

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA
UMBUTHO WEZAKHIWO ZEMVELI WASEMZANTSI AFRIKA
VOLKSBOUKUNDIGE VERENIGING VAN SUID-AFRIKA
PO BOX/POSBUS 15347, VLAEBERG, 8018
Email: info@vassa.org.za
Website: www.vassa.org.za

VASSA NEWSLETTER, JANUARY 2021

Dear VASSA Members

Can you believe that a year has passed since our last outing to Franschhoek? Little did we know then what lay ahead of us. Unfortunately, it now seems that more time must pass until we can receive the vaccination and meet safely again. This has been a trying time for many members who look forward to our monthly talks and outings ... and seeing friends, old and new.

Our chairman, Trevor Thorold, is resigning in March (the end of the VASSA year) after three years at the helm. The committee is appealing for a volunteer to take on this position. (S/he does not need to be a current member.) It is essential that the Society moves with the times in order to remain relevant and attract new members. We will still be undertaking talks and outings, and recording and researching, but we need to rely much more on our internet presence to raise awareness and share the valuable information which we generate.

We have a few new committee members, but the old guard are ready to step back now and hand over the Society to a younger generation. Please consider volunteering to serve on the committee. Bring along your ideas and innovations.

During the past year the committee has kept in touch via email to keep the Society ticking over, ensuring that bills are paid, etc. and we managed to have one face-to-face meeting. Other members have also been busy. Here are a few examples.

Activities

Marion Ellis and her team totally revamped our web page, so please take a look. Let her know of any suitable links to vernacular places and issues and things to see and read.

Some of you were no doubt lucky enough to watch/listen to André van Graan's Summer School lecture on Cape Town's Art Deco heritage. See summary on <http://www.summerschool.uct.ac.za/cape-town's-art-deco-heritage>. See also Human Scale Architecture by Professor Julian Cooke.

Alex Dodge continues to explore the Swartland with her 'trusty' Toyota Corolla and camera (see images posted on FB). She has discovered a rich but disappearing architectural landscape and a wealth of dignified people.



A farm near Malmesbury; Toyota rescue team (Alex Dodge).

The recording team organized by Nigel Amschwand, who measured up Zoute Kloof (Woesteheuvel) in the Sandveld, have finished their report and a small number of copies have been printed. A full-colour digital version is available for R50, and a printed version (B&W inside) for R140 (contact publications@vassa.org.za). More can be printed when we are able to have meetings again, as the talks were the main sales outlet.



The Soute Kloof-Woesteheuvel team; view of the kitchen.

Antonia Malan and Elize Mendelson, who run the Publications Portfolio, would love to receive ideas and contributions for publication (publications@vassa.org.za). The next *VASSA Journal* will include a history of the farm Breekyster, in the Williston district, and fascinating research into the architectural and social history of a forestry settlement near George. And the next special publication will be the Proceedings of a Workshop in McGregor in June 2019. Among other things, the McGregor team are developing a stunning interactive heritage survey tool.



McGregor (online images).

Over several years Pat Kramer and her Karoo team located and recorded hundreds of corbelled buildings in the Karoo. A draft master list has been completed. The team has been in contact with the heritage consultant from Johannesburg that has been appointed to investigate the 30 farms taken over by the SKA project outside Carnarvon. To date the consultants have recommended that the werfs of two farms have heritage importance. The VASSA Karoo team previously visited both of these sites as they have links with corbelled buildings and Baster ownership. The team has voiced its concern at the possible demolition of “modern” wool boom houses.



Grootpaardekloof.

The homestead and the remains of the trapvloer with kafhok on right. The Baster Frans Maasdorp claimed the farm in 1856, stating that amongst his improvements was “one round house”. This led to our visit to the farm but we were not able to find the corbelled building.



The Karoo team at De Hoek, deep in the Kareeberge.

Kathy Dumbrell, who has a long association with the Drostdy Museum in Swellendam, is collecting memorabilia (anecdotes, documents, project records, images, etc.) of Dr Mary Cook (1902-1981). She would be grateful for any memories or photos that the vernacs may have, and any information that would enable her to contact Dr Cook’s surviving family and colleagues. Contact: dumbrell@gmail.com.



Dr Mary Cook; the Drostdy Museum, Swellendam.

Look out for these ...

Nigel Amschwand discovered this website, and has much enjoyed the presentations:
<https://www.history.ac.uk/whats/ihr-events-archive/reading-and-writing-historic-buildings>.

There is a self-guided walk brochure online covering Muizenberg to St James. See
<http://www.theheritageportal.co.za/article/historical-muizenberg-st-james-walk>.

Jim Hislop continues to delve into the historical corners of Cape Town and hosts the FB group for VASSA and The Cape’s Threatened Buildings. Have you joined the VASSA Facebook group yet?

And this ...



Recent progress on the superstructure above the old VOC store, viewed from Bree Street and Strand Street respectively.

And maybe this one day ...

Cartoon village: The wacky multi-coloured domes that make up an eye-popping holiday retreat on the Persian Gulf



It's black and white - these domes make for an eye-popping place to stay. There are around 200 of them, and they form a cartoonish holiday retreat overlooking the Persian Gulf on the Iranian island of Hormuz, with multi-coloured exteriors and interiors in shades of bright blue, yellow, red and green. Eighty-five guests can be accommodated in 17 suites, costing from \$20 (£14), in 130 interconnected domes of varying sizes decked out with locally produced furniture. The remaining domes contain restaurants, cafes, shops, a spa, a gallery, a prayer room and tourist information.

If you have anything to contribute to the Newsletter, or information / links for the website, please let us know.

Keep safe and well.

PK & AM.