



VASSA Bulletin 5: 7 Oct 2009

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

Hi Folks, we're just back from a fantastic trip that took us through 5 provinces in two weeks and included the northern Free State and a walking trip in the Kruger National Park. The Cape is beautiful with its mountains and Fynbos, but there is something really special about acacia trees and being in the bushveld. It's a treat to get away from your normal surroundings and to see how others live. From a vernacular architecture point of view it's fascinating to see traditional building methods still being used in the more rural areas. I loved seeing the extensive use of the beautiful local sandstone in the Northern Free State town. (Ladybrand's sandstone police station is a real gem.)

We even stayed in an original corrugated iron house in Barberton which dates back to 1896. I have a very peculiar fascination for historic buildings made from corrugated iron. (This is extremely difficult to explain to a non-vernac - luckily Kim is pretty tolerant!) Having your husband walking up and down the main road measuring and photographing corrugations can be a bit trying I'm sure.

In the last Bulletin I mentioned that Kim and I had been renovating our newest baby which is a studio apartment in Greenpoint near the Stadium. Anyway I'm delighted to say that we've already had our first few batches of holiday makers and we have a website, www.capestay.co.za/cascades807/, if anyone wants to see what I've been up to!

Upcoming talk 20 October – **John Kramer**, our very own renowned artist, will be giving a talk on Corner Shop Café's which he is most famous for. His talk will be illustrated with slides of his artwork and promises to be very entertaining and very popular so don't miss it.

Report back on Tulbagh outing I think that Peta's e-mail says it all!

Dear Mark I am sure you will be inundated with emails from members in praise of Joy Saxon's wonderfully organised adventure on Saturday. She went to great lengths to stretch the small amount we paid and all the finer details were considered. It was friendly to be travelling on a bus together to such interesting destinations. We enjoyed typical country hospitality and kindness everywhere we went and had the benefit of Joanne's and Hans Fransen's expert knowledge along the way. Not the least of the blessings was a fine Spring day.

Sincere thanks to all who had a hand in arranging such a successful and happy outing.
Peta Maybury

I have also included a snippet from a fabulous report that Joanna Marx has put together for the members that went on the trip and others that are interested in the area. I have only included the sections that are associated with Lady Anne Barnard and Joanna Marx, both very independent and adventurous explorers! Please drop me an e-mail if you would like a full version.

“I had promised to give 'em Lady Anne Barnard's description of her journey through the pass from Tulbagh. It became a four-page document with other travellers' descriptions, hers, and my deductions about which kloof she went through - which was not specified. The puzzle was solved when our bus drove out though the Nuwekloof Pass at sunset (the time she went through) - and I saw what she had described! I had also happened upon a drawing of the scene made 20 years before she went through, which precisely matched her description.”

ROODEZAND PASSES TO THE TULBAGH VALLEY

Roodezand Kloof / Oude Kloof / Nieuwe Kloof / Nuwe Kloof

The Oudekloof was the first pass into the Tulbagh valley. It winds over a nek in the Obiqua Mountains about four kilometres north of the present Gouda and Nuwekloof. It has a steep eastern slope and a long western descent.

The Nieuwe Kloof follows the course of the Klein Berg River in a narrow valley through the mountains, and various routes along it have been in use for 2½ centuries.

Below are extracts from the accounts of early travellers entering or leaving the Tulbagh valley, also known as the Land van Waveren. There are also extracts from Lady Anne Barnard's description of her journey. From all this we have to deduce where she went.

1798: Lady Anne Barnard (See next section for Lady Anne's own report.)

Lady Anne Barnard, Mr Andrew Barnard and Mr Prince had come from the Breede River valley. On Thursday, May 24th they went through the 'Roysand Kloof'.

2009: Joanna Marx's observations about the Roodezand passes

The Oudekloof, north of Nuwekloof, is approached from the almost level floor of the Tulbagh valley; and winds over a high nek in the Obiqua Mountains in an area where no rock formations are visible from either side. The kloof itself appears to be short; but there is a long descent on the western side of the mountains to the Klein Berg River.

At present access to the pass is via the Oudekloof farm (visited, with gabled house, much altered) on the east side of the mountains and from La Bonne Esperance farm (not visited) on the west side. A few pylons or aeriels on top of a mountain on the south side of the kloof are a landmark visible from both east and west of the Obiqua Mountains

Burman's findings on the Oudekloof are very interesting, but who knows when and by whom the tracks were made. He mentions the Witsenberg – but they are far away on the other (eastern) side of the Tulbagh valley, then known as the Roodezand valley.

Between the Oudekloof and the Nuwekloof is also the Slagterspad. It is said that farmers who did not want to pay the toll for their animals used this route.

Yet another route through the mountain chain exists, in the far north-western corner of the Tulbagh valley. A Roodezandspas is shown between two parcels of the Groot Winterhoek Nature Reserve, and continues along the Leeuw River valley; the mission village of Saron lies nearby on the western slopes of the Saronsberg.

The successive Nuwekloof passes through the narrow valley of the Klein Berg River are nearer to the water than to the mountain-tops. The mountains rise steeply from the river and are crowned with rock formations. The distance through this route is about 6 km.

The first Nieuwekloof route ran mainly along the north-eastern side (right bank) of the Klein Berg River valley, very narrow in places, with two drifts. Much later, Thomas Bain built his pass (1859-60) which went along the south-western side (left bank), and sub-sequently he built the railway (1873-74) on the same side; his road was widened in 1935.

The current Nuwekloof Pass (1968) runs on the north-eastern side (right bank), with some high rock faces where the road is cut into the mountainside, one bridge in the pass and another a short distance to the east, beyond the Toll House.

LADY ANNE BARNARD'S JOURNEY

Lady Anne Barnard, Anne Elizabeth, Mr Andrew Barnard and Mr Prince had travelled in a horse-drawn wagon from Mr de Vos's farm Aan de Breede Rivier, (now Olifantsberg) in the Breede River valley to the Roysand Kloof. Was it Oudekloof or Nuwekloof?

In Lady Anne's own words . . . as in her Journal (Robinson, 1973)

[After lunch] "We . . . proceeded on to the Roysand Kloof . . . it had much the resemblance of one of the roads thro' the highlands of Scotland, having the banks on each side of the River which descended rapidly between them pretty well covered with bushes and different sorts of low wood . . ."

In Lady Anne's own words . . . as in her Journal (Robinson, 1994)

"We . . . proceeded to the Roysand Kloof, a very long pass, which we were obliged to walk, the wagon slowly dragging before – the road was very bad, but romantic.

"As we reached the summit the sun was beginning to set with a glowing orange ray to the left, behind the hills, but where he still permitted us light to see and start at the image which presented itself – a jet-black castle, turreted all around, with a strange oddity of a rock or building at a small distance, on top of which was placed an enormous urn, which seemed to be the sarcophagus of some giant . . . Nature had even gone so far as to make some windows in this tower, through which the rays of light darted. I liked it much – it was the finest object I had met with in a country where objects are thinly scattered, unless we count in the mountains, which are generally splendid ones. . .

"It now began to grow very dark, but Mynheer Prince knew the road and went before us until we descended into the more civilized part of the country, and after travelling some miles more, and passing the Lion's Rocks, so called after a fierce one having been killed there about fifty years ago, we reached the house of Mynheer Du Val . . ." [de Waal]

2009: Joanna Marx's deductions about Lady Anne's route

Lady Anne's party walked behind their wagon through the "Roysand Kloof" from east to west at sunset. She hardly mentions farms or the village in the Tulbagh valley.

Her evidence, corroborated by the descriptions of others, suggests that Lady Anne and her party went through the Nuwekloof. They would have climbed up its eastern side to the top of the mountains on the north-east side (right bank) of the Klein Berg River. She comments that the pass was a long one, mentions the summit and describes rock formations. The features she describes would indeed be nearby.

Afterwards the party proceeded north to "the Lion's Rocks", on the same side of the Klein Berg River. De Leeuwenklip was granted to Cornelis de Waal in 1762. The home-stead may date from about 1780 and has a magnificent front gable. The farm was bought in 1846 for the establishment of Saron Rhenish mission, and the homestead (still standing) became the parsonage.

vtulbaghpass3.doc jmm/aug09"

September outing to Prince Albert I'll have some feed back regarding this outing in the next bulletin, once I've touched sides with members who ventured into the Karoo over the long weekend.

Good reads A week or so ago I was reading a library book about the artist **Vincent Van Gogh** and was excited to come across a number of his paintings showing peasant cottages in Holland .

The interesting thing is that these cottages showed some close similarities to drawings by **James Walton** and others of the old Voortrekker houses eg Hardbieshuise and Kapsteilhuise. Dr Walton's book shows the Hardbieshuis as a rectangular building with a slightly rounded triangular gable on each end and a door in one of the long walls. The long walls are low and the house is thatched, the thatch reaches down as far as the top of the door frame and no windows are shown. His Kapsteilhuis is also rectangular with a plain triangular gable at each end with a door in the gable, the long sides have very low walls and the thatching comes down to the ground. No windows are shown. *Homesteads and Villages of South Africa – James Walton*

Mr Van Gogh's cottages are as follows: Rectangular with plain triangular gables at either end, two windows are shown in the gable and there appears to be a chimney built into one of the gables. The door is in one of the long side walls which are built low and the thatch seems to extend to about two feet off the ground. The door is set partly into the thatch. The Dutch houses are a little more sophisticated but I'm sure they share a common pedigree. Paintings : Farmhouses, The Hague, September 1883; Farmhouse with Peat Stacks, Drente Oct-Nov 1883; Cottage with Woman Digging, Neunen June 1885. *Van Gogh – R. Metzger and I. Walther (Meadowridge Library)*

When you do a visual comparison then the similarities really do stand out.

Readers contributions

In the last Bulletin we read about **Helen Binckes'** research. Here is some further information for those interested in this subject.

“I’m doing research for a Masters at UCT on the contextualization of World War One memorials in Cape Town and around – not truly vernac but if anyone comes across any grave or memorial in their vernac scratching in places near and far I would be pleased to know of their existence. For example: Sam McClennan via Maureen Archer has given me a most interesting photograph which is in the church at Stanford, which is linked to my researches about the Stone of Remembrance at UCT.” bihelene@gmail.com

...to follow on... The memorial to John Evered Poole in Stanford Anglican church was put up by his parents, Jack (John) Evered and Henrietta nee Stroud who built Mosaic Farm in 1892, of recent vernac. interest. His name appears on the war memorial in Hermanus. He was their only child and after his death, on 22nd August 1917 at Ypres in Belgium, the hopes of his parents had died too. He had been a 2nd Lieut. In the Royal Engineers. He was a first cousin of Major General Henry Evered Poole of WW2 fame. He was one of the members of UCT who are commemorated in their roll of honour represented by the Great War Stone there.

In fact I'll copy what I've written in full.

There is a plaque to 2nd Lieut. **John Evered Poole** in the Anglican Church at Stanford. He had enlisted under United Kingdom citizenship in the Royal Engineers 73rd Field Coy., dying of wounds 22 August 1917 aged twenty three years^[1] and was the only child of John (Jack) Evered and Henrietta (nee Stroud) Poole of Mossel River, Hermanus, Cape, South Africa. Born Wortlegat, Caledon, South Africa and buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery: Reference XVI. A. 5. The memorial uses the ‘King’s shilling’^[2] which is mounted on a hatchment^[3] shaped block of wood, as is a small brass plaque bearing the words 2/Lt. J. E. Poole Royal Engineers. Died of wounds in Belgium 22 Aug 1917. He would have been the first cousin of Major-General John Evered Poole (1902-1969) who distinguished himself in World War Two and after.^[4] His parents would have had the memorial erected.

Hope this is of interest. Helen.”

Interesting newspaper articles

Last weeks **Constantia Bulletin**, (1st October), featured an article by **Inga Strydom** with the latest news on the Tokai Manor House. It looks at though it will be completed this month and will become the head office of the Table Mountain National Parks, who will be leasing the property.

I also came across this article in the **Argus** of 30 September: “**Nero’s remarkable revolving restaurant**”!!! Archaeologists in Rome believe that they have unearthed a banqueting hall that revolved day and night in what was the Roman emperors Golden Palace. So far the excavators have uncovered “the foundations of the room, the rotating mechanism underneath and part of an attached space believed to be the kitchens”. This building was completed in 68AD and is surely going to be of great interest to a number of disciplines. Hopefully I’ll remember to take these articles to the next meeting for interested members to read.

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.

Lay a rim of paste around the sides and edges of a pie-dish. After the pigeons are cleaned, halve them; season as you would any other pie; a few slices of ham, some hard-boiled eggs, a cup of good stock or gravy. Cover with puff paste; ornament the top and stick four of the little feet out of it. Brush over with egg and milk, bake an hour and a half, with a buttered paper if the oven is very hot, over the pie crust to prevent its burning.

(Pigeons at the Cape are very plentiful, and are very good roasted or stewed.)

I would think that the little feet sticking out of my pie would put me off my meal!

Gail (Weldon)”

Other interesting cultural stuff !

“I have a mature Korean neighbour who is keen to practise conversational English in order to get a better working understanding of the language while she is in Cape Town. She would also love to join a choir or singing group. If any member can assist by providing contact information for a choir or practising English conversation please contact Mrs Eunmi (pronounced 'earn me') Kim at email >apouch2@hotmail.com or telephone 021 762 9093(home) 079 477 1177 cellphone.”

Veronica Wilkinson

(This is of particular interest to our members who may be wanting to travel to the East as I'm sure that the learning goes both ways. I think that the vernacular architecture in the rural villages in the East must be at its purest and most sustainable with the ingenious use of bamboo and other local building materials.) Veronica is our guru on the East and I'm dying to hear some more about this subject.

And finally some trivia ...

The Colosseum in Rome could hold a crowd of 50 000 blood thirsty citizens and it has been calculated that the whole lot could exit in 3 minutes! The word for “Exit” in Latin is *Vomitoria*, who said that Latin wasn't fun? The name “Colosseum”, actually comes from the colossal statue of Nero that stood nearby, (close to the revolving restaurant actually), and does not refer to the size of the stadium. (any idea how many Vuvuzela wielding soccer fans can be accommodated by Green Point Stadium, and how quickly they could be evacuated?)

Trivia from *Annotated Architecture* by Neil Stevenson (a great book)

Constructive thoughts on this bulletin will be welcome. Please enter into all correspondence via e-mail to this address ie markbowen@xsinet.co.za .

Best regards

Mark Bowen

Secretary for the Vernacular Architecture Society

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