



Regular Newsletter/Gereelde Nuusbrief

No. 236

08.01.2020

NOTE: That this is not an edited publication but merely a compilation of the contributions and comments as received from members and participants
A regular edited annual will be available shortly

To join Mpumalanga Heritage:
Contact Linda Grimbeek at Kruger Lowveld Tourism at linda@klcvt.co.za or 013 755 1988.
Membership is R175.00 per year.

CONTENT:

SCATHING ATTACK ON DEPARTMENT OF SPORT, CULTURE & RECREATION
IN MEMORIAM BILL YEOWART
IN MEMORIAM SHIRLEY SWANEPOEL
MAHLER'S PHOTOS OF THE MAC-MAC AREA
TRADING STORE RUINS AT CORUMANA DAM
BOOKS ON SALE AT KRUGER LOWVELD TOURISM CENTRE

GOODBYE TO 2019 & WELCOME TO 2020

GROETE AAN 2019 & WELKOM 2020

Last year ended quicker than anticipated with several events and occurrences never mentioned in our regular newsletter. In the next two or more editions we would like to update our members on the latest news dating from last year as well as our programme ahead for 2020.

Verlede jaar het vinniger geïndig as wat ons kon voorsien en baie van die laaste gebeure van die jaar is nooit hier genoem nie. In ons volgende twee of meer uitgawes wil ons net ons lede op hoogte bring met die jongste nuus maar oor inlig oor die program wat ons vir 2020 in gedagte het.

NEXT OUTING/VOLGENDE UITSTAPPIE

SATURDAY 8 February 2020

Heritage Walk of old Nelspruit
More information to be released soon

SCATHING ATTACK ON DEPARTMENT OF SPORT, CULTURE & RECREATION



The commemoration at the damaged mass grave

The following was published in Lowvelder

The Mpumalanga Department of Sport, Culture and Recreation is still in the process of finding answers after a scathing attack in the national media, questioning their credentials and motivation in handling the 70th anniversary of the Waterval Boven train disaster, which claimed the lives of 63 migrant workers in 1949. The controversial event went ahead last Friday, with dignitaries from South Africa and Mozambique finding themselves among unkempt monuments and the fallen shards of granite of a neglected mass grave.

The highly regarded, well-published social historian, Professor Charles van Onselen, previously from Wits and later a research fellow at the University of Pretoria, slammed those involved in the commemoration as “arrogant and poorly briefed nationalists” for the neglect and wrongful commemoration.

According to a recent News24 report by the seasoned journalist Pieter du Toit, Van Onselen believes commemoration events like these have been hijacked by politicians with no regard for historical accuracy or honesty about events and those involved.

And he is particularly scathing about the national and provincial governments’ lack of research to determine the real facts of the incident. He said government efforts to preserve “heritage” will always fail.

In the light of this, Lowvelder hopes to soon publish the reaction of the department. Some pertinent questions regarding these accusations were asked earlier this week, but are still being tended to according to Sibongile Nkosi, spokesperson for the Mpumalanga Department of Sport, Culture and Recreation.

The independent registered civic heritage grouping, Mpumalanga Heritage, is very much aware of the neglect and damage done to the monument at the site of the disaster as well as the mass grave. These were unveiled by the wife of both previous heads of states of South Africa and Mozambique, Graça Machel, some ten years ago.

Some members of Mpumalanga Heritage who reside in Waterval Boven took it upon themselves to restore the monument at the site after it was vandalised.

Mpumalanga Heritage also contracted an organisation to clean up the overgrown grave in the cemetery of the old township some time ago. Town members have also offered to fix the poorly constructed mass grave, which has since fallen apart, but the department declined such help.

Duncan Ballantyne, chairman of Mpumalanga Heritage, said the organisation is monitoring the situation. He chose to give the municipality a chance to answer before he gave comment.

Van Onselen, whose recently published book *The Night Trains* investigates the role of Mozambican mineworkers on the Witwatersrand, is highly regarded internationally. His monumental research, *The Seed is Mine. Kas Maine, the Story of a South African Sharecropper* has been hailed as the most comprehensive social historic recording of the life of a black man during apartheid South Africa and is regarded as the benchmark for documenting previously unwritten indigenous history.

IN MEMORIAM BILL YEOWART

It was with great sadness and a real sense of loss that we heard of our friend, Bill Yeowart's passing on 17th October, aged 83. He was an impressive stalwart of the MHIG, a sure presence at all the outings, even when walking became difficult, until he was no longer able to attend, owing to illness. We remember him walking over rocky ground on a windy hilltop, his hand firmly on someone's shoulder ("Thank you, my boy!"), his sometimes stentorian voice as he revealed his enormous knowledge of all matters historical, his kindness and his immense charm. We will miss his courtesy, his friendliness and his great intellect. Rest in peace, dear Bill.



August 2017 - Events on the history programme at the Lowvelder Book Festival draw good audiences. One of these was the book launch of local history buff Bill Yeowart's, *The Diaries of Sapper Robert Poole*. Yeowart edited these recently discovered hand written Anglo Boer War diaries of a Royal Engineers Telegraphist. The journal spans a period of a year until the start of the guerrilla phase of the war. It contains some interesting writings of his experiences in some of the major events of the first phase of the war. The foreword was done by the well-published historian living in Haenertsburg, Prof Louis Changuion. Changuion, left in the photo, also introduced the book during the interview with Yeowart.

Bill was born on 1st February 1936 in Pietermaritzburg, but when his father went up North in 1942, he and his mother moved to be with his grandparents in Kimberley.

His grandfather had been in the siege of Kimberley and he grew up with extraordinary stories of that ordeal. He and his friends used to cycle to Magersfontein looking for doppies and bits of shrapnel.

After his schooling at KBHS he was sent to Rhodes where he was taught by Guy Butler, who instilled in him a love of English and history. He played rugby well and cricket badly and made lifelong friends there. After Rhodes he went to Oxford and then came back to SA. His passion for history, particularly military history, has brought him huge pleasure over the years and he was delighted to be asked to edit the diaries of John Poole's grandfather.

He loved shooting and fishing of any description and was self-appointed Field Marshall of the Lydenburg Brigade, a group of friends who have been fishing together for 38 years.

Having moved to White River 6 years ago from Johannesburg, one of the many pleasures of living in the Lowveld is lying in bed listening to the Johannesburg traffic report!

IN MEMORIAM SHIRLEY SWANEPOEL



The following was published in Lowvelder 7 January 2020

Shirley Elsie Swanepoel (née Lawrence), a well-known and beloved resident of White River, passed away on Saturday December 28, 2019, aged 91, at Nelspruit Mediclinic.

Shirley was born in Johannesburg, on September 16, 1928 to Tom and Flora Lawrence of Plaston, Mpumalanga. She grew up on a citrus farm and never shook the farming habit, growing vegetables in her garden at Macadamia Village to the end.

A Lowvelder to the core, Shirley loved the outdoors, spending her youth rock-sliding at Montrose Falls, clambering up Legogote, playing tennis at the Planter's Club and enjoying many trips to her beloved Kruger National Park, which she referred to as "the Game Reserve".

She had a passion for local history and was proud of her heritage. She was the granddaughter of Thomas WH Lawrence, who was the founder and first manager of the "Milner Settlement", where the town of White River flourishes today. Her maternal grandfather was Robert M Robertson, architect of many landmark buildings in Stellenbosch, Cape Town and Gauteng. Her brother was Bobby Lawrence, the well-known Lowveld sculptor. Shirley was one of the original pupils of "Miss Fuller's School" near Plaston. This school would later become Uplands Preparatory School. She matriculated from Pretoria Girls High, after which she obtained a secretarial qualification in Johannesburg. She started work at White River Fruit Growers before leaving South Africa to

live and work in England and Canada. While in England, she was delighted to be invited to attend the Royal Garden Party at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth.

Upon her return to South Africa, she married "Bill" Swanepoel in 1959. They were married for 45 years, until Bill's death in 2004. Upon her father's retirement, they took over the farming of the family farm. Shirley is survived by their children Heather, Billy and Jack and granddaughters Teya and Agena. Many in White River will remember her for the years she worked at the White River Municipal Library, a job she loved. She loved chatting to the regulars and helping the children with their projects. She was honoured by the Rotary Club of White River with a community service award for her dedicated work at the library. Her enduring love of the Kruger National Park was such that she would use any excuse to visit. She was a loyal supporter of the Sunset Serenades, held in aid of rhino conservation, the initiative of a close relative and organised by the honorary rangers.

Shirley was a very active member of the community of White River and readily volunteered to help when needed, whether to shake a collection box in front of the post office or with church activities. The Anglican Church awarded her the Order of St Joseph the Worker for exceptional service to the church and to the community over a long period of time. There is only ever a maximum of 12 people in the Diocese that can hold this award at one time.

She was a member of various societies including the Lowveld Botanical Society, 1820 Settlers' Association, Mpumalanga Heritage and the Friends of the MOTHS. At Macadamia Village, White River, she also never missed any of the arranged activities.

An avid sports watcher until admitted to hospital, she never missed a tennis, cricket, golf, rugby or soccer match on TV.

Shirley was an adventurous and intrepid traveller, travelling to Europe and Canada in her youth, Zimbabwe and Mozambique as a young mother and Egypt, Israel and Cambodia in her senior years.

Loyal, curious, interested, adventurous, helping, caring, concerned for others, on-the-go and a "bok for sports" are words that come to mind when her family and friends describe Shirley, along with "a wonderful sense of humour". But more often than those, the word "amazing" crops up.

The funeral service was held at St George's Anglican Church, White River, on Saturday January 4.

She will be sorely missed. She will be ever remembered.

MAHLER'S PHOTOS OF THE MAC-MAC AREA

Article submitted by D. Ballantyne

In a previous newsletter a couple of Bernhard Mahler's photos were published.

Gerrit Haarhoff has in the meantime found out a bit more about this photographer.

He was a medical practitioner by profession who was based in Berlin, Rome & Paris prior to his move to South Africa.

He started off in Cape Town in 1868 (New Portrait Saloon). He was also active in Bloemfontein during 1871.

Mahler was probably the first photographer to capture Kruger's image during 1872.

It is known that Mahler not only took photographs during the 1st Anglo-Boer war, but also did ambulance duty. It has also been suggested that Mahler was a barkeeper, although where is unknown.



The above photo is titled MARKET SQUARE OF MAC MAC. At least seven flags are proudly fluttering in the breeze.



This photo is titled MAC MAC WATER FALL & CORTEN'S CLAIM. René Reinders, in her book Pilgrim's Rest Who's Who, mentions that C. Corten was working the Pilgrim's Rest Fields in 1873. In the foreground are some women and children, presumably enjoying a picnic. There also appears to be a water race leading down from the left-hand side of the waterfall. We know this waterfall today as Forest Falls and it is upstream of where Tom McLachlan erected his house at Mac-Mac.



Mahler, between the two above photos, obviously got the waterfalls' names mixed up. He titles this photo PICKNICK WATER FALL. It is clearly Mac-Mac Falls. Four people are occupied near the lip of the waterfall with various items of equipment. Since he notes that the waterfall is 320 feet high, they are presumably plumbing the height of the waterfall with a rope.

After this photograph was taken it is known that, for some reason, miners blasted away the top lip of the waterfall and substantially changed it. See below for the waterfall as we know it today.



CORRESPONDENCE/KORRESPONDENSIE

TRADING STORE RUINS – CORUMANA DAM

One of our readers has submitted a request. He has a stand in the Sabie Game Park which is where the Sabie River flows through the Lebombo Mountains into Mozambique. This happens to be an old trade route, going back into antiquity. A short way in, the river has been dammed to form Corumana Dam. Now that the dam has dried up the ruins of what is reputed to be an old Portuguese trading store and bakery have been revealed. There is reinforced concrete in the floors and it was well built. Dating it is difficult but probably somewhere between the 1920s and 1950s.

We are looking for any information about this trading post. If anyone can help kindly reply to Linda at KLCBT.



DATUMS & GEBEURSIS/DATES & EVENTS

A preliminary programme for 2020 will be published in the forthcoming newsletter

ABOUT BOOKS/OUR BOOKS

BOOKS ON SALE AT KRUGER LOWVELD TOURISM CENTRE



Sebe Ngwenya and Linda Grimbeek of Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism with a selection of some of the heritage publications on sale at their offices at Crossing in Mbombela.

A collection of excellent books on the history of the region is currently on sale at the info office of Kruger Lowveld Tourism next to Mica at the Crossing Centre

These books are on offer as a service to the traveling public as well as local collectors of books on history. The books on sale are brought together by Mpumalanga Heritage in its endeavour to promote regional history and heritage tourism together with the conservation of places of historic significance.

Some of the rare copies available here, are the English translation of Tol Pienaar's seminal work on the Lowveld and Kruger National Park, *Cameo of the Past*. A single copy of the original Afrikaans edition, *Neem uit die Verlede* is also currently on the shelf. The most informative set of maps of places and the original wagon routes in the Lowveld, is included with each book.

Another rare edition is *Eclectic ZA* by Wilhelmiens on the shared Dutch-built heritage in South Africa, of which many architectural examples are to be found in this province, at R450. Only a few copies are left of Gert van de Westhuizen's out-of-print revised *Guide to the Anglo Boer War in the Eastern Transvaal* at R300.

Other books on the Anglo Boer War are the well-received *The Diaries of Sapper Robert Poole*, edited by William Yeoward at R250 as well as Tian Schutte's, *Guerillastryd* at R400, stock now also nearing the end of its print run.

High on the popularity list is Gerrit Haarhoff's recently launched *Tracks & Trails of the Escarpment and the Lowveld* at R450 as well as local historian Hans Bornman's, *Historical Lowveld across the Ages*, signed by the author, at R350. Another recently released publication is *Fair Game, a Hidden History of the Kruger National Park* by David Fleminger at a most reasonable R165. *Southbound Travel Guide of Swaziland* by the same author and same price is also available here.

Other books by Bornman, a most knowledgeable local historian, is *Cockney Liz, Legendary Barmaid of Barberton*, *Kaapsche Hoop*, *Village in the Mist* and *White River Photo Album* all at R150 each.

Another handy guide book for tour guide or visitors alike is *Historical Sites of the Kruger National Park*, by Ron Hopkins at R190. This publication is also available in Afrikaans.

All these books are on display and credit card facilities are available. Contact Linda@klcvt.co.za for complete lists of the books available.

Not only for individual buyers but for lodges and guest houses alike this selection of books can form a handy little lounge library, suggests Linda Grimbeek, Chief Operating Officer at Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism.