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Joanna Marx (1937-2012)

Ron Viney (1965-2014)

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Joanna on VASSA excursions: always curious

Pat Kramer
Joanna Marx, a memory

Eureka Barnard and Leana du Preez

Joanna McDonald Marx was born and grew up in the Eastern Cape. During her youth and later years she spent many a holiday on Karoo farms with family and friends, as she wrote in her diary, “messing about in veld, fields and sloots”. Joanna studied in the Western Cape, resided in Pretoria (twice), and worked in London where her interest in historical architecture started. She also worked for two years in Heidelberg, Germany, after which she returned to South Africa. She lived in Cape Town from 1981 until her death in 2012.

Joanna’s original studies in natural sciences led to many years of biomedical research and subsequently of biomedical and academic editing. During her time in London in the 1960s she developed an abiding interest in historical architecture. She even attended her first course in historical architecture at the City Literary Institute, Drury Lane, London in 1964 and another one in 1965. In England and elsewhere she visited many villages, great houses, churches, cathedrals and the like, also taking an interest in modern architecture, the Art Deco period, and other architectural aspects of interest to her.

Back in Cape Town, she joined Human & Rousseau Publishers in 1982. In her free time she became an active member of the Vernacular Architecture Society of South Africa (VASSA), organised many day and weekend excursions, and chaired the society from 1989 to 1994. In preparation for these excursions Joanna and seasoned Vernack, Mike Visser (1924 – 2008), recc’ed together all over the old Cape Province.

In collaboration with Mike Visser, James Walton and Philippina Oberholster (left) she arranged the VASSA Silver Anniversary Excursion to the Great Karoo in 1989 - four days with 50 members visiting Beaufort West, Carnarvon, Fransberg and Sutherland. After that many other VASSA recces were undertaken in preparation for excursions to, among others, Riversdale, Heidelberg, Montagu, Tulbagh, Clanwilliam, Ceres, Citrusdal, Piketberg and Swellendam. Joanna prepared meticulous notes of all these visits, which can be found in the Joanna Marx Collection at the University of Stellenbosch.

The practical experience that Joanna had gained in heritage conservation and as a member of VASSA together with her keen interest in historical architecture, provided a solid foundation for subsequent employment of a more formal nature at the National Monuments Council (NMC) in 1991. At this stage she had seen much of the architecture and townscapes of the rural Western Cape (and some further afield), studied, read widely and assembled relevant books and publications. (Her interest in historical mills in South Africa, England and Holland only came later.)
At the NMC, and its successor the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), Joanna worked as Assistant Regional Manager in the Western Cape Office. Most of the time she was responsible for all heritage management activities in the sub-region Overberg, Southern Cape, Little and Great Karoo. This was based on current heritage and other legislation and included declaration of national monuments, general administration, as well as interaction with municipalities, aesthetics committees and local heritage societies.

During this time she also served on longstanding committees for a number of significant projects such as the Gamkaskloof Advisory Committee and the Cango Caves Scientific Advisory Committee. When the NMC was replaced by SAHRA and under new heritage resources management legislation, the emphasis shifted from preserving individual buildings to defining, retaining and enhancing the special qualities of places and cultural landscape.

Joanna’s special interests were vernacular and industrial architecture, the VOC period, and historical routes, roads, passes and bridges. Many of the routes in the Western Cape shown to the European settlers by indigenous people later became masterpieces of Victorian surveying and engineering and are still in use today.

But Joanna’s interest in historical technology, engineering and industrial structures led to her involvement in the crown jewel of her special interests, namely Mostert’s Mill in Mowbray, Cape Town. VASSA was encouraged in 1986 to form a sub-committee to deal with the aspects of preservation, restoration and appreciation of Mostert’s Mill. Out of this sub-committee the Friends of Mostert’s Mill (FoMM) was established in 1993. Joanna was elected the first chairperson and held this position until her passing on the 25th of May 2012. She stayed in touch with the milling community abroad and had been a member of the Mills Section of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) (UK) and The International Molinological Society (TIMS).

After her official retirement in 2002 she continued to participate in and serve heritage conservation and became a Member of Association of Heritage Assessment Practitioners (AHAP). Her active involvement in heritage conservation continued. This included temporary employment at SAHRA for specific projects, heritage consulting, leading excursions to vernacular sites and old mills, and many more.

In her own words, Joanna “survived the NMC’s transition to SAHRA and her compulsory retirement” by being, for example the project manager in 2003 for a project titled “Public
Monuments & Memorials” commissioned by SAHRA. She maintained contact with conservation bodies and municipal officials locally in Cape Town and in country towns (Plettenberg Bay, Wilderness and Knysna), all mainly in the Southern Cape areas of the Western Cape Province.

Dated “2010” Joanna wrote in her diary:

*I now again serve on the committee of the Vernacular Architecture Society of SA and participate in arranging its monthly outings; recently I published a paper about an old mountain pass in its Journal. The Dutch East India Company Society (Stichting VOC) has held interesting meetings. To balance all this heritage activity I am involved in an environmental organisation defending a sensitive area threatened with careless development (Two Rivers Urban Park). Local Old Girls of the school at which I matriculated, Clarendon Girls’ High School in East London, have had several jolly gatherings. There’s much to enjoy in and around Cape Town!*

After about 18 months of no paid work, I am currently inundated with heritage consultation jobs! I did a heritage statement for a turn-of-the-century house in an old suburb of Cape Town, followed by another for a 1930s school boarding-house in George (450 km east). With ex-colleague Ron I worked briefly on a job on Robben Island. Now said ex-colleague and I are tackling a complex, interesting heritage project at Hondeklip Bay, about 700 km up the north-west coast, where the earlier crayfish processing facility is to be replaced with an abalone growing facility. And the SA Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA, my previous employer) has approached me to sort out the content of their website. No time for sloth in the next months!"

**In a nutshell ...**

Note: Where the word “From” precedes a date, that activity continued until her passing in May 2012.

**Education and Qualifications**

- **1937-05-31** Born at King William’s Town, Eastern Cape
- **1950-1952** Kaffrarian High School for Girls, King William's Town
- **1953-1954** Clarendon Girls' High School, East London
- **1955-1957** B.Sc. University of Stellenbosch
- **1963** B.Sc. Honours, Zoology, University of Cape Town

**Biomedical research**

- **1958-1959** Zoology Department, University of Stellenbosch
- **1960-1962** Department of Agriculture, Pretoria
- **1964-1970** Imperial Cancer Research Fund, London
- **1971** Medical School, University of Cape Town

**Scientific and academic editing/publishing**

- **1972-1976** IRS (publications), Council for Scientific & Industrial Research, Pretoria
- **1977-1978** Bureau for Scientific Publications, Pretoria
- **1979-1981** Springer-Verlag (biomedical publishers), Heidelberg, Germany
- **1982-1991** Academica/Human & Rousseau Publishers, Cape Town
Conservation/heritage management

1991-2000 Western Cape Regional Office, National Monuments Council (NMC) for Overberg, Southern Cape, Little and Central Karoo
2000-2002 Western Cape Provincial Office, S A Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) for Overberg, Garden Route, Klein Karoo, Central Karoo
Project Manager: Public Monuments and Memorials, SAHRA
From 2004 Heritage consultant
From 2007 Specialist member, Association of Heritage Assessment Practitioners (AHAP)
Joanna also served on the Plans (later Permits) Committee for Heritage Western Cape

Experience

- Original training in natural sciences
- Cancer research in London
- Research and editorial experience
- Science and academic editing in Pretoria, Heidelberg (Germany) and Cape Town
- Historical architecture/conservation courses in London, York and Cape Town
- National Monuments Council, SAHRA (1990 – 2002): Application of heritage resources legislation, i.e. heritage resources management (HRM) at NMC, SAHRA and HWC
- Responsibility for HRM in vast, mainly rural areas: Groot en Klein Karoo, Eden District, Overberg and the Southern Cape
- Encouraged public interest at various forums in and knowledge of architectural and other heritage
- A member of longstanding committees for a number of large projects, amongst others the Cango Caves Scientific Advisory Committee (CCSAC), Gamkaskloof Advisory Committee (GAC) and the Thesen Island Environmental Monitoring Committee (TIEMC)
- Registered Tourist Guide (Western Cape)
- Served on the Western Cape Plans (later Permits) Committee and the Rowland & Leta Hill Trust

Architecture & Conservation courses attended

1964, 1965 Courses in historical architecture, City Literary Institute, Drury Lane, London
1989 Conservation (Course presented in Cape Town by the Institute of Architects)
1989 Conservation of historical buildings at the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies (IoAAS), University of York
1990 Historical architecture in South Africa (part-time course at Cape Technikon)
1992 Presenting historical sites to the public IoAAS, University of York
Various courses at Summer and Winter School, University of Cape Town

Heritage consulting projects:

2002 Monuments & Memorials, for SAHRA and the Department of Arts & Culture
2003 Table Mountain National Park, for SAHRA
2004 Concise Heritage Impact Assessment for the Kaaimansgat Pass, George district, for Ninham Shand (approved by heritage Western Cape’s Built Environment Committee: BELCom)
2005 Erven in Swellendam, for developer.
The farm Jackalskraal, of the Griquas of Kranshoek, Plettenberg Bay for Griqua National Conference
2005 - 2010 Collaboration on conservation management plan for Mamre (mission werf, village and commonage) for the Heritage Resources Section, CCT Resources Section, CCT Erf in Hill Street, Mossel Bay, for owner Noetzie, Knysna, for Noetzie Property Owners Association Robberg Nature Reserve, Plettenberg Bay, for CapeNature Sophia Street, Cape Town Hurteria, George

From 2010 Oceana: West Coast Rock Lobster (WCRL) operations, Hondeklip Bay, Northern Cape Province. Ron Viney and Joanna Marx were approached by Groenewald Preller Architects CC in December 2010 to look at the heritage component of the EIA.

Summary of membership of heritage-related organisations (NGOs)

1970s Member, Johannesburg Historical Society
1971 Member, Royal Society of SA
From 1981 Member, Vernacular Architecture Society of S A (VASSA)
1980s Secretary, then Vice-Chair, VASSA
From 1987 Numerous excursions planned and run for VASSA and similar organisations
1989-94 Chair, VASSA
1980s Secretary, then Vice-Chair, Cape Environmental Trust (Captrust)
1992-2002 Participated in five study tours of windmills and watermills in Holland and England
From 1992 Member, Wind and Watermill Section (now Mills Section), Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), UK
From 1993 Chairperson, Friends of Mostert’s Mill
From 1995 Member, VOC (Dutch East India Company) Foundation
1998 Vice-Chair, Cape Environmental Trust (Captrust)
From 2001 Member, The International Molinological Society (TIMS)
From 2001 Member, ICOMOS-SA
From 2002 Registered tourist guide (for mills in Western Cape)

Until her passing Joanna was, among others, also a member of the:
- Association of Professional Heritage Practitioners (previously AHAP)
- Two Rivers Urban Park (TRUP)
- Rowland & Leta Hill Trust

Summary of some other extramural interests and activities

1973, 1974 Courses in journalism at Summer School, University of Cape Town
1970s Secretary/Editor, SA Antarctic Association
1970s Member, SA Association of Industrial Editors
1980s Research and writing a book on District Six (unpublished)
1990s Member, Von Prophalow Society
1992- Five study tours of windmills and watermills in Holland and England
2007 Participant, 12th Symposium of TIMS in the Netherlands

Publications and reports

The nature of her work at NMC/SAHRA required research and preparation of reports, motivation for declarations, etc. Although Joanna has not been sole or joint author of a heritage-related
publication she has written much on various topics, for example numerous contributions at symposia and meetings (some of them published). She has made various contributions to publications such as newsletters and journals for VASSA, SPAB and TIMS and hand-outs in the form of ‘tour notes’ to VASSA.

Scientific and academic editing/publishing

1972-76 IRS (publications), Council for Scientific & Industrial Research, Pretoria
1977-78 Bureau for Scientific Publications, Pretoria
1979-81 Springer-Verlag (biomedical publishers), Heidelberg, Germany
1982-91 Academica/Human & Rousseau Publishers, Cape Town

The Joanna Marx Collection

Joanna’s extensive document and photo collection had been added to the Document Centre at the J.S. Gericke Library at the University of Stellenbosch, where it will be available to researchers. The Collection covers a wide field and includes:

- Heritage material – South Africa
- Mills – South Africa
- Heritage material overseas
- Mills Overseas
- Photographs and slides

The Joanna Marx Collection is available alongside the collections of the authority on vernacular architecture, Dr James Walton (1911 – 1999) and the heritage work of André Pretorius, who passed away in 2006. According to Lynne Fourie, compiler of the Collection, the Joanna Marx Collection covers the period after the passing of Dr Walton until her own death in 2012, which makes her work a valuable addition to the offering of the Document Centre.

In closing

Joanna Marx lived and breathed her passions. She often said that her hobbies became her jobs. She grew up at the hand of her teacher father, Chris Marx, who instilled in her a love for heritage, writing, languages, science, art and literature.

Joanna will be remembered for her contribution to the preservation of the historical built environment, town and landscapes. She will also be remembered for her sharp intellect, her well-informed conversations and her more personal passions such as opera, music, fine wine, cooking, beautiful books and pictures. She was a formidable friend and foe.

She offered the gift of friendship, and dining around her table was a joy which so many had shared. She left us with the example that she set and the knowledge that each person can make a difference in life. It will take passion, know-how, commitment, energy, tenacity and focus, but it will change the world as we know it. And it will change it for the better, as Joanna has done.
I met Joanna Marx in 1999 when I was working for the National Monuments Council in Johannesburg. That year, the SANLAM Restoration Award first went across the Vaal River to the Swiss Mission at Valdezia in Limpopo. I flew down with the principal of the Valdezia School for acceptance of the award. At the award ceremony was Joanna – elegant and eloquent. We then met very sporadically, as NMC colleagues, because she was in the far south and me in the far north of South Africa.

The next memorable occasion was when the furore broke about Paul Kruger’s head. The sculpture is situated just outside the Kruger Gate of the Kruger National Park. A Park official had gone on record to promote the removal of this head as part of their transformation efforts. At the time, Joanna had been commissioned to come up with a policy document on monuments and memorials in the ‘new South Africa’. We therefore set off with our colleague Francois Erasmus for an on-site inspection. The massive head was designed and sculpted by well-known artist Coert Steynberg. It weighs in the region of twenty tons, if memory serves. It had been conveyed to the site on a low-bed truck accompanied by a crane. Joanna’s very thorough research, with her prime motivation that it would cost millions to move (better spent on saving the elephants), saw the end of the matter.

Time moved on. I moved to Cape Town to work at the head office of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA replaced the NMC after 1999). By this time Joanna had left so we had lost contact. In December 2007 I also left SAHRA to pursue my own interests. About then I found a very nice flat in Broad Road, Wynberg. I had been there six months when, in conversation with an ex-colleague at SAHRA, they asked if I knew that Joanna also stayed in Broad Road. Well, you cannot have two heritage fanatics virtually staying next to each other without at least touching base. Little did I know that our reconnection would become a very short four year friendship, unlike any other I have ever experienced.

There were three types of phone call, and I always somehow knew it was Joanna. The one type would be around eight o’clock in the morning with: “What are you doing today?” This usually heralded a Vernacular Architecture day trip with compulsory picnic along the route. Start time would be nine o’clock, according to Joanna, but we never ever, ever left before half past ten. The second type of call was a little more mundane, at about lunch time: “Fancy a bite?” It would then be toast with cheese, lettuce, ham, tomato and a beverage (usually alcoholic). The third was more of a call to chase up the skills of Chef Ronaldo for dinner. I did quite a few dinner parties for Joanna and guests. At some stage we started a tacit arrangement to pool resources for dinner. It was just easier cooking for two than separately on our own. What I learned through these processes and the brilliant conversations was huge and absolutely invaluable – especially the heritage stuff.

There were two things Joanna would always drag me to, and those were the VASSA evenings and, of course, events at Mostert’s Mill. Joanna would also often call on me to help open the mill when special friends requested it, as it is only officially opened when the volunteer millers are available on a Saturday (Fig. 1).
Joanna and I also helped each other with one or two projects here and there. The most memorable was the Hondeklip Bay Survey. I was asked by an old family acquaintance who is an architect (and who I would come to know very well and do much work for) to prepare the heritage background and to find any other documentation for a Notification of Intent to Develop (NID). This was part of an Environmental Impact Assessment process being undertaken by an environmental company, and the architect wanted to ensure that heritage was properly assessed.

In early December 2010 we accompanied ‘Gert’ from the University of Stellenbosch, who was the client. The Northern Cape in December is inclined to be hot. Having left Cape Town at sunrise – yes, surprisingly Joanna was bok and on time – poor Gert ended up driving straight into the glare of the setting sun. We stayed in a charming cottage called Humewood (Fig 3). Unfortunately it is built below the high tide line, so apparently often got flooded with a spring tide. We did our walkabouts the next day and that evening Gert, in true Boere fashion, braaied an army’s worth of meat. AND we quaffed, of course. AND the Lady could keep her own with Gert.

Hondeklip Bay started as a harbour to export the copper from Springbok. To this end, the Cape Government built a very solid pass between the two so the ore could be brought down by ox wagon. Some six years later, a horse/mule-drawn narrow gauge rail was laid down from Springbok to Alexander Bay, on a much shorter route. The Cape Government had spent so much money on the road and pass and the customs post that they then tried all sorts of ideas to sustain Hondeklip Bay, such as encouraging farmers to plant wheat and export through Hondeklip Bay. Much later, of course, the discovery of diamonds brought life back to the area.
In 1923 an application was made by Messrs Austin and Company to the Department of Mines to start a crayfish factory. By 1925 the factory was up and running. By 1931 it employed 45 local people as fishers and factory workers, who were housed in an area called ‘Ou Lokasie’. By the time of our survey this had been flattened and only the foundations could be seen. From 1947 to 1957 the Namaqualand Crayfish Company [NCC] expanded their operations and built housing and a community centre. It took so long because they had to source gravel and sand for the construction, but could only do so with the Mines Inspector, Customs and the Police in attendance, just in case they built some diamonds into the factory walls!

By the early 1990s the West Coast crayfish industry had all but collapsed. The NCC had by this time been absorbed by a larger fishing company. To their credit they sold off the housing to long-standing workers at a minimal price, but it left a whole community absolutely destitute.

Figure 2. Left: Joanna had an unfailing ability to get people to unlock doors to forbidden places. Right: And, man, sometimes it was bloody difficult keeping up with her!

Figure 3. Left: Humewood Cottage: classic Victorian corrugated iron later bricked over and plastered. Right: Joanna with Mr and Mrs Cloete. Mrs Cloete is explaining what the layout of the crayfish (Cape rock lobster) factory looked like and how these delicacies were packed and shipped.

For some time the University of Stellenbosch had successfully hatched and cultured abalone near Hermanus. The University now wanted to use the old crayfish factory as an abalone hatchery. The idea was to reseed the West Coast kelp banks and to farm them commercially in tanks for resale. Gert showed us round and we got to see tiny little abalone - five rand coin sizes and some the size of the palm of your hand – at feeding time. They are slow creatures, so it’s not exactly a frenzy.
Our job was to ensure the sensitive re-use of the building. We prepared our NID for Northern Cape Heritage but did not hear anything again until a year later when the University had secured some more funding and we could go on a ‘Grande Tour de Namaqualand’. In mid-January 2012 we set off for a two week survey that would start at Springbok. We had hoped the local museum would have some information, but alas we knew more than they did. But we had fun going through the museum, seeing the first attempts by Simon van der Stel to dig for copper, and the smelter chimney. The local cuisine was not to be missed either. We quaffed.

Next day we carried on to Hondeklip Bay via the Messelpad Pass built between 1867 and 1869 with convict labour. We had heard that these roads become impassable after the rains but they seemed hunky dory. In mid-January you cannot have a car without aircon in Namaqualand. We had a nifty little four-wheel-drive, so no real concern. The midday meal was, of course, the inimitable picnic with appropriate beverage from a famous brewery in Namibia. We decided to have it in the dry river bed next to the road, just before the start of the pass. The only passable shade was under vicious thorn scrub. No breeze. After lunch we reached a fork in the road. Which one to take? The 1:10 000 map was a little unclear so we get out. All we see is a limitless flat expanse of sand interspersed with bits of plant. Before I know it, Madame has already walked a kilometre down the road to see if she can pick out some sign. We manage to sort it out and get to Koingnaas, which is where we need to fill up for there is nothing at Hondeklip Bay. Being Sunday, nothing is open. We Capetonians, who can fill up anytime, now have to come back in the morning.

Humewood Cottage was not available this time so we booked into the ‘Honnehok’, where the accommodation is basic but comfortable. Well, the survey work was always overshadowed by the culinary experiences. We had the most fantastic dinner at an open house with fresh seafood platters. Then one day Joanna dragged along a young local lad, who had a hessian sack that had obviously got live wriggly critters inside. We enjoyed crayfish bisque, cooked over the coals, and we froze some to bring home. AND we quaffed.

My last thoughts relate to when Leana du Preez, Joanna’s cousin and executor of her estate, informed me that she had left me her heritage collection in her will. This is a rare moment in your life, where you actually have to just sit down and really think. What was I going to do with the collection? I had no space to store it, I am no archivist, and an invaluable collection of material
would be lost if there was a fire or other calamity. And, why me, when she had so many long-standing friends in the heritage world? It still baffles me.

Joanna had also willed her mills collection to her alma mater, the University of Stellenbosch. I think it was without a moment’s hesitation that I asked Leana rather not to split her collection, but that I would willingly hand my share over to the university too. The Joanna Marx Collection is available in the Special Collections section of the University Library and is available for research upon request and appointment. The university has done a sterling job in cataloguing the collection – something they said was not difficult because Joanna had meticulously catalogued everything over time anyway. The photographs, personal notes, books, magazines, articles, among other materials, are an absolute treasure trove. Do make use of it.
Joanna Marx: an inspiration to milling

Andy Selfe

In December 2000, Lindsay Madden organised a Stationary Engine and Machinery show at Mostert’s Mill, at which the members of the Cape Vintage Engine & Machinery Society displayed implements connected with milling, driven by our old engines. This has led to a long-term association between Friends of Mostert’s Mill and our Society. We met Joanna Marx there, naturally, but not first thing in the morning!

Joanna invited two of us to accompany her to Mamre Mill in September 2002, to assess the damage caused by vandalism to the engines there, particularly to the rare Deutz side-shaft engine inside the building. There was no evidence of breaking and entering, but the engine was being dismantled and parts of it hidden elsewhere in the mill. By that stage too much of the engine had already been carried away to repair it. Lying outside was an earlier engine, built to the design of a Mietz & Weiss, but this was also stripped too far (Figure 1). The information that we supplied helped Joanna to compile a progress report for the Rowland and Leta Hill Trust in May 2005.

Figure 1. The old 2-stroke engine outside Mamre Mill, of unknown make but based on a Mietz & Weiss design.

1 Andy Selfe prepared this tribute in in July 2012 and it was revised in December 2014. He is a mechanic and fruit farmer from Elgin, and also an amateur journalist. See ‘Andy’s Corner’ on the website of the Cape Vintage Engine & Machinery Society: http://wctec.co.za/andy/andy.html.
Without my realising it, Joanna was ‘infecting’ me with the milling bug. She probably recognised the symptoms! Her frequent invitations to visit Mostert’s Mill (wind conditions permitting) on Saturdays, sometimes led to much-enjoyed visits. Video footage I took during a National Mills Day there is among my favourite viewing.

Joanna invited me to tag along with a tour of the Archaeological Society in October 2006, to Compagnes Drift Mill in Bot River. This is the home of Beaumont Wines. Little did anybody realise at the time what that visit would lead to! While we were still outside, looking at the water-wheel, she asked me what the purpose was of the pulley on a shaft sticking out of the wall (Figure 2). As a stationary engine collector, I knew the signs — two wooden bearers bolted to the ground underneath it told me there had been an engine there, to cope with times of drought. I was now getting really interested. We collect engines as well as the implements which they used to drive. Was I about to find a fully equipped mill-house?

I knew what we would find inside: a shaft and a pair of pulleys, one ‘fast’ on the shaft, the other ‘loose’, and a sliding fork to shift a driving belt from one to the other. Then there would be more pulleys on the shaft driving other machinery. I wasn’t disappointed. While the engine could never drive the water wheel at the same time as the Vitruvian mill, it can drive two other mills, two elevators and a grain cleaner.

After exploring the mill and discussing it with Joanna, I wrote to the owners, Raoul and Jayne Beaumont and asked if I could restore the mill. They readily agreed, and once again, I turned to the advice of Joanna and the Friends of Mostert’s Mill. While they admitted that they had no practical experience on the water-wheel side, they could certainly help with the mills. In fact they said that the constant power, as supplied by a water-wheel, would be like a holiday to a wind-miller!

Little realising what I had let myself into, I restored one of my engines and installed it, and I made three belts. Within a few weeks we were actually milling, using the Stamford mill (Figure 3). The
next logical step was to tackle the water-wheel itself, which needed all new planks for the ‘soles’ and pressed-steel buckets, the whole job requiring the replacement of nearly 800 bolts. Once the wheel was finished, it was followed by the corrugated steel ‘launder’, the 40-metre aerial channel which brings water from the overflow channel of the farm dam (Figure 4).

![Figure 3. Milling in the early days of the restoration with the Stamford mill, Beaumont Open Days, 2007.](image)

*Figure 3. Milling in the early days of the restoration with the Stamford mill, Beaumont Open Days, 2007.*

![Figure 4. The Beaumonts built this dam at the top of the launder and installed the sluice gate I had made, so that on milling days the water level can be raised to run down to the water-wheel.](image)

*Figure 4. The Beaumonts built this dam at the top of the launder and installed the sluice gate I had made, so that on milling days the water level can be raised to run down to the water-wheel.*
Repairing the water supply system was not as easy as it sounds. The water level was too low at the top to run into the channel, which is supported in the original stands made of railway line. I made a sluice gate and the farm-owners built a dam in order to raise the water level. I could not envisage how to make a trap-door over the water wheel, in the bottom of a corrugated trough, to control the outflow of water. I came across a photograph of the launder at the old Mill in Stanford Village. It was a rickety corrugated metal trough, supported by sticks, but over the water-wheel it ran into a wooden trough. That was more practical for inserting a flap which can be controlled from inside the mill-house (Figure 7).

![Figure 5. An old photo of the mill in Stanford village, showing a corrugated-iron trough leading into a wooden section over the water-wheel.](image)

The water still had to run away and a massive oak tree was growing in line with the wheel where the tailrace had been. We dug around it, through what must have been the farm dump, finding a cast iron kettle, soft drink bottles from a plant in Hermanus, and, to help date the dump, a plastic bag which had contained sugar, marked in cents and lbs, so it must have been in use between 1961 and 1977. Just out of sight in Figure 6, the tailrace runs back into the stream.

![Figure 6. The tailrace is a simple trough, dug around the oak tree through the remains of a recent farm rubbish dumping site.](image)
Figure 7. Water-wheel and launder complete. The trap-door in the wooden part of the launder is controlled by the miller from inside the mill using a pole protruding through the ‘miller’s window’.

All this time, I was filming and photographing everything I did, and writing illustrated reports after every visit. Joanna received her copy every time, and while I heard nothing from her all went well. I then announced that the next project was the Vitruvian mill, illustrated in the books written by James Walton and Chester Staples with the runner lying on a frame on the stones floor, as if in the process of dressing the stones (Figure 8).

Figure 8. The Vitruvian mill was like this for many years with the runner upside-down on a wooden frame. The mace was missing.
The ‘mace’, which imparts drive from the tapered square at the top of the stone spindle, was missing, and I had to guess what it would have looked like. At this stage I received a strong objection from Joanna; I was ‘interfering with History’. All the ‘furniture’ was missing and would have to be made, so what kind of bodge-job was I likely to make? To her eternal credit, once I had persuaded her that my restoration of the Vitruvian mill would be in line with examples in James Walton’s book, and considering what the restoration had involved so far, she gave in and from then on was fully behind me.

I fabricated a mace, inverted the runner and put it back in place. The water-wheel could then turn the runner (Figure 9). For a ‘tun’, I wanted one looking like a wine barrel, on the assumption that there would have been a cooper available on a wine farm to do this job, all those years ago. I chose the picture in James Walton’s book of Kleine Zanddrift in Bredasdorp, now sadly a ruin (Figure 10). (I have since heard from Dee Kilpin that she took James Walton to the farm that day to take the photos and make the sketches I used.) I set about copying the images as faithfully as I could: the tun, the lid, the ‘horse’, the ‘damsel’ (which Walton had sketched), the hopper, the meal-spout and the support for the shoe at the back (an indistinct Walton photograph).

A highlight during this process was making the tun out of planks from an old spray machine on my farm. It took a whole Easter weekend, and although it might not look like it, each plank is tapered and the steel bands are beaten down into place. Making the hopper was also a challenge. One can see that Joanna was happy with the result in this picture of her and Charles Forcioli of Mostert’s Mill (Figure 11).
Figure 10. James Walton’s photo of the now sadly derelict Kleine Zanddrift Mill in Bredasdorp. This was my model.

Figure 11. Joanna and Charles Forcioli seem pleased with the Vitruvian mill and its product.

Figure 12. The furniture, showing the copy of the damsel from Kleine Zanddrift as sketched by James Walton. All the recycled material was used up so there was not quite enough to make the meal spout out of the scraps.
The restoration had taken my spare time and most Saturdays for four years. The progress reports now number 168. At several stages during the restoration it was possible to visit other mills. It is always helpful to see how other mills and millers worked. Many questions are answered just by observation. Each of these visits led to further illustrated reports which were sent to Joanna and others.

The mills we visited included:

- Genadendal,
- Mamre (again after the fire),
- Vanwyksdorp (Pam Sullivan’s property, where Jill Hogan has been busy),
- Arieskraal here in Elgin,
- Kleinplasie,
- Stettyn,
- Boskloof (inland from Stanford),
- Attacquas in Hemel & Aarde,
- Elim,
- Rheenendal,
- the horse-mill at Calvinia Museum,
- La Motte (where I have helped twice with problems),
- La Cotte, Franschhoek (in a sorry state),
- milling spelt at Groenfontein on top of Katbakkies Pass (with a view of Boplaas at Op Die Berg in passing),
- McGregor (where I had to make a speech),
- and recently, a 60-year old portable mill made by Cramer on the Dutch border in Northern Germany, which has turned up in Stanford (Figure 13).

Figure 13. The 60-year-old Cramer Portable Mill in Stanford.
Elim is worth further mention. Joanna persuaded me to visit the mill where the water-wheel was stuck against the wall (Figure 14). We arranged to travel together, but as usual, she was ‘held up’, and I went on ahead. There I met with the town managers and I arranged to come back to pull the wheel off the wall.

![Figure 14. The stuck wheel at Elim.](image)

I stressed the need for a dedicated miller, (and this is the case with any restored mill) who would learn from visits to Compagnes Drift, Mostert’s Mill, Kleinplasie, Stettyn, and any others including those on the list above. He or she should also learn by studying James Walton and Chester Staples’ books about South African Mills, and other books from overseas such as Oliver Evans, Ganzel & Wulff, Kick, Kozmin, Lockwood, Wailes, etc. I returned the next week and used the tool I had made to pull the wheel away from the wall. I measured and made sketches for wedges which were to be made and inserted between the clasp arms and the axle tree. The following week, I heard that the wheel was stuck against the wall again. When I asked about the wedges, I was told that ‘they were not delivered’. By that stage, even the tenacious Joanna had given up; I certainly had!

Other restoration projects were done at Compagnes Drift after the Vitruvian mill. The front trunk of the main elevator was missing, the base was rotten and the distribution chutes to the various mills were missing. Luckily, a strip of belting with about 15 of the original buckets was found crumpled up in the bottom of the rear trunk. I re-made the front trunk with a window so visitors can see how it works (Figure 15). We brought in a sifter, which is installed just for demonstration. We did not want to clutter up the mill with too many artefacts, but there is evidence that there was a sifter, probably fed by the Stamford mill. We run the Gutmann with a pan of the tun removed so that visitors can see the complete workings of a stone mill. It was necessary to build a crane to lift the Vitruvian millstones. This led to some more interesting carpentry and steelwork.

Two of the clasp-arm spokes of the pit-wheel were rotten at their ends and have been repaired using a traditional joint called a stepped splayed wedged scarf joint, which was fun to do (Figure 16). It is interesting to note that the clasp arms are made of stinkwood. A segment of the rim of the pit wheel was badly decayed and has recently been replaced.
Figure 15. The window in the main elevator allows visitors (and the miller) to see what's going on inside. This is the descending trunk so the buckets face downwards, scoop the grain from the hopper at the bottom and carry it up the rear trunk and throw it out at the top. This has been a way of finding out how fast the water-wheel must turn. Any slower than 5½ RPM and the buckets do not throw the grain out.

Figure 16. The rotten ends of two of the clasp arms of the pit-wheel have been repaired using a traditional stepped splayed wedged scarf joint.
I must thank Joanna for resuscitating the seed planted many years ago at school; from looking in awe at Mostert’s Mill; from a sneak visit to the ruins of Josephine Mill when there were no floors or roof, only the sleeping giant against the wall; from a visit to the U-shaped unidirectional windmills in Eastern Crete (Figure 17), and perhaps many more. Her infectious enthusiasm and support has led to what I expect will be a lifelong interest.

Figure 17. These unidirectional U-shaped windmills are said to be endemic to Eastern Crete.
When Joanna introduced me to James Walton

Nigel Amschwand

During my first stint as a VASSA committee member, the chairperson, David van der Heever, invited all the members to lunch at his home. Also present were some founder members of VASSA including James Walton. My portfolio on the committee was to represent VASSA on the Friends of Mostert’s Mill committee of which Joanna was chairperson. Joanna introduced me to James with the added information that I lived in his street.

This was pure coincidence – what else could it be? On my arrival at the Cape, and whilst looking for somewhere to live, I purchased a house in James Walton Circle, opposite the Onze Molen mill in Durbanville. My neighbour informed me that James Walton was a famous expert on windmills and that there was a book by him in the local library. This was all some years before I joined VASSA.

James’s retort to Joanna’s introduction was to say, quite loudly, “that mill is a b*##^! travesty”, and to take a large swig of his drink. “Do you know anything about mills?” he asked. “A little”, I replied. “Well, sit yourself down and I’ll tell you all about it”, said James.

I had heard something about the mill, being told that the developers of the Onze Molen houses had asked to increase the density on the erf and had been given permission in return for restoring the windmill. The architects, James informed me, had visited Mostert’s Mill and prepared suitable working drawings for the reconstruction of Onze Molen based on that design. The architect’s specification was thorough and materials to be used were yellowwood doors and beams and teak window frames, and the collar on which the cap rotates was to be of ironwood.

![Figure 1. Front elevation of the Onze Molen mill – from the architect’s drawings.](image-url)
Subsequently, I obtained a photograph from the Jefferies Collection in the Cape Archives, showing the mill when it was occupied as a house (Fig. 2). This section presumably still forms part of the structure. James also informed me that the windmill had been converted into a horse mill at an earlier date.

![Figure 2. Onze Molen (CA J7839).](image1)

![Figure 3. Portion of an old map of Durbanville.](image2)
An old map of the “northern suburbs” shows the mill close to Stinkfontein Dam at the bottom of the Remainder of Johannes Fontein (Fig. 3). The map also shows the proposed railway to Durbanville. This idea was first proposed in 1901 but was abandoned in 1910. However, Durbanville did have a station where you could purchase rail tickets and then catch a bus to the railway at Bellville.

In James’s opinion the Onze Molen mill was built after the British occupation of the Cape and would have been a tower mill with a reefing stage, similar to that of Gradwell’s mill in Grahamstown (Fig. 4).

![Figure 4. Section of a water-colour of Gradwell’s Mill by Francis Lewin Dashwood (1876).](image)

I believe that even if the mill was not reconstructed with historical accuracy, the naming of the street is a lasting tribute to James’s expertise. Perhaps VASSA should agitate to have De Waal Drive renamed Joanna Marx Boulevard.

**Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Jean Parker for unearthing the working drawings of the mill’s reconstruction, and to the late Alf Wesson, a Durbanville local historian, for information on the proposed Durbanville Railway. The painting of Gradwell’s Mill is taken from James’s book *Water-mills, windmills and horse-mills of South Africa* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1974).
Figure 5. Onze Molen in 2014.
The Joanna Marx Collection

Ilse Arendse

“Joanna Marx was unique. Her passion for conservation, music, architecture and cuisine was her life.” This was according to Marx's cousin, Leana du Preez, on Friday (June 14) at the launch of the Joanna Marx Collection at Stellenbosch University’s (SU) J.S. Gericke Library.

Marx, who died in 2012, was very involved in the preservation of buildings and mills in South Africa as well as abroad and was working with the National Monuments Council now known as the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). One of her biggest projects was the restoration of the well-known Mostert's Mill.

According to Lynne Fourie of the J.S. Gericke's Documentation Centre, they received the collection in September 2012, and immediately set up an inventory of the contents, so that it could become accessible for students and researchers.

The Joanna Marx Collection 422, housed in the library’s Special Collection Division, has been divided into Heritage Materials South Africa, Mills South Africa, Heritage Materials England and Mills Netherlands and England (see below).

The collection consists of articles, talks, conferences, laws, maps, illustrations, plans, museums, monuments, pamphlets and brochures as well as slides. Marx has also done a lot of research for the conservation of places eg. Bredasdorp / Elim, Swellendam, Kaaimansgat, Gamkaskloof, Knysna (Noetzie & Thesen Island), Two Rivers Urban Park, Cape Peninsula National Park and District 6, and this information also forms part of the collection.

Among the guests at Friday's event were several friends and former colleagues, who remembered Marx as a loyal friend, formidable opponent and strong supporter. Du Preez thanked Fourie and her colleagues who worked on the collection. "The scope of the work took my breath away," she said. “This collection is Joanna's professional and conservation legacy.”


The official acceptance of the collection, attended by old stalwarts in Joanna’s life, 14 June 2013.
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Ron Viney passed away in December 2014 at the age of 50 after a brief illness.

The Executive Committee of the Association of Professional Heritage Practitioners and a number of Ron’s colleagues compiled this tribute: Regina Isaacs; Janette Deacon; Mary Leslie; Nancy Cloete; Dumisani Sibayi; Kirstin von Tonder-Pieterse and David Hart. The photograph of Ron standing next to a sidecar motor cycle is courtesy of Nancy Cloete.

Ron was passionate about heritage. He was at SAHRA for many years. He worked at what was then the National Monuments Council’s provincial office in Gauteng, initially as manager of the War Graves division, and subsequently became regional manager of the SAHRA provincial office in Limpopo. Among Ron’s numerous contributions to heritage management was his involvement at Mapungubwe, Makgabeng and Makapan national heritage sites in Limpopo. He secured Lotto funding for these projects. He excelled at working on the ground in setting up the management process and also developed a love of the bushveld. In executing these projects he appointed a number of young archaeology graduates, some of whom later became full-time SAHRA employees. Many of his notable contributions stemmed from his ability to inspire enthusiasm about heritage in the people with whom he came into contact, for example, initiating the training of local enthusiasts as guides at Makapan.

Ron later worked at SAHRA’s head office in Cape Town for a number of years, first in the then SAHRA Western Cape Office (now Built Environment Unit) and, thereafter, in the Grading and Declarations Unit. He left SAHRA to become a heritage consultant and specialist tour guide. As a consultant he worked on a number of projects on Robben Island, notably the repair and maintenance of the Robben Island Garrison Church. He was also involved in teaching students as part of the University of the Western Cape’s African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies which is run by the History Department in partnership with the Robben Island Museum. His series of articles recently published on The Heritage Portal is testimony to his enthusiasm for heritage and his appreciation of the value of good research and careful on-site observations when making decisions about the care and maintenance of heritage sites (http://www.heritageportal.co.za).

As a registered tour guide, he conducted an insightful walking tour through District Six. His knowledge of District Six and social commentary was remarkable. He also conducted a tour of the Lion Battery that ended with the firing of the Noon Gun on Signal Hill. He recently became a tour guide for Cape Sidecar Adventures taking tourists around the peninsula on a sidecar motor cycle. He had wonderful stories about these adventures.

In addition to his considerable contributions to heritage and his work as a tour guide, some of Ron’s former SAHRA colleagues were surprised when they joined a group of his friends at a memorial picnic at Kirstenbosch on 17 January, to learn of his other great love: rowing. As a direct result of Ron’s initiative, rowing was introduced to pupils at Grassy Park High School and he became their rowing coach. His former pupils spoke warmly of his enthusiasm for the sport and the patience with which he taught them to hold the oars as you would a small bird, and to
move the canoe through the water with your legs rather than your arms. His desire to encourage and inspire others meant that local schools have also benefitted from his expertise, both in coaching and in keeping the boats on the water.

Amidst Ron’s prowess as a heritage practitioner, tour guide and rowing coach he was also a handyman of note: he could build a bed, and in no time fix anything from a skateboard to a window frame. Ron always had something interesting to tell. He loved sharing his knowledge and experience, and he was kind and generous. Friends and colleagues remember how he returned small kindnesses shown him with unexpectedly generous gifts.

I first met Ron when together we part of the professional teams assembled by the Department of Public Works overseeing the contracts for the repair and restoration of the Robben Island Maximum Security Prison and Sobukwe House, both on Robben Island, a World Heritage Site.

Ron had responsibility for aspects of the heritage research and inputs to these projects and I was responsible for making sure that the contractor’s work respected fully the heritage requirements. This required a close collaboration between all role-players but particularly a dovetailing of Ron’s and my contributions. I soon recognised in Ron a more than common commitment to his specialisation; he contributed unswerving guidance, based on his thorough and sound research. We did not always see eye to eye - there is often an unbridgeable gap between the heritage imperatives and what is practically feasible given cost and contemporary materials, skills and methodology constraints. I valued Ron’s firmness in defence of what was right in heritage terms matched by his acknowledgement of those practical limitations, an acknowledgement which he nonetheless never allowed to compromise his professional advice.

The teamwork that this allowed us respectively to develop, served us both on the Prison and later projects on Robben Island: the Recreation Facilities Project and the Village Street Repair and Decoration Project. Together we resisted pressure to undertake inappropriate works that could have permanently harmed the inherited built fabric of a number of historic buildings and artefacts. Over the almost seven years of our shared engagements on Robben Island Projects I developed a respect for his approach to heritage matters and learned a lot from him that added to my already established knowledge of heritage conservation theory and practice.

His dedication to ensuring the quality of his inputs might have made him appear inflexible at times, but I am certain he was never wrong. He continued engagements with heritage projects on Robben Island longer than I did, up to the time of his death, and I am sure that Robben Island is even more worthy of continuing World Heritage Site Status than it would be had he not applied his dedication to our nation's heritage through his numerous projects on the Island.

I also got to know Ron outside the professional environment of our collaborations on Robben Island. Ron was regular attendee at Book Lounge events, myself less so, but when we did meet there it was an experience we shared; together we were exposed to a eclectic range of issues and topics at book launches and talks. In Ron I recognised a reflection of my own wide range of interests. I have said he was a ‘universal man’ in his breadth of interests and consider that trumps the sense that in his life “he never quite got his act together”. Had he done so, I suspect he would have been a lesser human being than he was and his life and impact on those who knew him less rich.

I wish I had known him better.

Howard Smith (Architect & Consultant)
Vernacular Architecture Society of South Africa
Volksboukundige Vereniging van Suid-Afrika
www.vassa.org.za

The aims of the Society are to

* promote and encourage the study of South African architecture and its cultural context
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* arrange excursions and study-tours
* foster research
* publish original work
* undertake and promote the recording of sites visited
* publish or lodge studies or surveys in a repository for the use of students and other interested persons
* selectively lobby for heritage issues

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