



VASSA Bulletin 3: 3 July 2009

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

Hi Everybody. I hope that you've been enjoying this wonderful bit of sunshine. I know that the weather played along just perfectly for the outing this last weekend.

Last week saw a couple of firsts for me. I was thrilled to be invited by **Joanna Marx** to do my first (mini) recce on Wednesday afternoon in aid of the weekends outing. (Om te kuier op die plaas met koffie en beskuit is baie beter as om te werk!) And on Thursday I popped into the Archives in Roeland Street for the first time. Initially the staff were a little taken back by my extreme ignorance and startlingly good looks; but they were extremely helpful, and had me settled down at table 6 with some very heavy reading material within a few minutes. I did find out that **you may no longer take cameras into the reading room.** Lockers are provided though.

Upcoming talk Tuesday 21 July at 20:00 at the Athenaeum. Historian and author, **Mike Walker** will talk about the history and development of Kalk Bay since Simon van der Stel visited the area in 1678 until today. His talk will include the whaling industry, the arrival of the Filipino fishermen and their families, the railways, the building of the harbour and the collapse of the fishing industry and the subsequent developments thereafter. Mike wrote the text for **KALK BAY – An Historical Booklet and Walk** which will be available at the meeting for R15. He is also the author of a number of other fascinating books on the area.

Upcoming outing Kalkbay – Walkabout Saturday 25 July 10:00 for 10:15 New VASSA member, architect **Roelf Jansen**, and **Carohn Cornell**, our social history expert, will lead a walk to look at Kalk Bay's stonework inside and outside buildings as well as on the streets and steps plus some other interesting local features. Members only, please see July's newsletter.

Report back on last talk see last bulletin

Report back on last outing 27 June: A Hill, a Height, a Vlei and a Gift. A big Thank you goes to **Joanna Marx** for putting together a wonderful trip, I know that a lot of work went into organizing this one and it really paid off. The weather threw Joanna a curved ball with the heavy rains causing the Diep Rivier to go into spate mid week but she handled this setback with ease.

"Julie Leader and I went on our first outing on Saturday to the three farms near Philadelphia and what with champagne weather, snow on the mountain ranges and the very friendly members it was a truly splendid day. I would like to make special mention of the membership secretary, Marion, her enthusiasm and friendliness in introducing new members was exceptional. I should also mention that Andre was also an excellent leader that day. A special thank-you to all involved with the arrangements and to the kind folk who let us wander through their homes. I very much look forward to the next meeting, and outing.

With kind regards

Peta Maybury

I love the expression "Champagne weather", thank you Peta.

VASSA Publications

Just a reminder that our latest journal is out and selling like hotcakes. Books are still far sexier and easier to read than the internet, so buy your copy now! R25.00 per copy.

VASSA Journal No. 21 June 2009

Rietfontein: a farm in the North Onder-Bokkeveld: *Nigel Amschwand* (Nigel has a book

coming out later this year covering this fascinating area)

The Liesbeeck River: its importance and its problems: *Yvonne Brink* (I must say that I found Yvonne's article extremely entertaining and informative, especially with the Liesbeeck right on our doorstep.)

Doornboom in Heidelberg, saved at last: *Hans Fransen* (Also see Andre Pretorius's in depth article on the pre restoration house in VASSA Journal 12 December 2004 which is now downloadable from our website.)

The Namaqualand stockpost: *Lita Webley*

Also have a look at our stock of older journals and the VASSA handbooks that are available

Other good reads Long time friend and supporter of vernacular architecture and other social issues, **Jos Baker**, the owner of Klein Zoar, has brought out a wonderful book called "**Preserving a House**". Her book "is not a scholarly architectural account of the house – reputedly Wolraad Woltemade's and dated +/- 1710. It's the personal story of the perils and pleasures of preserving a national monument, set against a wider framework of history, architecture, folklore and food at the Cape over the centuries." It sounds wonderful and what makes it even more amazing is that Jos has bequeathed this historic home to the NSRI in her will. I also believe that her late husband, **David**, may have hosted the Vernacs at the homestead in the past. The book is available from Wordsworth Books, Clarkes bookshop and Kalkbay books. Signed copies are available from Meriel@nsri.org.za or 021 434 4011 for R220.00 plus R15 p&p. this is the recommended retail price but may vary according to store. The proceeds will go into the upkeep of Klein Zoar

Readers contributions none this week

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 Constantia Bulletin 2 July see page 3 for a great article on Vernac member **Dr Peter Merrington** and the registering of the Constantia Valley Heritage Association with the Heritage Council of the Western Cape. Well done to Peter and the steering committee for getting this off the ground and all the best for looking protecting the heritage resources of this very important area. The journalist is **Inga Strydom**.

Southern Suburbs Tatler 2 July See page 4 for a great article on the 150th anniversary of The Church of St Mary the Virgin in Woodstock. This is one of Bishop and Sophie Gray's churches as detailed in **Dr Desmond Martin's** book "The Bishops Churches", with an 1890's photo in **Dr Hans Fransen's** book "The Old Buildings of the Cape", pgs 85 and 114. The journalist is **Nicolette Dirk** who very kindly has our notices published.

Please cut out any articles, letters or notices regarding the Vernacs that you come across in the newspapers. We want to start a scrap book to keep track of any publicity that we may get. If you can hand them to me at meetings or outings I'd really appreciate it. Don't worry about duplicating, we'd rather have extra copies than miss anything. Thank you.

Interesting websites none that I can think of other than www.vassa.org.za and any others already mentioned in the bulletin.

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 member in charge of arranging all these great club meets would love to get some more 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. Thank you to **Helen Binkes**, **Sally Titlestad** and **Veronica Wilkinson** for their suggestions. If suggested outings don't fit the pure vernacular theme then maybe we can do them as unofficial visits – more to follow once these and other suggestions have been mulled over.

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.

Okay, it looks like people are a bit shy at the moment so feel free to tell us what other members are doing! I do know that our very own **Dr Hans Fransen** may be considering doing a survey of the Cape English cottage architecture, such as in old Wynberg, and how it may relate to Cape Dutch work.

Our new member, **Veronica Wilkinson**, needs to go to Uppington, (Grootdrink actually) and will be grateful to know of any archaeological, architectural or art related features in the area that may be worth writing about. If you are able to give her some ideas please drop her a line on wilkinson.veronica@gmail.com. It sounds like a wonderful trip and Veronica is an accomplished writer so only good things could come out of such a venture. Maybe **Pat Kramer** has some ideas?

Vernac type books for sale My Dad, Denver Bowen, is a huge book enthusiast in PE and in retirement is sourcing old books for collectors. These are some really interesting books that he has on hand and if anyone would like more info about the listed books, please let me know. *Prices exclude postage from Port Elizabeth*

A Concise Guide To Cape Dutch Houses By Phillida Brooke Simons (1987) R50.00

Cape Dutch Houses and Farms By C. De Bosardi (1964 – second edition) R75.00

The Great Houses Of Constantia By Philippa Dane & Sydney-Anne Wallace (1981) R275.00

Our Building Heritage An Illustrated History Compiled by Paddy Hartdegen (1988) R250.00

A Pioneer Bank in a Pioneer Land By Carolyn Terry (1979) The history of The Standard Bank from establishment in 1862 R150.00

Claremont Album By Joyce Murray (1958) A brief history of Claremont. R50.00

Rondebosch and Round About By Adele Naude (1973) R150.00

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 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

Simon van der Stel Foundation For bookings, contact Pat on either pbhebbert@mweb.co.za or 021 794 7464.mornings only (8.30 – 13.00)

Saturday 11 July 2009 at 14:30. Lecture on Woodstock Glass. R50pp including tea & biscuits. Limited to 40 people. Wheelchair friendly. Co-ordinator: Andrew Jones

The collector, **Viccie le Roux**, will tell us more about his collection of Woodstock Glass. These items, recognizable by a fern-leaf decoration, were locally produced by the South Africa Glass Company (Limited), and established in 1878. Examples of Woodstock Glass from Mr. Le Roux's extensive private collection will be on view. **Venue:** Jenny Mallet Hall at St George's Grammar School, Richmond Rd, Mowbray. **Parking:** on the school grounds. **Directions:** From the N2, take the Liesbeek Parkway (M57) off ramp and travel south. Turn left into Klipfontein Rd and left at Raapenberg Rd (M52). Turn left into Richmond Rd and continue towards St George's Grammar School on the left. **Duration:** 2 hours.

Saturday 25 July 2009 at 14:30. Lecture: Cape Mission Villages – decaying beauty? R50pp including tea & biscuits. Limited to 40 people. Wheelchair friendly. Co-ordinator: Hans Fransen. Cultural historian **Dr. Hans Fransen** will discuss the mission stations established in former centuries for the landless and freed slaves. Until recently Genadendal, Mamre, Elim and Wupperthal were still enclaves of historical beauty, but they have been allowed to slide into increasing neglect. However, in their "kerkerwe" they still retain enough of their architectural heritage to make them into some of the most significant historical groupings in the Cape. The talk will be illustrated by visual material collected over half a century. **Venue:** Jenny Mallet Hall, see above **Duration:** 2 hours.

Irma Stern Museum **If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, Does it matter if the lens was made in China?**

*A solo exhibition comprising new paintings, videos and performance by **Paul Roux** at the UCT Irma Stern Museum, Cecil Road, Rosebank. To be held from 24 June until 25 July.* This is Paul Roux's first solo exhibition in South Africa for three years, having left in 2006 to pursue a bursary to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Visit www.paulroux.com to find out more about this accomplished artist.

Members news 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.

Mike Hall, oops, I got my facts mixed up in the last issue. Mike did do some architectural studies at the University of Natal but he didn't major in the subject and does not have an architectural qualification. He is a great professional photographer with an interest in architecture and other subjects, and can be contacted on 021 461 6344, 082 881 0881 or at hallmike@iafrica.com. Some of his architectural photos can be seen at www.mikehallphoto.com

Obviously we don't want to turn this into a Capeads type publication but I have an appeal from one of our members: **Veronica Wilkinson** recently engaged a char, Nontombi, who has great references and was recommended by a Safrea colleague. She is 28 years old, uses her own initiative and speaks English well. She has Thursdays open and is looking for work. She can be contacted on 078 444 9837 if anyone can help. I have a more detailed description if anyone is interested. As they always say, good people are hard to find.

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.

Last bit of info about this cottage 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: 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. Here is what **Dr Hans Fransen** has to say about the matter: "Hans Niehaus's thatched cottage is a gem, asymmetrically T-shaped, and still has its original windows, but the door is later. I would put the house at about 1850.

“(Hans) Niehaus's shop building, I think, was designed not by Uytendogaardt but by his partner, by the name of Norbert Rosendal. It does have a certain "brutalism" in common with the Werdmuller Centre which, though the latter has not worn well and is now badly vandalised, is really an amazing design, one of the best local buildings of the Modern Movement of the 'seventies. But Rosendal's shop can be compared with his Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Nativity in Pietermaritzburg, where he uses the same undulating "curtain" walls - in typical local salmon-coloured brick - to connect the circular church, set well back from the street, with the sidewalk, over which it projects pierced with a cross acting as a "signboard".” Thank you very much for this Hans and also the for the extra info about the shop which I must say really has me rubber necking when I drive past now that I know more about it! **Kathy Dumbrell** who is also an architectural historian had this to add “Norbert died before the building was completed and so Hans's on-going work on the building (another bit gets done as he has the money to do it) is really a living memorial to Norbert.” And there you have it, thanks to all who have contributed to this discussion and I must say that it has opened my eyes to what's around! Please see previous issues for the full story.

Truly useless trivia section! Whilst following a thread of info regarding a previous owner of the farm that the Athenaeum stands on I came across this little bit of trivia about Benoni of all places! (no I was not researching Charlize Theron!)

Benoni is a Hebrew word of biblical origin. Johan Rissik, surveyor-general in the days of Paul Kruger's old Transvaal Republic, had great difficulty in surveying a very irregularly-shaped piece of land. Recalling how in Genesis Rachel had died after bearing her son Benjamin and he was named Benoni, Son of my Sorrow, he called this farm Benoni too. During the 1910 elections and the mining strikes of the early 1900s, the wild behaviour of Benonians gave the town such a bad reputation that people seriously suggested its name be changed! (Thx to Benoni Publicity Assoc website)

It appears that Bernhard Pilgram (1845-1944), the owner of La Rochelle, (Athenaeum), Newlands had mining interests in Benoni AG 1709

Athenaeum News In my new position as Hon Secretary for the Athenaeum Trust. I have taken it on myself to try and find out as much about the history as possible so as to be able to bring back a bit of the life and character of this beautiful building. I have been told that Dorothea Bleek owned the house before the Trust bought it from her estate but her estate papers in the archives say that her house was called “Seigneurie” in Palmyra Rd, Newlands. And that at her death the house was sold on 9th December 1948 to Hilda Beatrice Lamont, widow for £3100.00. Does “Seigneurie” ring a bell for anyone? Is it what is now the Athenaeum, or was the Athenaeum previously La Rochelle as per Berhard Pilgrams photo in the archives? Either way, I've still got a lot of work to do on this project!

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 .

Thanks for your support in this venture and have a great july.

Regards

Mark Bowen

Secretary for the Vernacular Architecture Society

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