

## HERITAGE DAY

### What do we have to celebrate in the Swartland?

A pertinent question. Heritage can mean many things to many people; it is also a much abused word used to describe many intangible concepts, not all of them heritage related.

Swartland Heritage Foundation ostensibly concerns itself with the built environment, although our law encompasses a much wider brief, such as archaeological remains, shipwrecks, even clutter from space, meteorites.

A Cape Times article on 24 March 2000 announced the formation of this Foundation, with the aim of protecting the valuable architectural character of Swartland towns.

Described by some as an inhibitor of property development, it has never been the aim of the Foundation to assume this rôle. Residential (and business, naturally) development and growth is inevitable, necessary even. It is unrestrained and unchecked growth that may be perceived as having a detrimental effect to the environment, especially in heritage sensitive areas.

Our law is designed to put checks and balances in place so that development/s take reference to what is often called our *cultural landscape*. This is especially relevant at the urban edges of our towns and villages (see references on page 6) when the built environment meets the worked and natural landscapes.

In the Swartland we have much to celebrate regarding our heritage; it is sometimes a battle to convince property owners that preserving our built environment is to the benefit of us all, and to the future generations.

### Some important neglected structures in the Swartland

The Tiger Oats  
Complex in  
Moorreesburg



The old  
Liberale Kerk in  
Loedolff Street,  
Malmesbury



The Sendingkerk  
in Malmesbury



FOUNDATION LAUNCHED

## Swartland buildings to be conserved

SARAHANNE BOSCH

**T**he Swartland Heritage Foundation was launched in Malmesbury earlier this month with the aim of conserving the valuable architectural character of Swartland towns.

Chairperson Julie Stecher says she believes this will eventually enhance tourism in the area.

"Visitors will travel great distances to see an attractive, size-lined town centre with sensitively restored streetscapes and recreational facilities," she says.

"Malmesbury still has a long way to go to develop the necessary aesthetic character, and it isn't easy to achieve this. It requires expertise, money, time, dedication and a lot of co-operation from the relevant parties to make any kind of difference."

"We want to involve all communities and will make an effort to promote a love for our joint heritage through education and engagement. The foundation aims to co-operate closely with the local authorities, as well as professional role players and experts in the field of architecture and restoration."

Stecher says Malmesbury is the last "unexploited" town in the circle of towns around Cape Town. As such, the development potential of this small town is obvious and exploration opportunities ought to be gauged, but developers and private individuals must be encouraged to go to work sensitively. Any actions that negatively affect the aesthetics of the town must be prevented, she says.

At the launch, participants were taken on a guided tour of the area. Buildings which were highlighted included the splendid Mother church of the NG Swartland congregation, which was rebuilt in 1861; the Loedolff house which dates from the early 1800s, and a notable Victorian double-storey house built in 1898.

The Swartland Heritage Foundation will work closely with the National Monuments Council — which will soon be known as The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). The foundation has already affiliated with the Simon van der Stel Foundation Drakenstein and has applied for affiliation with the national body of the Simon van der Stel Foundation.

The inaugural committee of the Swartland Heritage Foundation comprises eight members: six from Malmesbury and one each from Darling and Malmesbury. The address of the organisation is Box 301, MALMESBURY, 7299. For more information call Carleen Broeybeek on 083 417 8011.

**SPLENDED:** This magnificent example of Victorian architecture is known as Andrew's Hope. It was built by a Malmesbury resident, Andrew Louzser, for his fiancée who, tragically, died before they were married. Louzser lived alone in the house for seven years and died in 1893, while still young.

## HSA 50

The year 1959 saw the establishment of the Simon van der Stel Foundation (now Heritage SA), which brought nation-wide and well-connected influence to bear on architectural conservation.

In his autobiography (1995), Justice Marius Diemont recalls: "The Simon van der Stel Foundation had been launched as a major project by Dr Punt. He was a good historian, an antiquarian and a lover of antiques, but was fiercely provincial and narrow in his outlook. He believed the Foundation had to buy up old historic buildings and restore them. The Foundation could work hand in glove with the Monuments Council in educating people to become aware of our old houses and cottages, of our streets and lanes and squares, churches and mosques". He added: "Having signed on I found myself chairman of a small but enthusiastic (Cape Town) committee that included Eric Virtue, Mary Cook, Douglas Andrews, Gwen Mills, Ruth Prowse, Louis Hiemstra, Hannes van der Merwe and Col Ignatius Terblanche. There was much work to be done. At the beginning of the 20th century there were some 3 000 gabled Dutch homes in the Western Cape; by 1960 the number had dwindled to 465 buildings. Not every house could be declared a national monument but there were many private dwellings which were worth keeping and treasuring".

WITH ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO DR ANTONIA MALAN



**SWARTLAND**  
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erfenis stigting

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**SWARTLAND CEMETERIES**

*Pointless Vandalism*

‘Swartland Municipality deplores the large-scale vandalism that is being committed at cemeteries in its area.

Graves and gravestones are private property and the municipality cannot therefore take responsibility for their maintenance. It can take responsibility only for the maintenance of the paths, roads and common open spaces within the cemeteries.

Please report any vandalism with to the Swartland Municipal Police or the South African Police Service.’

*This notice appeared in the Swartland Municipality quarterly newsletter (August 2009).*

Swartland Heritage Foundation have recently twice had articles published about vandalism in Swartland graveyards, in our local newspaper, Die Swartlander, and the Weekend Argus. It is desperately sad that anyone could contemplate such wanton destruction that pays no obvious dividends.

In a related incident there has been a report of a graveyard outside Belfast in Mpumalanga. A local resident went to visit the grave of a family member, only to be greeted by an excavation site with the last few graves perched in their original situation some height above the diggings of a new, open-aste coal mine.

SAHRA are investigating; if the site is older than 60 years, which appears to be so, a permit is required to move the graves, and until this time, they will remain situated above a somewhat incongruous mine.



*Some of the desecrated gravestones in the Riebeek West Cemetery*



*Gravestones of the reinterred remains of members of the Smuts family (relocated from the site of present day PPC) in the Riebeek West Cemetery*

**COUNTRY FEATURES**

*Aspects of the Riebeek Valley*

I suspect that the attractions of buying into a country village are the concepts of space, peace, friendliness, and in our case the physical beauty of the landscape. How many other villages have that spectacular view as you come over Bothmaskloof Pass, the wonderful Kasteelberg as a backdrop, and the whole aspect of the ‘valley’?

And of course the very characteristics that make it the country; when I first moved in nearly 13 years ago some defining features were sheep on vacant plots, cultivated areas within the villages, horses, chickens and geese and ducks; we even had a donkey (Gringo) and fat-bellied pig (Winnie)!

Today most of these have gone. Even the chicken and duck population has been seriously reduced. Vacant plots have become fewer and fewer, and more densely filled – certainly less space for sheep to graze.

There is another aspect to the townscape: those physical, constructed features, such as water tanks, barns, water furrows and wind mills. Many times, when approached through heritage, the request is to remove a water tank because, “it blocks my view”, or to convert a barn for residential use – this usually entails altering the structure so severely that it might just as well be a new building. Little or none of its original character or history remains.

One request was to cover a water furrow because “it is dangerous”. The fact that it had probably been dug a century or more ago to drain one of the rivers off the mountain, and survived without any known mishaps, did not seem to be part of the equation. Imagine covering the water furrows in



*A dammetjie of the type fast disappearing from the Valley*

Prince Albert – the charm of the main street would immediately be severely diminished.

Modernising old houses should also have due consideration. We obviously have very different lifestyles and requirements to a century ago, say, so the ‘flow’ of a structure needs to be altered. It just requires a little sympathy to the previous incarnation. The addition of fake elements can also be distracting. One old building in Riebeek Kasteel is having broekie lace added to the stoep. It probably never had this feature before so what are we trying to portray now?

What I am saying is that for those who have chosen to live in the Riebeek Valley, and the Swartland as a whole, to try and consider the values that make it rural and retain them, work with them; let the residents savour the luck that they do not live in one of the dense, ugly residential developments around a city.

## FROM HERITAGE TO HERESY

### *A Conversation about Conservation by (the late) Bev Gower*

For the purposes of this conversation (if somewhat one-sided), I have presumed the aims of the Swartland Heritage Foundation, are not so much concerned with the origins of Sarie Marais or N’Kosi Sikeleli i Afrika, nor the Story of an African Farm nor The Washing of the Spears, but more about Renosterbos, or Rocha Pan or the Kasteelberg, but MOSTLY with the built environment.

It can be said, the more enlightened histories (which encompass heritage) are recorded when there has been time for the observer to distance themselves from the present. The value from this perspective in time gives a depth of meaning, especially in the realm of the visual arts. To this must be added that our experience of **Heritage**, in the form we are addressing here, is primarily **Visual**. We seldom have the opportunity to fully experience the performance of the building’s envelope, and how the interior spaces might reflect the external forms and materials. This becomes increasingly rare in older buildings – modification may occur.

Two lines from the prologue of Shakespeare’s Henry V seem appropriate: *“Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them, printing their proud hoofs in the receiving earth ...”*

Actually we won’t be talking about horses, we’ll be talking about **Houses**.

Man may manage to survive a few more generations before the species destroys itself through greed for personal possessions or xenophobic religious dogma or dictatorial political power or either gourmandising as opposed to starvation. These qualities and/or conditions have always been with us, but as spaces between us become less and less, Homo Sapiens becomes more and more demanding, self centred and aggressive.

All this plays out from individuals to societies to nations. America is licking its wounded dollar waiting for another oil war. The EU is not so comely. Middle East Sheiks ooze competition for the sleekest skyscraper. The Russian Bear is grumbling again. The Indian Tiger has outgrown its stripes. The Chinese Panda panders to no one, and we all go “mmm”, nervously. The African Elephant? Well, it’s just being its African old self.

I focused on the Northern hemisphere, as that is where all the buildings are booming. Now, if you consider that this mass of masonry and concrete and steel and glass, that’s a lot of MASS, and if you consider the equator as an axis, there is one hell of a lot more on top than at the bottom. So, I’m not saying I’m the first to note this, and not likely to be around at the time, but I would like a bit of recognition, if it does . . .

This world scale is just too vast to contemplate when the task concerns our Swartland Heritage, the local we love. That is, if there is going to be a local, as inhalation and blindness from cement dust, deafness from blasting, nausea from diesel fumes, being ousted from our homes by hostile squatters or meeting a thankful end under the wheels of a PPC truck.

Returning, hopefully, to our topic but not taking anything for granted, I have consulted Collins Concise, the Concise

Oxford and an English Penguin, anticipating you will accept their authority which I’ve summarised.

It is interesting to note that the words Heritage and Heresy or their derivatives appear in the text spaced just 6 and 7 apart or follow one another I’ve taken:

**Heritage** as: to succeed by birth; social/intellectual environment into which one is born; property handed down.

**Heresy** as: religious belief opposed to a church; rejection of a belief opposed to established view or doctrines.

There seems to be an underlying implication, heresy is bad. But what if your doctrine is ‘honestly’ different. You could still be burnt at the stake.

Alternatively, your heritage could be malevolent to another mind set or way of life. So, they can be two sides of the same coin. Or one person’s meat is another’s pouission.

However, before we make a meal out of what is Fish or Fowl, I have proposed two categories we might consider as a means of discussing various types of buildings in our quest for heritage or heresy.

The 1st Category is:

Stand alone Buildings (and examples you would find locally).

I’ve shied away from mega structures as there are none in Malmesbury – though several mucky structures.

The 1st I’ve called – **Pure Heritage/Restoration** – working from drawings and photographs. The exterior & interior as close as possible to the original – minor interior addition of Bath and Toilet, eg Ravenswood – Anglo American House in Hatfield Road.

2nd – **Exterior Pure** – interior modified – Major. Ida’s Valley, Stellenbosch – Bathroom below ground.

3rd – **Façade Retained** – interior gutted. Change of use of building – Office Blocks in Cape Town centre eg SA Mutual apartments.

4th – **Elements in Façade** – minor changes but new styling. Italian Stone exterior with clip glazed doors.

5th – **Extensions** – follow existing details, match mouldings etc, but interior is changed.

6th – **Bland** extension ignores existing. eg Government buildings – Heading for Heresy.

But the picture becomes more complex and the pace of change with new issues complicate the decisions a designer must take. How long can one hang on to the remains of a building. Perhaps we’ve come to the other side? Where we could find a new structure emerges, embracing new technology, reflecting appropriate well-designed forms, yet paying homage to a small remnant of an older building, which once occupied the site. Here it would have been heresy to have restrained the designer from moving forward and facing pressing environmental issues, which I will return to later.

I think we also need to recognize in our local and broader society a sense of nostalgia for the ‘old’, the historically accepted measure of what is good and what is transient because it has not been tried and tested. It is deep and virtually unconscious, guiding us in our likes and dislikes, also making us apprehensive of the new.



Vernacular is an esoteric term tossed about in a cosy way by designers suggesting homespun/traditional. It has been adopted from its more correct reference to language but applies here as a useful definition.

We should now move from individual buildings, to rows or streets, groups, clusters and villages.

In RSA we seem far less successful at respecting our heritage than is found in many cultures and Europe is probably a possible comparison over the last century. Accepting that both are now undergoing more recent societal changes, it could be said the European histories have had a longer, generally homogeneous population who were more prone to keeping 'things' the way they were. If a few individual buildings separated the uniform majority, it still maintained a critical mass. This has mitigated against rapid change, whereas our scattered urban landscape is prone to many stylistic influences, which present as a diverse example of heritage or touch of heresy.

It almost goes without saying that the isolated country villages have been more fortunate, and the Matjiesfonteins and Prince Alberts, etc, have become valuable national exhibits, so far, relatively unmolested. It is the proximity to commercial development, which is inversely proportionate to, caring for conservation, and evidence of mercenary MAN.

Malmesbury is an example of a town in the front line, with some areas holding out, but the defending troops are very thin on the ground; I'm sure Chris (Murphy) feels it must be easier saving whales from harpoons than walls from bulldozers. It requires constant surveillance to try and arrest the decay. If one unit in a row goes through neglect and an inappropriate filling is stuck in, then another goes further down the set? It becomes like a poor job of dentistry, where there are more fillings than teeth. So, along comes an orthodontic developer who proclaims "they must all go, just sign here" and be replaced by a set of identical double decked dentures, proudly presenting the opposite neighbours a satisfied, sanitised smile. No place for a bit of plaque here, no imperfections or a patina to provide a little lived in feeling.

Our diverse South African backgrounds makes for trying to achieve some harmony in taking decisions on how our streetscapes might look, is very complex. There is the one lobby who maintain that Heritage and elevation control must have the powers to restrict changes to even window frame sizes or door knobs or paint colours, etc.

Now, we increasingly come across what might be called 'Future Heritage', where for eg one architect will decide on the overall planning, design and detailing of an entire village. A manual will be provided covering every aspect, which has to be approved by the developer's 'style police'. Much can be spoken and written about this approach. These are minefields of potential explosions and casualties, which I have personal experience of trying to pick my way through, on behalf of a few clients. I believe the concept is well intentioned but we don't live in an ideal society.

It is very rewarding to discover examples where nature has subtly overruled elevation control and the local lobby and see

some streets with examples of row houses or 'cheek by jowlers' (circa 1930 perhaps) which were out of the box replicas. They now display little personal touches, slightly camouflaged by creepers and trees giving movement with light and shade. Internally, they've probably remained little dark boxes where they have had to burn lights throughout the day. Now what? Redesign to let in the sun, or pay the new electricity surcharge.

I fear I am straying from Heritage to 'House and Garden', which might have you condemn me as a heretic for not properly portraying the property, which has been handed down to me. I am guilty and confess there was so much more unsaid.

But stay a moment before committing my argument to the fire and allow me to return to the 'pressing environmental issue' which I referred to earlier.

If we contend that Heritage encompasses the outcome of all man's creative (ie mostly of the mind) and constructive (mostly by the hand) then these endeavours must address inescapable ecological responsibilities.

At this moment in South African history, we should pause and give thanks to those in Eskom who were responsible for servicing the turbines and ordering the coal but didn't. They have given us the opportunity to consider our fate, ecologically.



*The building referred to by Bev in his talk*

Man is clever. He is so clever making things happen, he has forgotten how to stop.

Man is unintelligent. He is so lacking in intelligence, he has no idea how to let things take their course.

Most living things apart from a few domestic animals could literally breathe a sigh of relief if man just, went away.

The world could get back to normal.

The chances of that happening are slim

The chances of man surviving are slimmer.

We still have time to give an award to the 'Most NON Building in Malmesbury'. It's the double storey over garages on the left hand side leaving for Kasteel – you know it – where the police trap (see picture).

But who will be available to evaluate the Heritage on our West Coast from Blouberg to Big Bay?

Oh! And don't bother to put out the lights when you leave – Eskom said they will take care of that!

**DID YOU KNOW**

**Dr FLC Biccard**

The first South African medical book, *Volksgeneeskunde voor Zuid-Afrika*, published by JC Juta in 1866, was written by Dr FLC Biccard. He was raised in the Swartland and practised in Malmesbury.

His nephew, a Dr Louis Biccard, recalls using the book of home remedies as his first medical text book. He also noted that nothing had been published before dealing with South African conditions, local ailments, climate or way of life.

The book was aimed at remote farmers, dealing with issues such as the treatment of face pains, headaches, hypochondria, and poisoning by mushrooms, bitter almonds, honey, crayfish and mussels. Amongst his herbal cures he used were plants such as buchu and wild dagga, and something referred to as *Hottentot's fig juice*.

Young Louis Biccard, inspired by his uncle, studied medicine in Edinburgh and Vienna, before returning to practice in Hopefield.

Both made valuable contributions to the health of their patients in the Swartland.

**QUOTE**

*'It has been said with some truth that the greatest defenders of the Afrikaner heritage in architecture have been English women and English-speaking South Africans.'*

If this was uttered today it might be seen as an extremely provocative and incendiary statement. It was in fact an observation by Lawrence G Green in his book *Beyond the City Lights*, published in 1957 by Howard Timmins Publishers.

**REMEMBERED**

**Rose Baker and Sue Burton**

2009 sadly left us with two losses, within the space of a month. Both of these dedicated, energetic women made valuable contributions to Swartland Heritage Foundation.

Rose Baker from Mooreesburg died suddenly just after Easter 2009, leaving her husband and small daughter, aged seven years. She worked tirelessly for Heritage, West Coast Tourism, the Koring Museum, the ACVV and the Church.

Sue Burton, the secretary of Swartland Heritage Foundation for many years, passed away on Monday 11 May 2009 after a short illness and will be sorely missed by the Riebeek Valley community. She too worked hard to further tourism in the Valley and was very concerned about development which could potentially damage the heritage of the area.

*Rest in peace. You will both be missed.*



**LETTERS ABOUT GRANITE**

*relating to an article in Village Life earlier this year*

Dear Dr Miller

As someone with no geological knowledge I found your article in Village Life very informative.

One point was wryly amusing in that the laying down of Table Mountain sandstone at 510m years was considerably younger than the Malmesbury Group rocks – I suppose 30m years is a substantial time, but in the context of 500m it seems relatively short. The way we bandy these huge chunks of time around . . .

I have a quick question: some time ago Prof Rust from Paarl did a talk for us and mentioned that both Paarl Rock and our nearby group, Paardeberg (a section of it, Babylonstoren, is pictured) were the remnants of volcanoes. From your article this does not appear so – would these have been more conventionally formed?

Regards

*Chris Murphy*

Dear Chris

Thanks for the feedback. I am glad you didn't mention the howler in my article. Darwin visited Sea Point in 1836 not 1856!



*Typical granite outcrop on the Paardeberg*

In between these dates he wrote *On the Origin of Species*, so a lot can happen in 20 years, let alone 30 million. Personally, I find geological time very difficult to conceptualise. I was trying to get across the notion that a lot can happen in 30 million years, including the erosion of an entire mountain chain. Actually, local geologists think it took only about 10m years.

Izak Rust was not completely wrong in what he told you. As I understand it, our granites may be the remains of feeder chambers to former volcanoes if there were conduits from them to the surface. In that sense they could be seen as the 'remnants' of volcanoes, but they certainly aren't the remnants of original surface volcanic cones or lava flows. The only exception I know of is the rock exposed at the end of Langebaan peninsula, which looks superficially like granite, but consists of explosive lava deposits (according to Stellenbosch University's geologists). This points to a possible genetic connection between the other local granites and volcanoes. There are also volcanic ash deposits in the Nama rocks exposed in Namaqualand and southern Namibia that date to the same age as the Cape Granites and may have originated in volcanoes connected to them. Nevertheless, not all granite bodies reach the surface to form volcanoes, and most of the Cape Granites certainly solidified at considerable depth (about 10 km). So whether any particular granite body is the root of an ancient volcano, we don't know.

I hope this clarifies the issue.

Regards,

*Duncan (Miller, Dr)*

**OUDEKRAAL**

*(Proposed) Development*

The third attempt by Oudekraal owner, Kassie Wiehahn, to develop luxury houses on the mountain below the Twelve Apostles, latterly via the Supreme Court of Appeal, has been turned down.

Initially granted development rights in 1957, it has been contested primarily by the City of Cape Town, SA National Parks and SAHRA. The Judge also added that the ecology of the area is unique. This was coupled to the fact the authorities in the 1950s took no cognisance of the kramats on the site. Today these are properly and rightly protected by the National Heritage Resources Act.

Oh, and Mr Wiehahn's selling price? R1billion!

**GOLF COURSE**

*Pinnacle Point Conditions Ignored*

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEADP) states that part of the development has not followed instructions, with the consequent damage to an archaeological site.

Water from irrigation is seeping through topsoil and penetrating caves below containing material estimated to be over 100 000 years old.

**and a GOLF ESTATE**

*Bella Riva in Durbanville*

Locals have opposed the development of a 500 hectare mixed use golf estate, and this has been supported by City of Cape Town Councillor Taki Amira, because it is 'outside the urban edge'. *A point of reference for the Swartland?*

Of interest here is that the company responsible for the EIA, Withers Environmental Consultants, have been quoted in the press as being in support of the development as it would 'uplift the area and provide employment'. Aren't companies and individuals who perform EIAs and HIAs, for example, supposed to take an *objective, neutral* rôle in the proposals?

In the Swartland this urban edge also appears to be a flexible boundary that is fairly easily moved to accommodate expansion.

**PINNACLE POINT**

*More about the caves*

There is now a school of exploration that concludes people living in these caves about 72 000 years ago might have been the first to use fire for making stone tools, which is some 40 000 years earlier than similar scenarios in Europe.

This could dramatically alter the perception of the origin of the lineage of modern humans. Heat treatment of materials is a complex process which shows developed cognition.

**SAN DIORAMA**

*Display to remain closed*

Professor Bredekamp, Iziko's Chief Executive, has said that the controversially closed diorama will remain so for the immediate future, although it could be reopened by next year.

There has been ongoing debate about the display, with arguments ranging from exploitation to the educational benefits of viewing a hypothetical 19th century San encampment with life-like casts, set in the Karoo.

**OLD GRANARY**

*Revamp of 200 year old Building*

Cape Town Heritage Trust has been granted a lease on this historic building, originally the customs house during British occupation, by Cape Town City Council and has to fund the restoration project.

A provincial heritage site, alterations have to be managed by a recognised heritage architect and work has begun on the neo-classical exterior, but Laura Robinson of CTHT described the inside as a 'wreck'. The building is seen as pivotal to stimulating other development in a somewhat neglected area of central Cape Town.



**A BENZ STORY**

*Heritage with a Different Take*

Bertha Benz holds the unlikely distinction of being the first person to drive a motor vehicle further than the designated trips undertaken during workshop trials.

She and her two sons arose early on the morning of 12 August 1888, and pushed the newly constructed *Patent Motorwagen* stealthily from the house, then drove 106km, ostensibly to visit her mother, but in reality to prove to her husband that they had a marketable entity.

Apparently the public were frightened of this strange, motorised carriage and needed some convincing of its worth.

After numerous *maintenance* stops en-route (and imagine the difficulty of obtaining petrol in a non car age – Ligroin, a cleaning agent available from pharmacies was used), she arrived at her destination some 12 hours later. Allowing for the breaks,

she, or rather the vehicle, was capable of something less than 8kph! Bertha then notified her husband, probably quite alarmed by this stage, of her arrival by telegram. At least that technology was somewhat faster.

The route has now been declared by the German authorities as the **Bertha Benz Memorial Route**, a route of the industrial heritage of mankind.

It illustrates that heritage can take many, varied forms.

