar interests. An example: if a member is new to Cape Town and would love to go to the Castle with a gang of interested people, he or she drops me an e-mail, it goes in the bulletin and hopefully people respond and a fine time is had by all. Maybe you missed the Long Street outing but still want to go, set a date and time and lets see who is interested. As I say, as long as it's in our wider field of interest I'm sure many of our members will be interested and would be delighted to share knowledge and experience with others, and also to learn from others.

Interesting newspaper articles Annelien Dean and her team at the People's Post printed a very nice article on Veronica Wilkinson and the talk that she was to give at the Vernacs meeting on 16th June. See page 4 of the 9 June edition.

We are delighted to welcome the intrepid journalist from the Constantiaberg Bulletin, Karen Watkins, as a member of the Vernacs. Karen has done wonderful work through her articles of bringing heritage issues to the awareness of the general public.

Interesting websites Helen Binckes sent in this contribution for all of us who are interested in African Art:

AFRICA SOUTH ART INITIATIVE (ASAI) Developing critical resources on art in Africa www.asai.co.za Thank you very much Helen.

Member Surveys This section allows the committee to gauge member's opinions on topics that may come up from time to time but may also allow us to determine where member's interests lay.

Joy Saxon, who is our committee meeting in charge of arranging all these great club meets would love to get some suggestions from members for future talks and outings. Please send me your ideas and if you know of interesting speakers it would be of great help. Joy does such a marvelous job of organizing things for us that it would only be fair for us to help her as much as possible.

Member's research(new) This new section is a brilliant suggestion from Annemarie Van Zyl and will allow members to let others know what work is being done out there. By knowing what is being researched we will be able to see where members' interests overlap with others and possibly where there are gaps in the field for new research projects to be initiated. I'm guessing that the Vernacs are pretty humble when it comes to their achievements and activities but this isn't bragging, this is just telling it as it is. And just knowing that there are others out there doing wonderful research is likely to be motivating for others!

Talks by other societies and clubs that may be of interest Here we note anything that comes to our attention that may be of interest to our members.

Cape Natural History Club talks

Thursday 25 June 2009 – David Grier: Running the SA Coastline
(David and his running partner, Braam Malherbe, ran the Great Wall of China in 2006!)

Thursday 30 July 2009 – Bruno Werz: Recent developments in South African Maritime Archaeology. This looks really interesting for those of us that enjoy scratching around in the dirt for old stuff – I'll be there for sure.

In case of queries contact Eleanor: **Telephone** 021 762 1779 or see their website www.capenaturalhistoryclub.co.za

All meetings are held in the lecture theatre at SACS, entrance from Main Street, Newlands, at 8 pm R20.00 for visitors

Members news (new) This is where we learn a little about our members. I definitely don't want to turn this into an advertising spot but lets hear what you're up to. As you've guessed by now, I'm a firm believer that we should support our friends and fellow members whenever possibly.

Marion Ellis, our elegant and eloquent membership secretary, has a beautifully updated website at www.capeinsights.com . If you want to see some mouth watering cultural tours please take a peep.

Mike Hall, is a new member with a passion for the perfect shot. He is a professional photographer with an architectural qualification and boy does he know how to photograph buildings (and other stuff too!). He can be contacted on 021 461 6344, 082 881 0881 or at hallmike@iafrica.com.

Andy Horn, is also a brand new member but he is living the Vernacular Architecture Enthusiasts dream! Andy is a professional architect who has a practice specializing in building with traditional materials and methods. This is very exciting for us as a society. Please have a look at his website – you've just got to love it! www.ecodesignarchitects.co.za. Also www.mamrerevitalization.wordpress.com for his heritage project in Mamre. Andy is collecting digitalised photos or old photos and slides of

Mamre to scan and load onto the site. If anyone can help then please contact him on andy@ecodesignarchitects.co.za.

Members question and answer section This is for members who have a lot of questions to ask and for people to share their hard earned knowledge.

Q 1: When I drive up Protea road in upper Claremont (going towards the mountain), I see a small white painted cottage on the left hand side of the road with a thatched roof. It is just across from the antique shop that seems to be in perpetual state of being renovated. The front door and windows appear to be new but I'm wondering if it's an original? It's strange place to build a little thatched cottage if it's a recent build. Thanks
Mark Bowen

A1: Thank you to Sally Titlestad, Mary Floyd, Jeremy Lawrence and Andre Van Graan for sharing their thoughts on this matter. Sally did her masters degree on this area and has really opened my eyes – it's pretty complicated and involves three estates, Vineyard, Feldhausen and Sans Souci. The very odd way that Protea road curves first to the right and then to the left as it heads past Norwich Oval is due to the fact that it follows the lines of old footpaths that traced the boundaries of the estates. These footpaths are shown on Thibault's map of 1812. Sally's investigation showed that a certain amount of land in upper Claremont in the Bishoplea Road area was given to and developed by emancipated slaves in the early 1800's. Unfortunately no trace of their buildings appear to remain. Please read Sally's "The (forgotten?) stories and questions revealed by spatial explorations of the subdivisions of two estates in 19th century Claremont" for the full picture. This was published in 'Proceedings from a workshop "Studies & debates in Vernacular Architecture in the Western Cape"' VASSA 2004.

The cottage, now called "Thatch", belongs to Mr Hans Niehaus who is the owner of the antique shop and it certainly dates back to the 1800's. It doesn't appear on Thibault's map of 1812 but is shown in the survey of 1880 which means that it was built before the subdivisions occurred – hence the strange angle of its siting on its plot. (As a matter of interest, the unfinished building from which Mr. Niehaus operates was designed by the well known architect Roelof Uytenbogaardt of Werdmuller Centre fame. I'm definitely not a fan of the Werdmuller but I must say that I find the Claremont building quite interesting with those flowing curves, I wonder what the finished product was supposed to look like?) Thanks to all that helped with this question and Sally you've got a really nice telephone voice and manner. m

Athenaeum News Yours truly was elected onto the board of the Athenaeum at its AGM last month as the VASSA representative and the boards secretary. The Athenaeum and its affairs have been looking a bit sad for many years now, but thankfully the corner has been turned under the guidance and hard work of Ken Kynoch who served as Chairman of the board last year. It's time to breathe some life into the elegant old lady again and I'd love to hear from any of our members that may have done some research on the Athenaeum. The previous owner Dr Dorethea Bleek (1873 – 1948) played a major part in the preservation of the San (Bushman) languages as well as providing us with a huge collection of visual references through photography. She carried on with the work of her father Dr Wilhelm Bleek and aunt, Mrs. Lucy Lloyd. This house represents a cultural gem but unfortunately at the moment although it is really beautiful outside, it's pretty bleak inside. (wow, terrible choice of words but very apt!)

Constructive thoughts on this bulletin will be welcome, please bear in mind that I don't want to turn this into my full time job so I need to keep it simple. Please enter into all correspondence via e-mail to this address ie markbowen@xsinet.co.za My wife, Kim, is already giving me the eye whenever the phone rings in the evening so the e-mail option is more conducive to a happy home life .

This is being called a regular bulletin but we won't commit to a definite schedule until we determine how popular the idea is.

Thanks for your time and let's enjoy this wild winter weather!

Regards

Mark Bowen

Secretary for the Vernacular Architecture Society

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