



VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA
UMBUTHO WEZAKHIWO ZEMVELI WASEMZANTSI AFRIKA
VOLKSBOUKUNDIGE VERENIGING VAN SUID-AFRIKA

PO Box 15347, Vlaeberg, 8018
Email: info@vassa.org.za
Website: www.vassa.org.za

VASSA NEWSLETTER

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KLEINBOSCH AND OTHER RE-IMAGININGS AND RESTORATIONS

The Kleinbosch project was the subject of **May's Talk and Outing**, presented and led by VASSA member Johan Malherbe (Malherbe Rust Architects). A good crowd was attracted to both events and we are extremely grateful to Johan and his team for their information, stories and hospitality (there really was a free lunch!). Not only has the sense of place and vernacular quality of the precinct been recreated but young people with Afrikaner roots are given educational opportunities and can experience the beauty of thoughtful design and construction. It may be bucolic, but it is certainly impressive! (Photographs courtesy of John Kramer.)



Left: A good crowd listening to Johan Malherbe introduce the Kleinbosch Project.
Right: Welcoming space at the new educational facility.

Koos Bekker and his wife, Karen Roos, are widely known for restoring historic Cape properties. The most famous is Babylonstoren estate in the Franschhoek/Stellenbosch winelands, which they transformed into an ultra-luxury farm hotel and highly successful e-commerce brand. Babylonstoren's formal fruit and vegetable garden was conceptualised in 2007 by French architect Patrice Taravella. The neighbouring farm, Donkerhoek, has since been re-imagined as Soetmelksvlei, a meticulously curated living museum and working farm that captures the theme of late 19th-century pastoral life. It recreates the self-sufficiency and artisan craftsmanship of the Boland region in the year 1897.

While Bekker and Roos are celebrated for these projects, they have restored other select architectural treasures globally, such as the Victorian rectory of Emily Hobhouse in Cornwall. They own The Newt in Somerset, a luxury country hotel, working estate and major garden attraction (including the Viper,

a suspended walkway designed and built by two South Africans, architect Mark Thomas and engineer Henry Fagan). The estate spans hundreds of hectares of countryside, orchards and woodland. The property is anchored by a 17th-century Georgian house known as Hadspen House, featuring -luxury bespoke rooms, a spa and farmstead accommodations (the Farmyard). The estate boasts a cider press and tasting rooms, the Story of Gardening museum, and an interactive Roman Villa Experience (including Roman loos and foods). Archaeologists excavated the actual site of the villa, dating back to 350AD, discovered during the development.

Bekker purchased the Kleinbosch farm in Daljosafat, Paarl, to spearhead yet another extensive restoration and re-purposing project. This undertaking focuses on rescuing a property deeply tied to the origins of the Afrikaans language. It is the site of the Gedenkskool der Hugenoten (established in 1882), which was the first school to use Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. It was the historical family farm of the Du Toit and Malherbe families. Iconic South African literary figures like the poet S.J. du Toit (Totius) grew up there, and author D.F. Malherbe (Oom Lokomotief) was born on the estate. The property contains a Huguenot cemetery which was laid out in about 1692 by the ancestor of the Du Toit family, but the marked graves date from the close of the 19th century. Key founding members of the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* were buried there, also the remains of family servants (*Hier lê slawe van Du Toit Klaas Flora Clara*).



Left: Du Toit House. Right: The Gedenkskool.



Malherbe House in 2021 (Johan Malherbe).

In 2017, a fierce runaway mountain fire swept through the valley, gutting the main 1792 Du Toit homestead. Bekker stepped in to buy the damaged property, bringing in Johan Malherbe of Malherbe Rust Architects who had previously worked on Babylonstoren. Instead of a generic modern rebuild, the team designed a conservation strategy focused on the 1890s period. This specific era highlights when the site was at its cultural and linguistic peak.

The property is carefully revitalised, combining strict heritage preservation with high-end commercial tourism. The gutted Du Toit House has been fully restored and furnished, alongside extensive renovations to the Malherbe House and the Gedenkskool. Non-historic 1970s service buildings, modern sheds and guard huts were removed. In their place, traditional agricultural features like a cowshed, kraal, and original pathways are being brought back to life. Similar to the Bekkers' other luxury ventures, Kleinbosch is a heritage tourism destination.



Left: The cemetery. Right: A werf wall runs alongside the old road that fronts the line of buildings, affording a view across the valley to the Paarl mountain.

The focal point of vernacular architecture is the H-shaped Cape Dutch-style Du Toit House, originally completed by Guillaume du Toit in 1792. The house features a holbol (concave-convex) front gable highlighted by delicate plaster mouldings. Unlike traditional Cape Dutch layouts, the central bar of the H-plan was extended to incorporate stabling spaces directly within the main house structure, completely separate from the external outbuildings. The loft was lined with clay tiles to form a *brandsolder*, meant to trap roof fires and save the lower house. During the restoration, this was replaced with lightweight concrete to prevent dust shedding while maintaining structural weight distribution. The unplastered end-gables inside the loft feature narrow orange bricks (220x70mm) laid in Flemish bond (alternating headers and stretchers in every row) dating back to roughly 1770, an earlier period.



Left: The Victorian-era Gedenkskool has been decorated with period school artefacts. Right: Dr Annemarie van Zyl signing copies of her book, *Van Kombuistaal tot Huistaal*.

To make the project commercially viable as a hospitality destination, guest rooms, public dining facilities and a walled braai area are integrated into the newly built agricultural outbuildings rather than the historic structures. The landscaping masks modern guest amenities within historical structural boundaries: An enclosed walled braai courtyard functions as a private hospitality space while mimicking the walled enclosures common to old Cape farms. A modern guest swimming pool and pool house have been tucked carefully out of view to the west of the main house. All necessary modern utilities, generic agricultural sheds, and new employee housing are explicitly pushed out of the historic sightlines. They are clustered into a separate, discreetly masked zone to the north-west.

An extensive sourcing and manufacturing strategy was developed to replace the 18th-century timber, masonry and thatch destroyed in the 2017 fire. When original structural elements are completely lost, the use of modern off-the-shelf components is shunned, requiring highly specialised period-accurate materials instead.

The fire entirely consumed the original 1792 yellowwood floors, ceiling beams and interior joinery. Indigenous South African Outeniqua yellowwood is strictly protected today. Harvesting mature trees for large architectural projects is illegal. For substantial timber and thick beams, the procurement team sourced reclaimed structural yellowwood from demolished or compromised 19th-century warehouses and old homesteads across the Western Cape. For external windows and doors, they utilised stable hardwoods like Teak or specialised Cedar, to withstand the Paarl valley's extreme temperature swings, and milled exactly to 1890 profiles.



Left: A recreated *muurkas* in Malherbe House. Right: 'Pioneer' style furniture and yellowwood floors and ceilings in Malherbe House.

When structural walls needed reinforcing, modern standard metric bricks could not be used due to sizing discrepancies. Narrow, custom-fired orange-red bricks match the 220mm x 70mm dimensions discovered in the unburnt remnants of the attic. Modern Portland cement is highly destructive to old Cape walls. It traps moisture inside the soft, sun-dried clay bricks, causing them to crumble over time. The team formulated a highly breathable hydrated lime-based mortar. Following historical regional recipes, the mix combined local West Coast sea sand with roughly 5% crushed seashell content to replicate the flexibility and high porosity (around 24%) of the original 18th-century bonding agent. The finished walls were coated with traditional limewash rather than modern acrylic paints. This allows the structural masonry to naturally absorb and evaporate environmental moisture.

Re-roofing a massive H-shaped house requires thousands of bundles of high-grade thatch. Cape Thatch Reed (*Thamnochortus insignis*), commonly known as Albertinia Dekriet, was used. This specific reed grows along the Southern Cape coast and is internationally prized for its high wax content and durability against rot and heavy rain. Master thatchers laid the reed over reconstructed timber sapling structures (*latte*). They packed it to a dense thickness of roughly 300mm using traditional thatching spades.



Left: The rear wings of Du Toit House with new thatched roofs. Right: The extended wing of Malherbe House (on the right) with old wall fabric.



Left: Bunk beds in the school hostel. Right: Bespoke fittings adapt the simple robustness of period materials, in this case basins in the ablution section of the hostel.

Over the 20th century, the original movement patterns of the farm were lost to modern roads and security infrastructure. The landscape plan deliberately stripped these away to reopen historic arteries: The old horse-drawn carriageway running north of the Malherbe house was reinstated. The old *wapad* (wagon road) running along the western edge of the property has been restored to provide the original approach used by early travellers arriving at the valley. Rather than designing a contemporary manicured resort garden, appropriate agrarian elements are planted along the linear axis of the werf.

CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER - THE 'HARPSICHORDS' OF TULBAGH

Anna Stoddard

A trip to Tulbagh to investigate two historic square pianos proved to involve more detective work than I anticipated.

The first piano was in the Oude Kerk Volksmuseum, and I was astonished to find it labelled 'Harpsichord J Green, London, 1733'. Clearly this is not a harpsichord, and the date is even more baffling as square pianos were only invented in the 1760s. However, as seen in the photograph below, the name board reads, 'J Green Piano Manufacturer 1733 Soho Square London'.

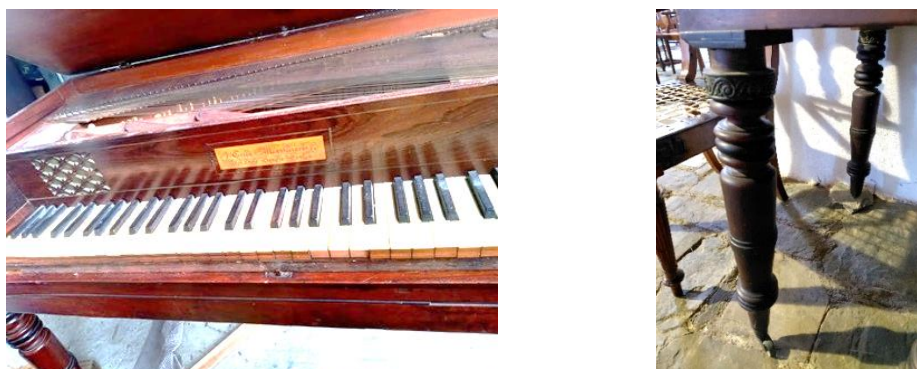
When I discovered that the piano maker John Green had his rooms at 33 Soho Square, part of the mystery was solved. The remaining mystery was resolved using Google Lens, which revealed that what looks like a 17 is actually the abbreviation for number, N^o. So, not 1733, but N^o 33 Soho Square London.

As for dating the piano, J. Green was active in London from 1821–49. The instrument's elegant mahogany case and turned legs suggest the Regency period. I have traced a similar instrument in New Orleans dating from around the 1820s. The guide booklet to the Oude Kerk refers to 'Mahogany Piano 1825–30', which ties in with this.



Left & top right: John Green piano. Right below: Baffling label for the piano.

This piano must have had an interesting history, as the decoration on one of the legs is different from the others, suggesting a replacement at some point. The back leg has lost its caster and is now propped on a stone.



Left: J. Green Piano, New Orleans (photograph Jacques Ferland). Right: The front left leg has different decoration to the other legs, and the back left leg has lost a caster.

The second instrument, located in the Victorian House on Church Street, presented a different set of challenges. This is a more solid, later piano, with well-preserved carved wooden decorations on the casework. Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful in persuading the authorities to let me see inside the instrument. However, a search on the museum's computer cataloguing system showed that it was made by 'Small, Bruce and Co., London'. Again, this was wrongly catalogued as a harpsichord and I have since alerted the curator to this mistake.

'Small, Bruce and Co.', originally piano makers in Edinburgh, were only in London from 1831 to 1841, which helps with the dating of the instrument. Interestingly, this company made pianos for conditions in countries outside of Europe. The *Bombay Herald* of 28 August 1840 advertises 'A handsome new square pianoforte, made for the climate by 'Small, Bruce and Co' Rs 600'. An early newspaper from 1837 advertises two handsome pianofortes from the same maker 'expressly adapted to the climate of India'.

Both Tulbagh pianos have only one pedal, the damper pedal, and this is placed so that it could be played using the left foot, rather than the right as we are accustomed to on modern pianos. This arrangement was common in square pianos, especially English ones.



Small, Bruce & Co. piano – Tulbagh.

I gave much thought to the 'Small, Bruce and Co.' piano being closed. With not even the keyboard on display, how does this instrument serve to enlighten the public? Many pianos in museums are displayed with the keyboard open and a piece of Perspex protecting the keys. As it stands, this piano is reduced to a decorative box upon which other objects are placed.

A MUSEUM IN RUINS

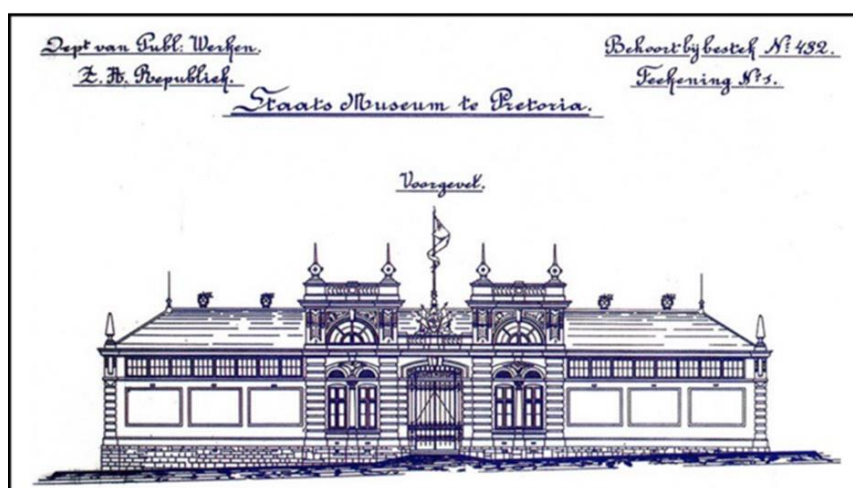
"Historic 134-year-old South African museum abandoned and completely empty." This article was written by Kirsten Minnaar and appeared on 24 February 2026 in *The Daily Investor*. As members of VASSA we found this story to be one of many sad museum failures.

The former site of the Nature and Culture History Museum in Pretoria, once a key national cultural and historical institution, now stands abandoned. Situated on Boom Street in the grounds of the National Zoological Gardens in Pretoria's CBD, it was known as the Staatsmuseum (State Museum). With a history dating back over 130 years, the once-revered museum has been abandoned and left to fall into disrepair.

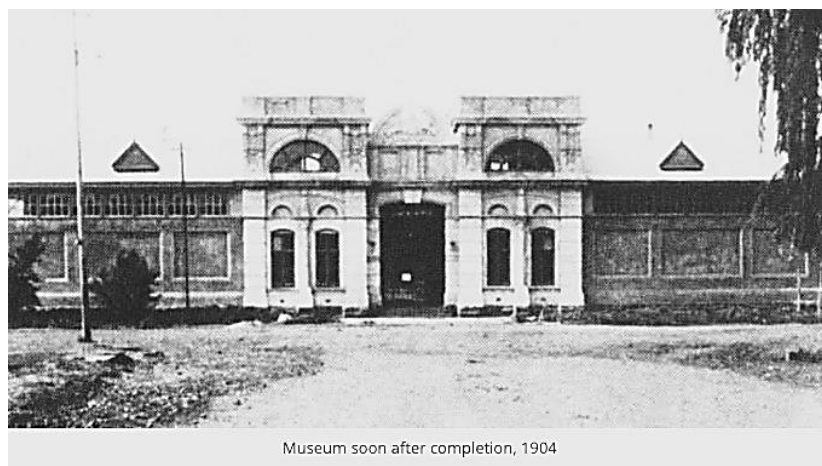
The establishment of the State Museum in 1892 was initiated by South Africa's State Secretary, Dr W. J. Leyds, whom the State Museum's board regarded as "the Father of the State Museum". The idea behind the museum was to establish a true museum with a national collection of natural and manufactured products, as well as art and antiques from South Africa and other countries. Initially, the museum was biased towards cultural artefacts, but the focus soon shifted towards national history.

It was first housed in a small room, the Museum Room, next to the clock tower on the top floor of the 'Raadsaal' on Church Square. In 1894, when that room became too small and too inaccessible to visitors, the government relocated the museum to a small building at the Pretoria fresh-produce market, now Sammy Marks Square in Van der Walt Street. However, it was not long before the market building also became too small to house the rapidly growing collections. In December 1898, after several attempts to build a new, 'proper' museum building, tenders were released for a building on Boom Street, at the point where Andries Street intersects.

The cornerstone of the new building was laid in July 1899. The Second Anglo-Boer War broke out on 11 October 1899, interrupting construction. When the British invaded Pretoria on 5 June 1900, the museum had reached roof height. The museum was closed until 8 June 1900, when it reopened as the Pretoria Museum, later renamed the Transvaal Museum. On 20 January 1902, after the war, the British colonial government awarded a contract to the same builder who had built the museum before the war to complete the building. The museum building was finally completed in December 1904.



Front elevation; Source: Bakker et al. 2014:165



Museum soon after completion, 1904

Dr Gunning stayed on as director until his death in 1913. By 1930, the museum exhibited significant historical, ethnographic and archaeological collections. Most of these collections were donated, and, traditionally, the donor's name would be part of the exhibition. The Louis Botha collection, dating back to 1922, is among the most significant additions to the history section's holdings. In 1952, the museum housed a complete 'Voortrekker' cultural history exhibition and facilitated a Van Riebeeck Festival. An Anglo-Boer War collection was added in 1972, and the National Cultural History Museum celebrated its Silver Jubilee in 1989. However, the museum was abandoned as the head office and closed down in 1991.

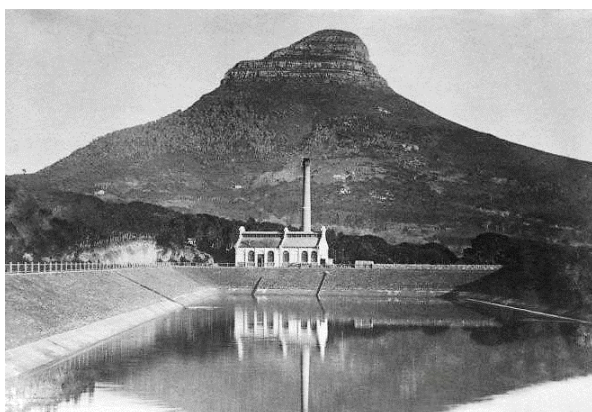
The displays in the eastern wing were severely damaged after a pipe burst that year. Another pipe burst in July 1992 caused irreparable damage to the museum, which had to be closed to the public. Traces of the old collections and exhibition cabinets can be found in the abandoned old Museum, which had been declared a National Monument. Today, the former museum site still stands abandoned.



However, the legacy of the original State Museum lives on under the name Ditsong Museums of South Africa. This institution has grown into a network of eight distinct museums, seven of which remain located in Tshwane. In comments on the article, Mariette Peplar-Harcourt noted that: "This article is actually very misleading. None of the artefacts were stolen or destroyed. They are now safely housed and on display at the Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History on the corner of Visagie and Bosman Street." [Ed. We note that the article was more concerned with the deterioration of the building than the fate of its contents.]

FRIENDS OF THE CITY

Joy Woodward sent US a copy of the City of Cape Town's Recreation and Parks Department Newsletter in which they report back on the activities of volunteer groups who partner with the City to protect its green lungs, riverine corridors and nature reserves. Joy herself is an active Friend of Arderne Gardens in Claremont, for instance. Newsletter no.4 of 2025 includes a contribution from David Hart – 'Hart on Heritage' – about De Waal Park, Molteno Reservoir and the Graaf Electric Lighting Works. The power station's steam turbine chimney was demolished after it was decommissioned in 1920.



These photographs of Graaf Electric Lighting Works are from the City's collection.

Talking of power stations and redundant chimneys, some of you will remember watching the demolition of the concrete cooling towers at the Athlone Power Station in 2010, when the blasters pressed the button five minutes early so we were still busy making tea and chatting and missed the

whole spectacle. A great disappointment as we had a panoramic view from the Tea Room in the Archaeology Department at UCT.



Athlone power station cooling towers in the 1960s (posted by Harry Valentine Cape Historical Society). The brick chimneys are 99 metres high.

Since then, various proposals, studies, applications, contestations, heritage nominations, legal arguments and other goings on, have stalled any adaptive reuse or redevelopment of this large site. It belongs to the City of Cape Town but they have been unable to find adequate support for their plans. Meanwhile, the remaining tall brick chimneys have been declared rotten and unsafe but, for now, still stand proudly as a landmark on the N2.

Two more currently contested sites can be seen in the photograph above, behind and just above the steam from the chimneys: King David Mowbray Golf Club (proposed low cost housing) and Black River Anglican Cemetery (deconsecrated and archaeologically exhumed in 2017 and now privately owned with proposed housing development).

A chimney in Mechau Street, Cape Town has been demolished. It was built for a gas works in the 1850s and during the 1870s became a component of the boiler engine of the wool washing and drying factory of Marquard & Co. (Heritage Portal). The little laundry chimney at the rear of the Mount Nelson Hotel remains. Originally built to supply hot water to the laundry rooms situated beneath it, after costly stabilisation work the chimney stack is now preserved as a historical landmark.

If you wish to know more about the art and craft of brick chimney construction, Ralph recommends this charming video of British steeplejack, engineer and Victorian styled legend Fred Dibnah: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R3-YwDZrzg>. There is also a 1966 TV documentary series on him. You may need subtitles!



Left: Chimney in Mechau Street (Cape Archives CA527). Right: The chimney at the Mount Nelson (photo Sarah Balchin).

MAIN ROAD, RONDEBOSCH

Published by [capetownetc](#) on 29 May 2026.

One of Cape Town's busiest suburban corridors could soon look very different, and the City wants locals to help decide what happens next. Residents, business owners, students and commuters are being invited to share ideas on how Main Road in Rondebosch should evolve as the area continues to grow and change. The public participation process focuses on the stretch between Belmont Road and Woolsack Road, a section many Capetonians know for its heavy traffic, student activity, small businesses and constant movement throughout the day.

For years, this part of Rondebosch has functioned as more than just a transport route. It's a meeting point between education, commerce and everyday suburban life. From students heading to lectures and theatre-goers visiting the Baxter, to delivery drivers weaving through traffic and shoppers moving between stores, the road has gradually become one of the southern suburbs' busiest urban spaces. Over the last decade, Rondebosch has transformed rapidly. New student accommodation developments, increased commercial activity and changing land use patterns have reshaped the character of the neighbourhood.

Now, city planners believe the area needs to catch up with the pace of development around it. Locals have often raised concerns about congestion, unsafe pedestrian crossings, limited public space and chaotic parking, especially during peak hours. Delivery bikes and ride-hailing vehicles have also added to the pressure on an already crowded corridor. The City says the proposed vision is not simply about traffic management, but about creating a more functional and attractive urban space that works for everyone using it.

Possible upgrades being considered include improved pedestrian crossings, traffic calming measures, better public spaces, revised parking layouts and safer infrastructure for both motorists and pedestrians. Raised crossings, bump-outs and upgraded paving are among the ideas currently on the

table. City officials say community feedback will play a major role in determining what the future design ultimately looks like. That includes hearing directly from people who use the area daily, whether they live nearby, run businesses there or simply travel through it regularly.



Public participation projects around Cape Town often attract strong opinions online, and early reaction to the proposal has already sparked discussion among residents about walkability, safety and whether Cape Town's suburban roads should become more people-focused instead of vehicle-dominated. Urban planners globally have increasingly shifted toward designing streets as shared public spaces rather than roads built only for cars, and similar conversations have started emerging in parts of Cape Town, particularly around high-density areas linked to universities and transport routes. For many residents, the Rondebosch proposal reflects a broader debate about what Cape Town's future suburbs should look like as the city continues to densify.

How residents can participate:

- Submit comments and proposals before the deadline on 29 June 2026.
- <https://www.capetownetc.com/news/cape-town-invites-residents-to-help-reshape-rondebosch-main-road/>
- Comments can be submitted online, via email or in person through the City's public participation channels.

Whether residents want safer crossings, greener public areas or solutions to ongoing congestion, officials say this is an opportunity for the community to directly influence the future of one of Rondebosch's most recognisable roads.

HISTORIC CLOCK FACES RESTORED

The Colonial Mutual Clock Memorial tower located at the bustling intersection of Hans Strijdom Avenue has been restored. According to *Capetownetc* "This landmark structure, which features the historic clock faces installed in 1887 on the original Colonial Mutual building in Adderley Street, was not just the first clock tower of its kind but a beacon of the city's colonial history".

After the Colonial Mutual Building fell victim to a devastating fire, the clock tower was reconstructed in 1983 at its present location in Hans Strijdom Avenue, standing as a reminder of resilience and architectural elegance. Over the years the tower had become grubby and to make matters worse, vagrants had broken into the tower and started a fire, destroying the clock face in the process. It is assumed that the clock now at the bottom of the city, incorporates the four original clock dials from the tower of the original building.

Lila Komnick added this contemporary information to the Artefacts web page (artefacts.co.za). (References: SAAE&S Jnl Sep 1907:12; SAWW 1910; SAB Dec 1932:11, 13; Radford 1979:127)

Amongst the numerous buildings erected within the last ten years in Cape Town, those belonging to the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society are considered some of the finest. They were completed

in 1888, and stand on the site of some stores formerly occupied by a firm of merchants, which were surrounded by a high stoep, and which were extremely ugly in appearance.



This is the first building erected in Cape Town that was constructed of cut stone, the material being brought from England. The style is of the French Renaissance, one of the features of the design being that there are no pilasters for ornamentation, and considerable care has been taken to avoid anything like undue heaviness.

It has a clock tower of 85 feet [25,9m], the clock having four dials each 4ft. 6in. [1,37m] in diameter, illuminated at night. At the main angle in Longmarket Street is the emblematical device of the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society, carved in white marble, representing a female figure with a shield protecting the fatherless and widows.

In 2026 the public was invited to cast a vote for one of the design options offered, and these were:



Option 1: Mosaic Brights. Image via Facebook @CapeTownCCID



Option 3: Classic Contrast. Image via Facebook @CapeTownCCID



Option 2: Pastel Harmony. Image via Facebook @CapeTownCCID



Option 4: Fresh Citrus Greens. Image via Facebook @CapeTownCCID

And the winner is:



WOLRAAD WOLTEMADE STATUE ON THE MOVE

A while ago we mentioned that we had come upon the statue of Wolraad Woltemade at the Old Mutual building in Pinelands. Well, Wolraad has now been moved to a site from which he can see the sea which took his life.



Statue of Wolraad Woltemade by Ivan Mitford-Barberton in its new position.

Ian Pretorius writing on the *Cape Town Heritage* site explains:

It was reported in *Die Burger* of 26 May 2026 that the massive bronze statue (about 3 tons) of Wolraad Woltemade found a new home after 70 years. For all these years it stood at the Old Mutual building in Pinelands. Garry van den Berg, chairperson of the Friends of Loxton Heritage Park in Milnerton discussed this idea with Old Mutual who easily gave their consent. This new position affords the hero a view over the ocean that claimed his life in 1773. This new position is not far from the Cape vernacular cottage Klein Zoar which is believed [by some - eds] to be the home of Woltemade. He and his horse, Vonk, (who also drowned) saved several lives from the sinking ship *De Jonge Thomas*. This statue was made by Ivan Mitford-Barberton (1896-1976) and was inaugurated in 1956 by the governor-general E.G. Jansen. Now in its new position, the statue was unwrapped on 1 June to commemorate the day in 1773 when Woltemade and his horse died.

Wolraad Woltemade and his brave deed make for interesting reading:

Wolraad Woltemade (1708 – 1 June 1773) died while rescuing sailors from the wreck of the ship *De Jonge Thomas* in Table Bay on 1 June 1773. The story was reported by the Swedish naturalist Carl Peter Thunberg who was in South Africa as a surgeon for the Dutch East India Company at the time.

Woltemade was born in present-day northwestern Germany. He worked for the VOC as a soldier or as a dairyman and after retirement as Keeper of the Menagerie of the Company.

On the morning of 1 June 1773, the start of winter in the southern hemisphere, a sailing ship named *De Jonge Thomas* was driven ashore in a gale onto a sand bar at the mouth of the Salt River in Table Bay. Many lives were lost as the ship started to break up but a substantial number of survivors were left clinging to the hull. The stricken ship was not too far from dry land and many sailors attempted to swim ashore. Most of those who did so perished; the water was cold and the current from the nearby Salt River too great. Except for the very strongest swimmers, those who headed for the shore were carried out to sea.

A crowd of spectators stood on the beach. Some came to watch, others to try to help and yet others were hoping to loot the cargo that was being washed ashore. A detachment of soldiers was in attendance to keep order among the spectators. Corporal Christian Ludwig Woltemade, the youngest son of the elderly Wolraad, was among those standing guard. As daylight came, Wolraad left his home at nearby Klein Zoar on horseback, taking provisions to his son.

As Woltemade reached the beach, he was filled with pity for the sailors marooned aboard the wreck. Seeing that nothing could be done by those on the beach, he mounted his horse, Vonk, and urged the animal into the sea. As they approached the wreck, Woltemade turned the horse and called for two men to jump into the sea and grasp the horse's tail. After a moment of hesitation, two men threw themselves into the water and did so, whereupon Woltemade urged the horse forward and dragged them to shore. Woltemade rode out seven times, bringing back fourteen men. By this time he and his horse were exhausted, but at that moment, as they rested, the ship began to collapse. Woltemade once more urged his horse into the water but by now the desperation amongst the sailors was tremendous. Seeing this as probably their last chance to escape before the ship was destroyed, six men plunged into the sea, grabbing at the horse. Their weight was too much for the exhausted steed; all were dragged below the waves and drowned.

Woltemade's body was found the next day, but the horse was not found. Of the 191 souls on board, only 53 survived and of these 14 were saved by Woltemade.

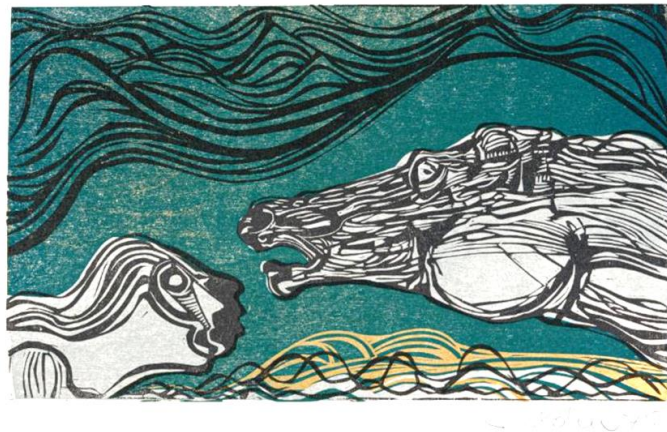
Woltemade did not immediately become a hero. The Captain (van Lammeren) of *De Jonge Thomas* was given an official funeral, but there was nothing so grand for Woltemade. The general opinion at the Castle seems to have been that he was an officious fool who had lost his life unnecessarily. In the first report to Holland, his name is not even mentioned – though considerable space is devoted to the eighteen boxes of money providentially saved. This gold was the reason the flotilla had been allowed into Table Bay in the first place, as transporting it by land from Simon's Town to The Castle would have been too dangerous given the poor roads, made worse (impassable) by the storm. However, Thunberg who had witnessed the event, did not forget Woltemade; nor did the former's countryman, Anders Sparrman, when he wrote his famous book *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope* in 1775. The VOC did eventually compensate his dependents, but it took a few years of public outcry for them to do so.

The Dutch East India Company provided amply for his widow and children and named a ship *Held Woldemade*. It was taken by the British fleet as prize during the battle in Saldanha Bay on 4 July 1781. A railway station in Cape Town is named after him. The Union of South Africa King's Medal for Bravery, instituted in 1939, bore a depiction of Woltemade's heroic act on its obverse. In 1970 the Woltemade

Decoration for Bravery was instituted as the highest civilian decoration for bravery in South Africa. This was replaced in 1988 by the Woltemade Cross for Bravery. The Woltemade Cross was discontinued in 2002, as part of the move towards establishing a new South African honours system, following the advent of majority rule. The name was also given to the S.A. *Wolraad Woltemade*, one of a pair of salvage tugs built in 1976, which at the time were the most powerful tugs in the world.



Heroic death of Woltemade at the Cape of Good Hope, 1773 (Nicolaas van Frankendaal, 1775, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Object No. RP-P-OB-75.366).

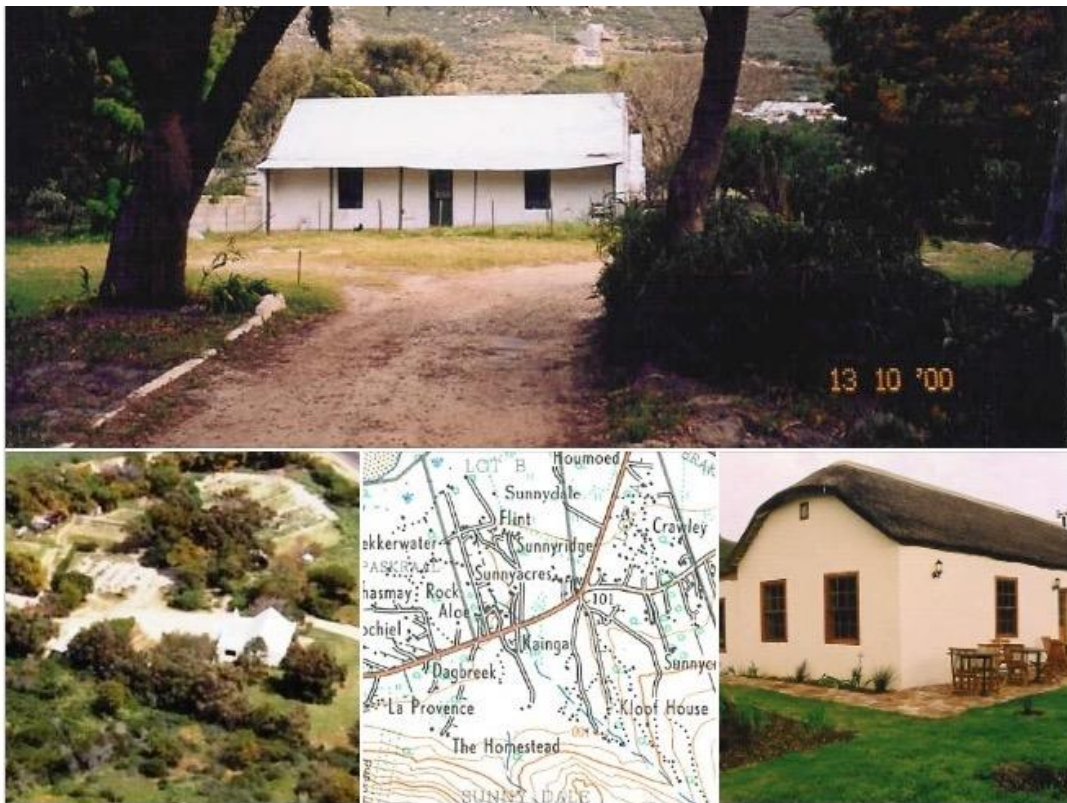


Woltemade Rescues Two Sailors, from White Monday Disaster (Cecil Skotnes, www.straussart.co.za/auctions/lot/307-15-apr-2024/77).



Left: Woltemade Cross for Bravery, silver, discontinued 2002. Right: Tugs *John Ross* and *Wolraad Woltemade* in Table Bay sometime in the 1970s.

DAGBREEK COTTAGE: WHAT WILL BE THE FATE OF THIS HISTORIC COTTAGE?



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a day ago · 🌐

HAVE YOUR SAY – DEMOLITION OF DAGBREEK COTTAGE

The CoCT is applying for the demolition of the original rectangular thatch and mudbrick building, called Dagbreek Cottage, next to the Kommetjie Road Fire Station in Sunnydae. This building dates to the 1800s and has had various uses over the years. The latest being Mnandi's and Rioja restaurants, which saw the building grow its footprint as various additions were added to the original rectangular structure. A heritage assessment has been done of the building. The Heritage practitioner has recommended 2 options.

Option 1. Demolish all new additions to the building, restore and preserve the original rectangle structure under the thatch. Increase visibility of the cottage from the Kommetjie Main Road.

Option 2. Demolish the building but not before recording the history and historic footprint. This record should be lodged with the relevant heritage authorities, City of Cape Town and Heritage Western Cape, and local repositories, such as the Fish Hoek Valley Museum and the Poespaskraal Provincial Heritage Site documentation, to ensure that the building's evidential and interpretive value is not entirely lost, even if the structure itself is removed.

It is important that heritage is preserved.

Unfortunately, comments concerning the fate of Dagbreek Cottage, which dates back to the 1800s, have already closed, and we await a decision on the fate of this historic building. Here is the Facebook page posted by the Sunnydale Ratepayers Association.

MODERN SOLUTIONS TO OLD PROBLEMS

Here are two examples of how a tricky architectural problem has been solved. The downpipe is particularly amusing.



Left: Downpipe. Right: Upstairs.

*Compiled by Pat Kramer & edited by Antonia Malan - publications@vassa.org.za.
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