



**SIMON'S TOWN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

BULLETIN



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The Society President, Mrs. Audrey Eunice Read, nee Mar-Gerrison, died peacefully at her home in Gay Road, Seaforth, at 01:00 on Thursday 16 June 2022. Her friends and fellow Historical Society members gathered at Simon's Town Museum on the afternoon of Tuesday 9 July to celebrate her life and her contribution to the Community.

SIMON'S TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT SIMON'S TOWN MUSEUM ON 28 MAY 2022.

Now that Covid Restrictions are easing a little our Committee Meetings are in session again and we are hoping to reintroduce the Monthly Lecture Series.

A members' Tour will also be arranged in the near future.

Membership: Although the number of members has decreased, we are most grateful to those members who so generously added donations to the Society and The Museum when paying their annual subscription.

It was with sadness we recorded the passing of a few of our members namely Rear Admiral Vic Holderness SAN (Retired), Mrs. Hilary Mauve and Mr. Eddie Willcocks. Condolences to their families.

Website: Our website has been revamped and now includes a Walking Tour with Photographs and is downloadable onto your Smart phone. If you have not seen it yet, take a look, take a tour. Find it on simonstown.org Many thanks to Eric Mawhinney for his dedication and hard work on this one.

Bulletins: Eric Mawhinney has also digitised all the Bulletins dating from 1960 and is presently in the process of placing them on the website which can also be accessed via simonstown.org.

A mammoth task and a most significant contribution to the Society.

Plaques: The installation of new and the replacement of faded and stolen plaques continues thanks to Roy Burnie.

The Wall of Memory: The Mast House and Dockyard Church panel has now been added and The Methodist Church is presently in the pipeline. These panels have proved to be most popular with visitors to Simon's Town. Thanks to Diana Reekie for being the organiser.

After researching the history of the Water Reticulation System and mounting a display board Roger Bagshaw compiled an excellent booklet which is now on sale in the Museum Shop.

The committee was saddened to hear that Mrs Audrey Read has stepped down from the Committee after being a stalwart over many years. Audrey will however remain as an honorary member and President of the Society.

Our local heritage sites have increased in number with two Kramats being declared Heritage Sites at the beginning of the year.

We have applied for the Old Hospital Terrace to be declared a National Heritage Site but to date we have received no response from the powers that be.

A walking tour of the Historical Mile with the Simon van der Stel Foundation was held on the fifth of March and enjoyed by all. Thanks go to team leaders Arné and Eric.

In closing I would like to thank all our Committee Members for their contributions and special thanks to our Secretary, Cherry Dilley, for keeping us all in line.

Roger Bagshaw: CHAIRMAN.

SIMON'S TOWN KRAMATS: HERITAGE SITES

Kramat: In the Cape Malay Community, an Islamic shrine, usually the tomb of a holy man. - Dictionary of South African English.

On 3 December 2021 it was announced that ten of the Cape Peninsula's thirty-one Kramats, known collectively as the "*Circle of Tombs*" had been declared National Heritage Sites by the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA). The declaration ensures the preservation and protection of these holy sites for the benefit of future generations.

As stated in the Chairman's Report, the ten selected include those of Tuan Ismail Dea Malea and his son Tuan Dea Koasa located on the mountainside above Goede Gift at Simon's Town.



The Kramat Site above Simon's Town. Source: Google News.

NAVAL GUNS' CREW COMPETITION (GUN RUN) 1927:

In 1927 teams from *HM Ships Lowestoft, Birmingham* and *Dublin* took part in the Guns Crew Competition at the Rosebank Show in Cape Town.

The competition involved dismantling the guns and gun carriages in order to cross obstacles; reassembling them on the other side and firing a blank round in the shortest time and was won by *HMS Lowestoft*. The competition has its origins in the Siege of Ladysmith in 1899 when guns from the Simon's Town based cruisers *HMS Powerful* and *HMS Terrible* were landed to Simon's Town (West) Dockyard to be mounted on wheeled carriages and were then shipped to Natal where they were transported by train and then dragged by oxen, all the way to Ladysmith. Two 4,7 inch (119 mm) and four twelve-pounder guns, together with their ammunition, were involved.

On their return to England in 1900, having successfully relieved the besieged town, the ships' companies paraded with their improvised gun carriages and demonstrated their skills at the Royal Naval and Military Tournament in the Agricultural Hall in Islington. – Information: Wikipedia



The guns crews of H M Ships *Lowestoft, Birmingham* and *Dublin* in action at the Rosebank Show in 1927

GROWING UP IN SIMON'S TOWN: JUSTIN FOX

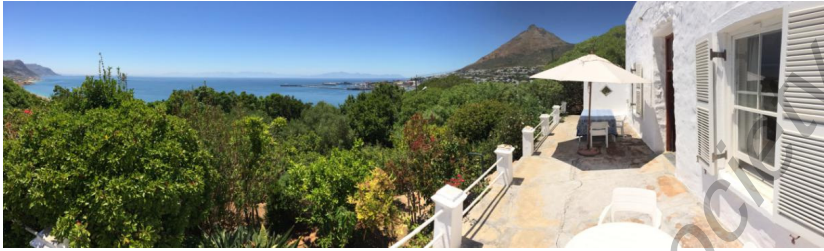
As a boy I spent most of my weekends and holidays with my family in the gracious 200-year old house, Fairview, set high up on Redhill, off Paradise Road. It had a large garden on terraces with vines, fig and olive trees, an old bakoond oven, reservoir and stable - all very reminiscent of the Mediterranean. My mother bought the house in the 1970s and my father, architect Revel Fox, restored it. I soon fell in love with Simon's Town and from an early age knocked about in the 1970s in anything that floated: rowing boats, canoes, sailing dinghies, windsurfers and keelboats, racing from False Bay Yacht Club.

Our family was friendly with the Weights of Duart House, situated in Kleintuin Road, just above Water's Edge Beach, and I spent much of my spare time on that stretch of sand and in that old Edwardian Villa.



Fairview, the Fox Family home above Paradise Road. – Photo: Justin Fox

Later on, I did my National Service in the SA Navy, serving as an Ensign in Training Aids Production Centre in the West Dockyard. During that period, I began to learn about naval skirmishes that had been fought in South African waters during World War II and the defence of the convoy route against commerce raiders and U-Boats. German, Italian, Japanese and Vichy French naval forces all operated close to our shores and sank many ships within sight of the bottlenecks of Cape Town, Cape Agulhas and the Mozambique Channel. I became interested in the minesweeping exploits of South Africa's 'little ships'. If the actions of raiders, U-boats and convoys were soon forgotten by the general public after the war, the exploits of minesweepers hardly received any mention at all. Yet the industrious, daily sweeping by these vessels kept South African ports open.



The East Dockyard Basin seen from the terrace at *Fairview*. – Photo: Justin Fox

My research took me down a number of fascinating rabbit holes. I explored the Simon's Town Museum archive, as well as the archives of the Simon's Town Naval Museum and those of Snoekie Shellhole, the MOTH attached to Simon's Town Museum (especially its meticulously recorded persona accounts of those who served at sea during the war). My research also brought me into contact with retired naval officers – all of them similarly passionate about World War II – who were happy to offer anecdotes and guidance. The product of this research is my latest novel *The Cape Raider*, set in Simon's Town with its hero, Lieutenant Jack Pembroke RN, lodging in my family home, Fairview, and his admiral father renting Duart House (renamed Milkwood) at Water's Edge. I wanted to recreate the atmosphere of the Town and Bay in 1941: a bustling St George's Street full of sailors from all corners of the Empire, the Lord Nelson pub bursting at the seams, matinees at the Criterion Cinema, the Soldiers and Sailors Rest Room, Just Nuisance on the prowl, the arrival of HMS Hermes for repairs.... and the knocking shops of Paradise Road. My Mother used to tell of tea dances at Admiralty House and the goings-on in "Snoektown," all of which have made their way into the novel.

I still spend considerable time in Simon's Town, staying in the old family house, sailing out in the Bay and delving into the local archives for my next World War II novel, also set in Snoektown.

Biographical note: Justin Fox is a travel writer, photographer, and former Editor of *Getaway Magazine*. He is the author of more than twenty books, including *The Marginal Safari*, *Whoever Fears the Sea*, *The Impossible Five* and *Beat Routes*. His latest World War II novel, *The Cape Raider* (Penguin 2021) is available at Wordsworth and other bookshops and on amazon.com. *The Wolf Hunt* will be published later this year.

C S CABLE RESTORER:

A well-known feature of the Simon's Town Waterfront has all-but disappeared due to the efforts of shipbreakers and much of her steel structure has been carried away to local scrapyards.

Completed in 1944 as *HMS Bullfrog*, *C S Cable Restorer* was employed in maintaining Anti-Submarine loops at British ports for the remainder of World War II. She was then acquired by the Cable & Wireless Company in 1946 and was renamed *Retriever*, and later *Retriever III*.

Although the Cable & Wireless Company had been nationalised by the Labour Government in 1947 their ships were allowed to retain their livery of white hulls and yellow funnels. Some retained the names of former directors, for example *Lady Dennison Pender*, which called at Cape Town in 1942. In contrast, cable ships owned and operated by the U K General Post Office were painted "battleship grey" overall.



C S Cable Restorer WITH *M V Zest II* ALONGSIDE, MOORED OFF LONG BEACH AS A FLOATING DORMITORY FOR SIMON'S TOWN HIGH SCHOOL MARITIME STUDIES STUDENTS

During the 1970s the ship was managed by Safmarine and was kept in readiness in Simon's Bay to locate and repair any damage to the communications cable off the West Coast. In 1990 *Cable Restorer* was chartered to portray the Union liner *RMS Scot* for the SABC TV film *Barney Barnato*, even though *Scot* had two funnels and *Cable Restorer* only one. The mining magnate Barney Barnato was lost overboard from *RMS Scot* on 14 June 1897 near Madeira and according to the TV film, was actually thrown overboard and left to drown in the ship's wake.

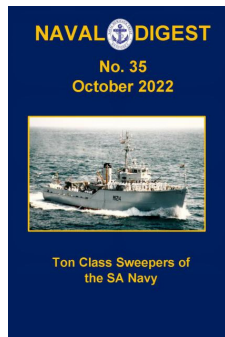
In 1993 when no longer required to repair and maintain the undersea cable the ship was handed over to Simon's Town Museum and was chartered by Mr L.H.M. Dilley. The photograph above was taken some years ago when *Cable Restorer* was moored off Long Beach to serve as a floating hostel for the first Maritime Students at Simon's Town High School. She was no longer required to perform this service when the first Lawhill House, built using ISO shipping containers, was completed as an accommodation block and Maritime Studies facility and she was moved to a berth alongside the Dockyard Wall, where she housed the very popular Roaring Forties Restaurant and Functions Venue.

**“WATER IS THE DRIVING FORCE OF ALL NATURE”
LEONARDO DA VINCI**

Before Simon's Town was connected to the Cape Town water reticulation system the supply of that life-giving commodity to our Town and locally based ships or visiting ships was often problematic. Various dams and reticulation systems were built over the years, and these are described in a booklet entitled “Water Supply in Simon's Town – a short history.” This was compiled by Roger Bagshaw, Chairman of the Society, and is available for sale at the very reasonable price of R 70 per copy at the Museum Bookshop.

NAVAL DIGEST No. 35 – TON CLASS SWEEPERS OF THE S A NAVY.

During the nineteen fifties the Royal Navy built more than 100 wooden-hulled minesweepers commemorating British villages with names ending in “ton.”



They were originally to have been named after insects, but the names were changed before the first ship entered service. The South African Navy acquired ten of these ships, forming the biggest fleet of “Tons” outside the Royal Navy and many young officers and ratings had their first experience of life at sea aboard these lively little ships. As far as is known the former *SAS Pretoria*, sold out of the Service in 1987, was the only one of the forty-four ships allocated an “*Insect*” name to go to sea with one; ending her career as she began it, with the name *Golden Firefly*.

The S A Naval Heritage Trust is planning to commemorate the service of these grand little ships by publishing Naval Digest No 35, entitled “Ton Class Sweepers of the S A Navy,” in September this year.

Copies will be available at a cost of R 50 to members of the Naval Heritage Society and R60 to non- members and may be obtained from the Society, which has an office in the MOTH “Shellhole” below Simon’s Town Museum. As the Simon’s Town Historical Society is a corporate member of the NHT, paid up members of the Society are now entitled to the same benefits as the Naval Heritage Trust members. Further information may be obtained from the website www.navalheritagetrust.co.za.



MV Madiba ex SAS Pretoria on a Synchrolift berth at Simon’s Town Dockyard.

- Photo: Capt. Peter Smith SAN (Retd).

MARYON ALBERT (TOUCHIE) MINICKI (1918 – 2015): ESTELLE MINICKI

Maryon Minicki was born on 12 November 1918, the day after World War I ended, and died on 3 March 2015.

He was a man with many names. Some called him Maryon, some called him Albert, his two Baptismal names, while some called him Touchie, a pet name his sister Josephine gave him. His fellow Civil Engineers used to call him “Piet.” In the Cape Point Area, he was mostly known as “Mr. Minicki,” sometimes shortened to “Mr. Min.”



Maryon Minicki walking on
His beloved mountain.

Photo: Wikipedia.

He was the son of Francis Joseph Minicki and Ethel Wood. Maryon’s father Francis was born in Warsaw, Poland, the son of a Medical Doctor, and his mother was born in Paris. As a young man Francis travelled the World and spoke several languages, including Russian and French. He met and married Ethel Wood who hailed from in Sevenoaks* in Kent, in the Southeast of England.

Francis and Ethel decided to “see Africa” and arrived in Johannesburg in or around 1900. They bought the farm Orange Grove, which today is a bustling suburb of Gauteng. After a holiday in Cape Town they decided to move to the sea with their two children Maryon and Josephine. They sold Orange Grove, where they had lived very happily for several years, and bought a farm named “The Orchards” in the Strand. Their former home, Orange Grove, originally known as “Lemoenplaas,” was developed as a residential area and one of its most famous residents was Mohandas Gandhi, who lived at number 34 Grove Road while practising law in Johannesburg.

Happy days were spent on the beach with friends and the family made trips into Cape Town. On one of these trips Francis Minicki went to the Grand Parade to have a look at the revolving map vehicle, which indicated plots for sale around the Peninsula. He rather liked a property in the Cape Point Area and decided to buy it without any inspection whatsoever and the family went back to The Orchards after a happy day's outing.

After a while Francis decided to have a look at this newly acquired piece of land near Cape Point. After inspecting it he immediately decided to sell it as he thought that it was too remote, and he went back home to The Strand. Ethel was curious and wanted to see this piece of land that had been bought and sold. Having looked at the property she fell in love with the farm and Francis bought it back.

The family moved into the homestead at Klaasjagersberg and Maryon and Josephine spent a very happy childhood there, hiking and horse riding. Not surprisingly friends were eager to visit.

Touchie attended school in Simon's Town before progressing to Diocesan College (Bishops).

Whilst Touchie was attending Simon's Town School his father got to know the operator of the old Aerial Ropeway which connected the West Dockyard to the Naval Sanatorium on the Klaver Plateau above the Town. The operator allowed Touchie to ride in the cable car to the top of the mountain on his way home from school. This saved him a climb to the Sanatorium, but he still had a long walk across the plateau and down the kloof to Klaasjagersberg.

His study of Civil Engineering was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II in 1939. The carefree youngster was now faced with new challenges, stark realities, decisions, and the possibility of death in action. He served first in Kenya, where he underwent training, and later in the Sahara Desert, in Egypt, maintaining the engines of aircraft which landed for refuelling at secret locations. It provided an opportunity for making new friends that he remained in contact with all his life, and also for him to visit exotic places and to develop a fondness for the city of Cairo.

After the War he resumed his studies at the University of Cape Town and completed his Civil Engineering Degree. His first job took him to the middle of

the Karoo, away from his beloved farm. However, he enjoyed the open spaces and plant life around him and experienced life in one of the famed roadside construction camps.

Later he was promoted to Regional Engineer for the Eastern Cape, with its very different scenery, vegetation, and a diversity of cultures. Now married to Estelle and with a baby daughter, Mary, he spent a short time at the National Roads Headquarters Office in Pretoria.

Back in Cape Town, just before retirement, he was a key member of the team involved in designing, planning, and constructing the Huguenot Tunnel in du Toit's Kloof, which was his pride and joy.

Years of happy retirement at Klaasjagersberg followed. Here he planted vegetables for the table, tended his orchard, battled marauding baboons, and hiked up his mountain to collect armsful of fynbos. He also built stables and a bridge and renovated cottages on the farm.

He was never a man to sit still and while away his retirement years. He was always on the go with some new or old maintenance project at his home and at the farm. For many years he was a keen beekeeper and enjoyed working with the hives on the farm. Time was also spent discussing the state of the World as well as amazing developments in technology with his two daughters Mary and Frances and his wife Estelle providing a comfortable home. A man with an excellent memory and a kind and generous nature.

As a matter of interest Maryon's daughter Mary is a trained Document Conservator who works at the National Archive, located in the former Roeland Street Gaol. In 2003 she was a member of a group sent by President Thabo Mbeki to Timbuctu, in Mali, to teach the art of restoring and caring for irreplaceable ancient documents. Some of these were brought to South Africa for an exhibition held at Cape Town Castle.

**Six of the seven oaks for which the town Sevenoaks was known were destroyed during the "Great Storm" of 16 October 1987, the worst since 1703. This article was based on the obituary written by Maryon's widow Estelle.*

MY EARLY CAREER: AUDREY EUNICE READ (1929 - 2022)

I left Star of the Sea at the end of 1945, having just written the Matriculation Examination at the age of fifteen. I did a Secretarial/Bookkeeping Course as I had to wait before I could start a course in Radiography at UCT/Groote Schuur Hospital in 1947. There were many ex-servicemen in the queue and as I was so young I, like many others, had to wait my turn. Well, when I discovered that without further study I could obtain a very reasonable salary, and being never too keen on studying, I commenced work with an Estate Agent and worked there for about four years.

My parents decided that instead of a huge, frivolous twenty-first birthday party, it would be better if I spent the money on a trip to the UK and Europe. I jumped at the idea. I spent a year away working in London and Edinburgh to eke out my money as well as travelling the length and breadth of the British Isles to visit friends and relations.

This trip only whetted my appetite for more travel. Travelling in those days was not as easy as it is now so on my return to Cape Town I started to save and left South Africa again in 1953. I went back to England as a starting point and to reconnect with old friends I worked again at South Africa House, in Trafalgar Square, but some of the shine had gone from the job I had enjoyed there back in 1951. I then answered an advertisement for a job with an oil company which had an office in Oxford Circus. I got the job and at first it was a mixed blessing. Even in 1953 this building had not been repaired after sustaining bomb damage during World War II. The War had ended in 1945 but in this office building, where there should have been walls on the upper storeys, there were huge holes covered up by canvas and plastic sheeting. Well, that was Ok in Summer but come the Autumn I began to freeze. The only way to take dictation was to wear mittens, which made the task very difficult, and secretaries and their bosses wore overcoats in that part of the building.

I even contemplated leaving and joining the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) but was foiled by the man I chose to ask for a reference. He, an old

family friend, refused the reference because he said that my father would never forgive him if I joined the Royal Navy. Not only that but to make sure that I was frustrated in my efforts, wrote to the head of recruiting for the WRNS informing him how ill-advised he would be to accept my application! Later you will appreciate, as I did, that he was actually doing me a very good turn!

Well, it became colder as the months went by and one day there was still ice on the ground and icicles hanging from the cars at ten o'clock on the morning, so I decided that something had to be done to get me to warmer climes. I went to the Oil Company's Personnel Department and was thrilled to learn that I had arrived just in time to be interviewed for a job in The Lebanon. The job was in Tripoli, north of Beirut, a lovely place in those days where one could sail in the mornings and, if inclined to do so, ski in the mountains in the afternoon. What a life, I thought. Well, this life was most enjoyable, a very congenial job with a very vibrant social life. Then came the Suez Crisis in 1957 and we girls were all sent back to the safety of the London Office. It was very boring as we had no work to do but had to appear at the office every day. We did lots of knitting and many crossword puzzles, which soon began to pall.

Just then I was interviewed for a job in Qatar, way down on the Persian Gulf, where in those days there was a lack of communication with the outside World. However, even though the photographs of the Country did not inspire one with confidence that it would be particularly enjoyable, the pay was extremely good, and it certainly was *warm* there. To get to Qatar one had to one catch the Company's chartered aircraft which left every Monday from London Airport, which in those days was at Northolt and not Heathrow. The Departures Building was a Nissen hut and one had to be weighed before boarding the plane in order to ensure that the combined weight of passengers and freight was within the limits for a safe take-off.

This charter went only as far as Basrah, in Iraq, flying via Beirut in Lebanon and Kirkuk in Northern Iraq. At Basrah we transferred to a smaller aircraft for our flight down the Gulf to Qatar. On board, besides myself, were some burly American Drillers who, when we stopped at Dukhan, on the coast of Qatar opposite to Um Said, where I was going, gathered their belongings and started to climb off the plane. They got as far as the door, took one look at the country outside and announced that it was not for them. As you can imagine that did not cheer me up! However, I was too far committed to cry off now, so I sat tight and duly arrived at Umm Said and thought to myself that the Drillers were

right! I was given a great welcome and soon settled into a very interesting job and a hectic social life. We played tennis at night on floodlit courts as it had cooled down a little from the 120° of daytime. In the afternoon it was sailing and swimming.

My job was Secretary and Personal Assistant to the Managing Director of the oil company in Qatar, who was also the Managing Director of several smaller oil companies stretching through the Trucial States and Oman. It was most exciting as I was the only girl allowed to travel and each month a good period was spent travelling with my boss or even alone to do work for the General Managers of these companies.

The work had to be kept very secret and could not always be entrusted to the typists who did their routine work. I also had to decode and encode messages to and from our London Office and half the work was of a very political nature. I was in at the beginning of OPEC (the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries), little realising what an historic moment it was at that time.

It was an exciting time to be in this part of the World, which was still very undeveloped, and before oil in great quantity had been found. There was a civil war raging in Oman and at that young age the prospect of being shot or driving over a landmine still provided a thrill which one found would be lost as one grew older. The men of the Company were very protective towards me and in their all-male existence my arrival was always an excuse for some sort of celebration, and I know that their pin-up pictures were removed from the walls for the duration of my visit.

Well, as I mentioned further back, I did not realise at the time how fate was going to reward me. If I had joined WRNS I would not have met my future husband, Gerry Read, who was working for a different oil company in the Persian Gulf. When he was to be transferred to Southern Rhodesia, we made our decision. I resigned from my job and took a month to travel to England via Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. Gerry and I were married in Southwark Cathedral, in London, in 1959 and sailed for Cape Town via Saint Helena. I introduced him to my parents in Simon's Town and we set off via the Garden Route and Kruger National Park for our new posting in Salisbury. Since then, we travelled almost the length and breadth of Africa during the next twenty years. We retired in 1979 and decided to settle in Simon's Town, where we were made to feel very welcome.

Gerry, who received an OBE in 1969, was honoured with a CBE at Buckingham Palace on 30 July 1980 for services to the Oil Industry.



G. B. Read O.B.E; C.B.E and Audrey at Buckingham palace on
30 July 1980.

When Audrey was working in the Middle East oil was refined in the Producing Countries and was shipped to Europe as petroleum spirit and diesel fuel in tankers of 12000 to 16000 tons deadweight.

After Iran nationalized its oilfields and refineries in 1951 the consumers decided to buy crude oil and refine it in their home countries. A cargo of 16 000 tons of crude oil would not produce much refined spirit so tanker sizes grew rapidly, with the largest built, M V Seawise Giant, completed for C Y Tung in 1979, being capable of carrying around 564 763 tons of crude oil.

KLEINVISCHHOEK :

The house Kleinvischhoek, at the bottom of Dido Valley Road, was, for many years, the home of the Bruyns family. Christian Archibald Bruyns, who was born there in 1827 was the great-grandfather of the late Audrey Eunice Read. The photograph below shows the house on fire in 1965. It was rebuilt and restored and is now owned by the Department of Works on behalf of the South African Navy.



H M SALVAGE TUG ST. DOGMAEL

For many years Audrey Read's Father, Captain Mar-Gerrison, commanded the Admiralty Tug *Saint Dogmael*, one of a large class of Salvage Tugs of which 46 were completed during or just after World War I and the remaining 18 cancelled.

She was launched by the Taikoo Dockyard & Engineering Co. Ltd. at Hong Kong on 11 November 1919 and spent most of her working life based at Simon's Town. She was paid off in 1950 and, when no buyer could be found, was sunk by gunfire out in False Bay.

Dogmael was a Sixth Century Welsh Monk and preacher, descended from the Kings of Wales, who preached in Pembrokeshire before moving to Brittany. The ruined Abbey dedicated to St. Dogmael is situated on the south bank of the River Teifi in Pembrokeshire. – *Wikipedia*.

GLADYS THOMAS nee ADAMS - (1934 – 2022): Yolande du Preez

Poet, authoress, playwright, and political activist Gladys Thomas died on Saturday 2 April 2022 at the age of 87.

Gladys, widow of writer and activist Albert Thomas, was born in Salt River in 1934 to John Adams and his Irish wife Dorothy O'Riordan and later moved to Lakeside. She married Albert Thomas in 1952 and the couple settled in Simon's Town where they had three children, André, Adrian, and Tanja.



Gladys Thomas – Activist, prolific authoress and poetess.
– Photo courtesy of the Thomas Family.

Albert was born on 17 November in 1932 in Simon's Town. He received a BA degree with majors in History and Communication. Afterwards, he received a scholarship for a University in Amsterdam. He started working at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in the Student Advice Office, helping people of colour get their study permits to permit them to study at UCT, assisting with the legalities around it and finding funding for them. He retired in 1993 and in 1996 became a founder member, along with his wife, Gladys, of the Simon's Town Phoenix Committee. The STPC was formed specifically to assist the Simon's Town Museum to collect the neglected history of the displaced community of Simon's Town. This remains its function today. Albert served as the Chairperson of the STPC and as a Board member of the Simon's Town Museum until his death in 2006.

During the 1960s the Thomas family was one of many relocated to Ocean View in terms of the Group Areas Act and Gladys started writing to voice her opposition to Apartheid and to expose the atrocities and trauma its application created.

In 1967 she began writing *Cry Rage*, in conjunction with poet and anti-apartheid activist James Matthews. This work was published in 1971 and had the dubious distinction of being the first book of poetry to be banned in South Africa.

Ms Thomas wrote many plays and books during her career and her work was recognised with the award of, inter alia, the Kwanzaa award for Protest Writing; the Bertrams V. O. Literary Award (1990); the Molteno Medal for her contribution to literature in the Western Cape in 2000; the Western Cape Department of Arts and Culture Award for Literature in 2004; the South African Literary Awards (SALA) Lifetime Achievement Award and the State President's Award, the Order of Ikhamanga,* in silver in 2007. In 1991 Gladys wrote *The Time is Now*, a localised version of the play *Waiting for Lefty* by Clifford Odets. This was to be the debut production of a theatre group called the *Getwise Players*, which was formed in 1993 by Gladys and Albert, who had recently retired. They toured the Peninsula with the play, and it also featured at the Grahamstown Arts Festival.

In 1996 Albert became a founder member, along with his wife, Gladys, of the Simon's Town Phoenix Committee. The STPC was formed by the Simon's Town Museum specifically to research, collect and display the neglected history of the displaced communities of Simon's Town. Albert chaired the Phoenix Committee Meetings and served on the Board of Simon's Town Museum until his death in 2006.

Gladys ran a drama group for children in Ocean View and, in 2005, produced her play *Sex can wait, AIDS can't*, performed by the Ocean View Players and containing an important message for the youth of the Township.

In 2020 Mrs Thomas was involved in the organisation of a march protesting about the allocation of houses being built in Dido Valley (Reported in the Echo of 29 October 2020). Sadly, she did not live to achieve her desire to be allocated one of the houses and to spend her last years back in Simon's Town.

Following her death many people and organisations offered condolences. The family received a message from the Office of President Cyril Ramaphosa stating "The President's thoughts are with Ms Thomas's daughter Tania, and sons André and Adrian as well as her friends and the political and creative activists with whom she associated over many decades."

**Ikhamanga is another name for the flower we know as Strelitzia.*

This article is based on an Obituary by Yolande du Preez which appeared in the False Bay Echo published on 14 April 2022. The photograph was supplied by Mrs Thomas' family via the False Bay Echo.

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FORGOTTEN RAILWAY SIDINGS OF THE SOUTH PENINSULA:

By Sydney Cullis

When the railway from Cape Town reached Simon's Town in 1890 it resulted in major changes to life in the town - the journey now taking only a few hours instead of at least a whole day. It was a substantial benefit to the only major industry in the Southern Peninsula at that time, the Royal Naval Dockyard. There was a proposal to extend the line with a siding into the Dockyard itself but, unfortunately, this never materialised and all freight had to be unloaded into the goods store (now offices of a dive school) and then transferred by road. It is probable that, as the siding would have to pass through the grounds of Admiralty House, it was not considered a viable option! At the opening ceremony in 1890 it was, however, suggested that the line would be extended the 7ks to Miller's Point – but this, too, did not materialise.

Nevertheless, access to the railway enabled new industries to be established in the South Peninsula-including the Glencairn Quarry, Glass Factory and Marine Oil Refinery - which all needed to be serviced by railway sidings - now gone.



Simon's Town Station in 1905 showing the goods shed. The turntable would have been behind the train in the station.

THE SIMON'S TOWN TURNTABLE:

At Simon's Town station there was, however, a short siding which serviced the turntable - necessary in the days of steam locomotives as the visibility from an engine, especially with a tender, running in reverse was not ideal, access to controls was difficult and most engines travel slower in reverse.

The Simon's Town turntable was installed in 1890, having been manufactured by Cowans Sheldon and Co Ltd in Carlisle in the UK in 1883. It was 16.75 m in length which accommodated locomotives up to the Class 6J but not the Class 19 D used later. However, with the electrification of the line in 1928, it was only needed for the steam powered goods trains and in the 1960s they were superseded by diesel locos which were easier to control when running in "reverse" mode.



The turntable manufacturer's plate.



The former Simon's Town Turntable in situ in Loerie.

Surprisingly, it is still in remarkably good condition with the makers nameplate still in situ – the date, 1883, suggests that it may initially have been installed at Kalk Bay - as that was when the line reached there – and then moved to Simon's Town when the line was extended. Maybe a “fairy godmother” could wave her magic wand and return it to Simon Town, where, with some modification to the catenary support pylons, it could be fitted back to the original siding as the circular stone embankment is also still in very good condition. Unfortunately, despite an extensive search, no photograph of the Simon's Town turntable in situ has been found – so if anyone has one it would be most appreciated.



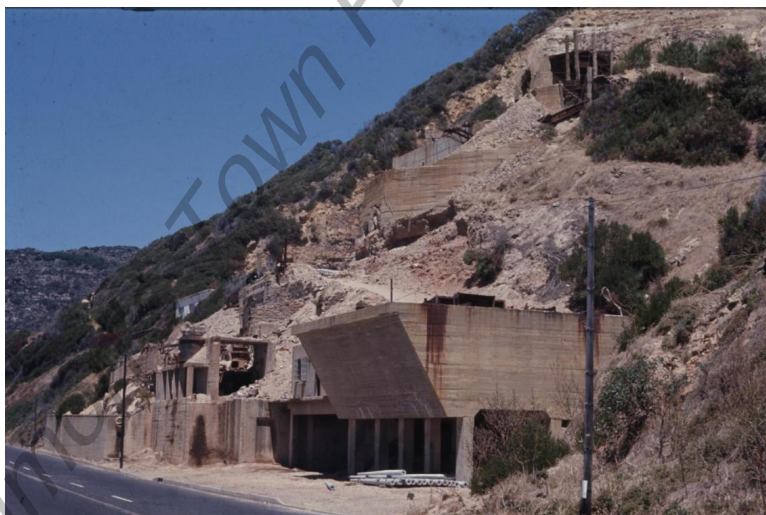
The turntable embankment in Simon's Town today.

GLENCAIRN QUARRY

The Glencairn quarry opened in 1898 and was operated by the Divisional Council until World War I. After the War it was reopened by an engineering firm, Strong and Moore, until it closed in 1978, mainly due to environmental concerns. It produced stone crushed to various sizes which was used for construction - especially of roads, railways and the Simon's Town Dockyard. In about 1900 James Graham installed the crushing plant and a slip siding which connected it to the suburban mainline on the Sunny Cove side, but having to cross the Main Road. This, needless to say, caused considerable inconvenience to road traffic when a train was crossing and as traffic increased, especially with an increase in tourists, this led to the removal of the siding in 1957 when the Main Road was widened. Thereafter until its closure in 1978, it was necessary to use road transport.

Since then, there have been many suggestions of how to utilise the quarry, including an aviary for raptors and a hotel - but so far it has only been used by the False Bay Sports Shoot Club as a shooting range, a rehearsal venue for the Quarrymen's Male Voice Choir and an occasional Rave.

Again, we have no photograph of the railway siding in action.

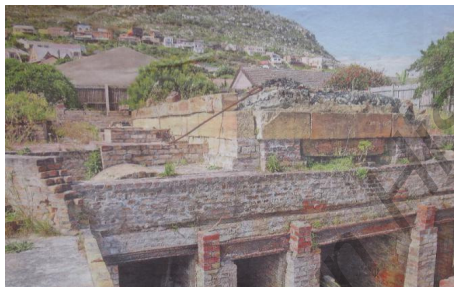


Glencairn Quarry showing the hopper beneath which the trucks were filled

GLENCAIRN GLASS WORKS

In 1902 Anders Ohlssen established a glass factory in Glencairn to supply his brewery in Newlands with bottles. The choice of this site was on account of the local supply of remarkably pure sand, kaolin (China Clay) and limestone - and the existence of a railway siding from the mainline for transport of the end product up the line to his Newlands Brewery and the supply of coal needed for the furnace. The siding had been built in 1900 by the Salt River Cement Company to transport sand, and possibly limestone, to its Salt River Works but this closed in 1902. The Glass Works only functioned until 1906 when it closed as it was not economically viable and the supply of kaolin was exhausted.

Unfortunately, despite a detailed plan to restore it as part of a Heritage site in 2013, no funding could be obtained and the site was sealed with new houses built above it. The only reminders of its existence being the road named Glass Furnace Way in Glencairn.



Glencairn Glass Works prior to being buried



The glassworks site is behind last houses on right in this photograph.

In 1902 the siding had been used for the test firing of a 9.2 inch gun which had been modified in the Salt River Cape Government Railway Workshops to be

carried on a Type U7 well wagon - this was needed as a result of the lack of heavy artillery for the British forces during the Second Anglo Boer War (South African War). It was at the time the heaviest weapon ever mounted on a railway wagon and the forerunner of the massive rail- guns used in both World Wars. Originally named "Sir Redvers" after Sir Redvers Buller, it was later changed to Kandahar after Lord Roberts of Kandahar. It was intended to use it against the Pretoria fortifications but, when Pretoria was left undefended by the Boers, it travelled to Belfast in the Eastern Transvaal. It arrived after peace had been declared on 31 May 1902 and was never used in combat.



Upper photograph: test-firing a 9,2-inch gun in 1902.

Lower photograph: The 9,2-inch mounting "Kandahar."

SIR JOHN JACKSON'S SIMON'S TOWN QUARRY.

The construction of the East Dockyard and the Selborne Dry Dock started in 1900. The stone needed for some of the buildings and for the fill to create the wharfs came from two quarries on the northern slopes of Simonsberg, the scars of which are still obvious today.

To transport the stone from the quarries to the dockyard a (UK) Standard gauge (4ft 8.5inches/1.435 metres) railway was built which descended along what is now Runciman Drive as it curves around the Old Burial Ground – where there is now a memorial to the railway at c/o Runciman and Jan Smuts Drives.



Jackson's Quarry siding



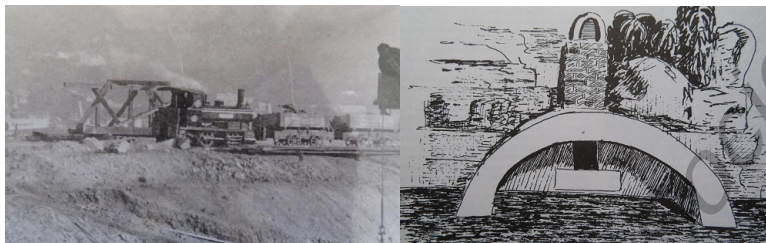
Left: The route taken by the trucks loaded with sandstone, under Queen's Road and down to the Dockyard construction site.



Right: The memorial stone in Runciman drive.

It then passed under Queens (Main) Road and turned left through what is now the Institute for Maritime Medicine (IMM). Close to this intersection was situated what was initially thought to be a "Hot shot oven" which provided heated cannon balls for the Boetselaar Battery on the seaward side of the

Martello Tower, a considerable distance away. A more recent study, however, suggests that the structure was a way-station related to the railway.



Left : A locomotive en route from Jackson's quarry to the construction site in the Dockyard.

Right : The so-called "Hot Shot Oven" in Queen's Road.

(An archaeological survey indicated that this was too far from the battery to be a "Hot Shot Oven" but was probably part of a Guard House)

Another urban myth is that one of the steam engines used in the project is now in a park at the corner of Belvedere and Keurboom Roads in Claremont – but this American-built engine has a different provenance.

MARINE OIL REFINERY

In the early 1940's a Mr F C Jameson and two van Zyl brothers were involved in a Shark Liver Venture and needed an area in which to erect a factory but, because of the unpleasant smell produced in the process, it needed to be remote from a built-up area. The Mayor of Simon's Town, L.C. Gay, mindful of the potential of such a venture to provide employment to the large number of workers from the Naval Dockyard, now unemployed as a result of the end of World War II, facilitated the allocation of the area of land at the bottom of Dido Valley for the project, with the full approval of the Administration and the Government Health Department.

So, on this windy waste of white sand swept by the strong southeaster in summer, came into being the Marine Oil Refiners of Africa Limited. It became a large and successful enterprise, earning much foreign exchange and employing a large labour force. It produced 500 U.S gallons (1900 litres) per day and a wide variety of products, including candles, medical oils (especially Vitamins A and D) and various grades of oil used in paint manufacture and other lines.

A railway siding was built which, in addition to a large fleet of road tankers, provided the means to deliver the raw materials, fuel oil and coal for the furnaces and take away the end products.



Marine Oil Refinery of Africa
Limited In its heyday



Oil tankers and trucks in the
Marine Oil Refinery siding

At the time there were plans to build a fishing harbour adjacent to the factory in order to facilitate the trawlers' delivery of their catch directly to the factory – but this never materialised.

In 2001 the factory closed mainly because of environmental concerns - especially asbestos and nickel - and, even after demolition of the factory in 2005, the rubble was so toxic that it took more than ten years for the toxicity to fall to levels safe enough to allow the commencement of what was to become the Harbour Bay Shopping Centre. At about this time the railway siding was removed – the last reminder of the Forgotten Railway Sidings of the South Peninsula.

SIMON'S TOWN DURING THE EARLY 1800s:

Due to severe financial constraints on our Navy very few ship movements are seen by the residents of Simon's Town and the adjacent suburbs. Records held by Simon's Town Museum indicate that in years gone by both in peace and in war Simon's Bay was much busier. Take the early years of the nineteenth Century for instance.

On 29 July 1800 *HMS Tremendous* (Captain Osborne) arrived. She had been completed by William Barnard at Deptford as a 74-gun ship of 1656 tons, similar to *HMS Ganges* and is of interest because she was later rebuilt at Chatham Dockyard to incorporate a system of diagonal framing devised by Robert Seppings, the Master Shipwright. When relaunched in 1810 *Tremendous* did not exhibit the deflection normally found with a wooden ship and Seppings' system was adopted for the construction of future "Wooden Walls."

On the same day *HMS Jupiter* (Captain Losack), reputed to be one of the fastest ships in the Royal Navy, arrived with her prize *Montgomery* and the merchantman *Starling* (Captain Gardiner) arrived with a cargo of pepper.

On the thirty first of July the brig *Alert* (Captain Kelly) left Simon's Bay bound for Mossel Bay and the fourth of August saw the departure for Table Bay of the Sloop *Benjamin* with sundries for the Fleet and *Surprise* with bread for the Agent Victualler.

According to popular South African author Lawrence Green (Grow Lovely, Growing Old page 217) –

"A queer spectacle in Simon's Bay in 1800 was the hulk of *HMS Hope*. She was in such an unseaworthy condition that she was sold to a speculator. This enterprising man brought her close to the beach, provided a bridge and let the officers' quarters as dwellings and the rest of the ship as storerooms." This *HMS Hope* was possibly one of nineteen Dutch Hoys which were purchased by the Royal Navy in 1793-4 and were armed with one twenty-four pounder gun and three thirty-two pounder carronades to serve as coastal gunboats. She was disposed of in 1798.

On 14 May 1806 the frigate *HMS Woolwich*, with Commander Francis Beaufort in command, arrived in Simon's Bay, escorting a fleet of East Indiamen from England to the East. Her captain had devised a scale of thirteen wind strengths

varying from Calm to Hurricane and had recorded these in his ship's logbook on 13 January 1806 while his ship was anchored in the Solent. During the ship's southbound voyage, the logbook would have recorded weather conditions using Beaufort's Scale for the first time. No doubt his new scale would have been discussed with other naval officers in Simon's Town before *Woolwich* continued her eastwards voyage. On the return voyage to England the scale was refined and was eventually accepted as the twelve wind-strength Beaufort Scale we use today.

John Osmond, a former naval shipwright who settled and acquired a considerable number of properties in Simon's Town, surveyed the hull and fittings of the ship *Union* and on 11 December 1808 certified her fit to take on cargo. *Union* was owned by Irishman Michael Hogan (1776 – 1833), a prominent shipowner of dubious reputation.

At that time British flagged ships were not allowed to transport slaves but were permitted to land slaves taken from captured enemy ships. Hogan's ship *Collector* was known to have landed and sold several cargoes of Mozambiquans, supposedly "liberated" from French and other enemy ships, making him a very wealthy man. After leaving Cape Town Hogan lived in New York, Cork, Havana and Valparaiso, and died (intestate) in Washington DC in 1833.

John Osmond had arrived in Simon's Town in December 1799, aged thirty, aboard *HMS Lancaster*, a 64 gun ship purchased from the Honorable East India Company while still on the building berth. She was originally to have been named *Pigot*.

HMS Lancaster sailed from Simon's Town on 29 August 1806 escorting a number of transports to take part in the unsuccessful second British invasion of the River Plate, attempting to wrest control of the territory from Spain.

As a matter of interest, following a visit to Simon's Town John Wilson Crocker refers in his report to "Sir John Osmond, formerly Acting Master Shipwright" (ADM 359/33C/108). This appears to be the only reference to Osmond having been knighted and perhaps Crocker meant "King John," the title bestowed by the residents of Simon's Town which led to his house being referred to as "The Palace."

Another arrival in the early 1800s was *L'Esperance*, a French prize captured by H M Gun Brig *Staunch*, with Lt Ben Street RN in command. She was offered for sale on 30 January 1810 “as lies” on the beach. Possibly her resting place was to be the location for the waterfront residence named “L’Esperance.” This substantial building was one of a number acquired by compulsory purchase by the Cape Government on behalf of the British Admiralty for the construction of the East Dockyard. The residence was allocated to the Naval Constructor appointed to Simon’s Town Dockyard by the British Admiralty and the last occupant was Alan K Bull RCNC who vacated the house to return to the UK in 1969. The residence was then demolished to make room for *SAS Dromedaris*, the multi-storey submarine base.

THE FRIGATE *SAS Spioenkop* IN ACTION:

Although Simon’s Town residents have not seen much naval activity in the Bay recently, many would have noted the arrival of the frigate *SAS Spioenkop* at the end of May. While she was patrolling the Mozambique Channel during March 2022 her Maritime Reaction Squadron, trained at the former SAN Gunnery School on Redhill, was involved, as part of the SAMIM (SADC Mission in Mozambique) in the fight against ASW (Al Sunnah wa jama’ah) terrorists who had invaded Matemo Island, North of Pemba.



Spioenkop, a German-designed and built Meko Class Frigate, bears the pennant number F 147 which was previously worn by the Type 12 Frigate *SAS President Steyn*.

BOB Mc JANNET (1928 – 2022)

Over the years many interesting people have chosen to reside in Simon's Town. Bob Mc Jannet, who died on 2 April 2022, was one such person. Born in Johannesburg on 17 August 1928, Bob attended Parktown Boys' High School before studying at the University of Toronto, in Ontario, Canada.

His career as a Human Resources Manager led him to work and reside in Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa before he retired to Simon's Town to pursue his interests of walking, swimming and gardening. Bob was also an active member of the Simon's Town Probus Club, which meets for lunch and fellowship every month at the Country Club.

During one of these convivial lunches Bob told the writer that his family, the Jannets, moved from France to Scotland to serve Mary Stuart, who reigned as Queen of Scotland from 1542 to 1587. While there, presumably to blend in with the local population, the family adopted the name Mc Jannet.

Bob's Uncle, Donald Mc Jannet, lived in Saint Cloud, in Paris, and tutored HRH Prince Phillip during the 1930s while the Greek Royal Family was living in exile in France. The two remained in contact and Monsieur Mc Jannet was invited to attend Prince Phillip's wedding in 1947 and Queen Elizabeth's Coronation in 1953.

Bob was married to Maureen and, sadly, died on her birthday, 26 April 2022. A memorial service was held at Simon's Town Methodist Church on 22 June 2022. RIP Bob.

MARGARET AND JANET CARTWRIGHT:

Margaret and Janet, the “Cartwright Twins,” celebrated their ninetieth birthday on 20 June 2022 with a Service at St. Andrews Church, just across the road from their house in Glencairn, followed by “tea and sticky buns” with their many friends at the nearby home of Lady Cilla Bromley.

The two sisters, both qualified librarians, have given many years valuable service to St. Francis Church in Simon’s Town and Simon’s Town Museum and Historical Society.

The Cartwright family has been associated with Glencairn, and South Africa in general, for very many years and the twins count among their extended family Lieutenant General Denis Earp (1930 – 2019), who was Chief of the South African Air Force from 1984 to 1988 and the writer Olive Schreiner (1855 – 1920).



Janet (left) and Margaret with Archdeacon Richard Martin on their ninetieth birthday. – Photo: Mary Ann Kindo.

THE SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' HOME, SIMON'S TOWN: ELIZABETH (LIBBY) CHAMBERLAIN (NÉE JAKUES):

In early 1947, our parents Vicky and Ted Jaques were appointed as joint wardens of the Soldiers and Sailor's Home by Reverend Creed. At the time, my dad was partially disabled so the bulk of the work initially was done by my mother. She was an incredibly strong and capable woman who set to with a will. Thus, they became "Mom and Pop" to hundreds, if not thousands of passing sailors and marines.



The Soldiers' and Sailors' Home is the two-storey brick building to the left of the Methodist Church. – Photo: Simon's Town Museum.

At that time not only did she do all the daily cooking and serving of about 120 dinners each night, but this did not include her supervision of cleaning (she was fanatical about it), making and changing beds, administration of accounts and supplies and she also shopped for and ordered everything herself. There was a constant call for tea, coffee and snacks like pies and sandwiches. No production line here, just her! Her daily routine during this busy year also meant making special food for the returning prisoners of war from Japanese camps. For about a year, their blue hospital uniforms were a constant presence in the town but more so at the "Home". She made easily digested food twice daily, but the favourite was her "egg flips" (raw egg, milk beaten very well with vanilla essence added) drunk cold.

The Navy-Blue Bedford Van called twice daily bringing the metal “mess” plates and taking the food to the patients. Her home-made soups, filled with all the fresh vegetables, were especially popular.

In 1948, she was joined by her father, Fred Sydow, who was known to many in Simon’s Town. He was also a very skilled chef as his family not only owned hotels in Cape Town but he had worked with and for them. This helped to ease my mom’s burden and she was able to help Rev. Goldman’s wife with her projects. Suddenly, or so it seems, life at the Home became even more hectic as the Korean War began. Once again Simon’s Bay and the docks were full of passing ships taking men and equipment East and the Home was busier than ever.

As the South Atlantic Station became busier and seemed more important than ever, my parents decided that the Billiard Room built separately at the back of the Home was little used and would serve better as an extra dormitory because the place was bursting at the seams. So once again, my poor Dad set about installing a toilet plus hand basins in this room plus 12 extra beds and bedside lockers. Goodness knows where my mom got them from, but they were gorgeous brass beds and were finished with the “new-fangled” foam rubber mattresses. This dormitory became a favourite of the Royal Marine bandmen. These Marines were like family to us as they regularly practised in the front lounge (next to Church Hall) when the Recreation Hall was busy. My Mom also loved it as she was often asked to sing with them at Concerts in the Recreation Hall. Halcyon days as I remember them!

My Grandad died in 1953 but by this time Dad was fully mobile and able to shoulder the extra load. But “times they were a-changing” and nowhere more so than in Simons’ Town. By 1956 or so, the big cruisers with large crews were no longer stationed in Simons’ Town together with a smaller vessel. At first a light cruiser HMS *Euryalus*, was stationed with one frigate but by 1958/1959 this had been reduced to a single frigate with a crew of 200 plus. The Home was no longer buzzing with activity but slowed down. Not only did the Income drop but it was becoming a burden for the Methodist Church. The Sailors’ Society SA took over the running and costs of the Home. Things were about to change in the town itself when the Simon’s Town Agreement was signed, and the Dockyard and all the rest of the ancillary buildings were transferred to South Africa. The South Atlantic Station, as a British administered and held Base, was no more.

The South African Navy moved from Durban to Simon's Town and a new era began. Our first taste of the difference was when four SAN gunnery officers and their families were billeted at the Home whilst their new homes (in the former RN Hospital above Runciman Drive) were refurbished for this purpose. These were quickly followed by sixteen SAN sailors who were also billeted at the Home. SAN sailors were very different to the RN as, not only were there far fewer of them, but they also did not need a home from home. The Home had to re-invent itself or sink.

The large dormitory above the church hall was stripped of the beds and mattresses and this now became a very basic cinema hall every Sunday night. This was for the SAN sailors and their friends and became pretty popular. Once again my poor Dad became a builder/carpenter as he installed a wooden fire escape from the last dormitory window down to the small alcove between the church hall entrance and vestry. The Sailors Society provided the projector and Dad became the projectionist as well as selling cool drinks and sweets at intervals between reels. The Home continued to run but served a very much smaller community service. In the meantime, the void left by the Royal Marines was filled by the South African Navy Band who practised again in the front lounge. They did this for about two years and once again Mom was in her element. To this day I am a great fan of brass bands.

My memories are many and very varied and I could continue "ad infinitum." I loved every minute of it. Some of my favourite memories were spending every Sunday morning after church sitting on the front step with a bowl on my lap whilst I shucked a bag of peas, followed by peeling what seemed like a mountain of potatoes and carrots for Sunday lunch. Both my brother and I had to help wherever and whenever needed. Our weekly chore before he left school was to count the linen for the bi-weekly laundry with one of us making the list. We were in trouble if there any errors when our sergeant major (Mom) checked it. It was such a happy "Home," warm and welcoming. My parents retired in 1965 due to ill health and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home was returned to the Methodist Church.

Many non-service people visited the Soldiers and Sailors Home prior to 1947 and also during our parents' time in charge. These included:

Rider Haggard, who is said to have started writing "King Solomon's Mines" whilst in the first cabin at the top of the stairs. This was the best room to be had!

Rudyard Kipling, in the early 1900s. He was said to use it on his way back to the United Kingdom from India.

Miss Emily Hobhouse (1860 – 1926) who, in 1901, published her “Report of a visit to the Camps of Women and Children in the Cape and Orange River Colonies.”

Lord Baden Powell, the well-known founder of the Boy Scout Movement, was also rumoured to have visited on more than one occasion.

Members of the first scientific expedition to Marion Island in the South Atlantic stayed there while in transit and it was also home to servicemen and their families going to or returning from Tristan Da Cunha. Some of these families became life-long friends of my parents.

The Tiller Girls, a famous dance group, were billeted in the home during the early 1950s whilst waiting for the Union Castle Liner to return to the United Kingdom at the end of their South African Tour.

As a matter of interest, Baroness Betty Boothroyd, who was speaker of the British House of Commons from 1992 to 2000, was a Tiller Girl from 1946 to 1952 when a foot infection brought her dancing career to an end. – Ed.



The Tiller Girls on the beach at Durban.

– Photo: The Tiller Girls Website

Another notable visitor to the Home would have been the writer Edgar Wallace, (1875 – 1932) who served as a Medical Orderly in the Military Hospital and, in 1901, married Ivy Maude Caldecott, daughter of the Methodist Minister Rev. William Shaw Caldecott. – Ed.

MUSEUM SUBMARINE *SAS ASSAGAI*, FORMERLY *SAS JOHANNA VAN DER MERWE*:

Some very good news recently was the formal signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between the South African Navy and the Naval Heritage Trust for the development and management of the *SAS Assegai* Submarine Museum of Technology, as an annexe of the Naval Museum, in the Navy's Cole Point parking area next to NSRI Station 10. This area includes the old operations room which will provide all the necessary facilities for the museum and has direct pedestrian access for visitors.



Floating Museum *SAS Assegai* at her former berth alongside the Dockyard Basin wall.

Source : *SAS Assegai* web page.

The agreement was signed by Chief of the Navy, Vice Admiral Mosiwa Hlongwane, in Pretoria, and then on 16 May by the Chairman of the Naval Heritage Trust, Mr Mike Bosazza, in the presence of Flag Officer Fleet, Rear Admiral Musenkosi Nkomonde, Flag Officer Commanding Naval Base Simon's Town, Rear Admiral (JG) Joseph Dlamini, and the Officer in Charge of the S A Naval Museum, Commander Leon Steyn. A momentous moment and whilst the end of a long arduous journey, the beginning of a challenging task of raising the funds to bring the project to fruition. Source: Spindrift June 2022, edited by Rear Admiral (JG) A. G. Söderlund SAN (Retd).

OSVLO :

Simon's Town residents may occasionally hear the buildings on the mountain side of the Main Road, across from the old Masonic Hall, referred to as "OSVLO."

Until the South African Government took over Simon's Town Dockyard in 1957 the Public Service employed very few artisans. The only department having a significant number of tradesmen was Water Affairs, which employed plumbers and pipe fitters.

Suddenly the Personnel Division in Pretoria had to deal with a host of tradesmen including Shipwrights, Joiners, Marine Fitters, Engine Fitters, Pattenmakers, Sailmakers, Riggers, Marine Draughtsmen, Painters and Signwriters and semi-skilled workers such as Lagers, Welders, Burners, Wiremen and Iron Caulkers, working some 900 miles/1400 kilometres away.

Sorting out the affairs and problems of these people, located in the far Southwest of the Country, proved to be problematic so it was decided to appoint a senior administrator, an Under Secretary no less, to set up an office in Simon's Town to handle the task. This officer was allocated offices in the Old Hospital on the uphill side of St George's Street, and he was given the title "Ondersekreteraris Vlootsake," hence "OSVLO."

The Committee of Simon's Town Historical Society is attempting to have the Old Hospital Terrace Buildings declared a National Monument.



SEA HURRICANE LOST IN SIMON'S BAY:



A HAWKER SEA HURRICANE WITH ARRESTER HOOK DEPLOYED, READY TO LAND. Photo : Wikipedia.

Hawker Sea Hurricane V 6944 from the Fleet Air Arm Base *HMSAS Afrikander I* at Wingfield (Goodwood), dived into Simon's Bay on 27 July 1942 during a dummy attack on an R N ship. Unfortunately, the pilot, Lieutenant R V Smith RNR, was killed. - Source: WINGFIELD by Cdr Gerry de Vries SAN (Retd)

IMAM M. A. BAKER COMEMORATIVE PLAQUE RESTORED:

Over the years the plaque in Quarry Lane celebrating former Simon's Town resident Imam Baker became illegible due to the ravages of time and environment.

During 2022 Historical Society Committee Member Roy Burnie cleaned and restored the commemorative plaque which records an important event in the Town's history.

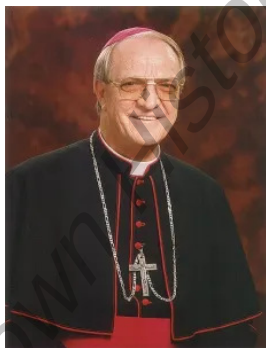


THE RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP REG CAWCUTT (1938 – 2022):

Reginald was born into the Cawcutt Family, well known in Cape Town Horse Racing circles, in the Cape Town suburb of Rugby on 25 October 1938. He attended Rugby Primary School and St Agnes Convent in Woodstock before going on to Christian Brothers College in Green Point.

He then studied at St John Vianney Seminary in Pretoria before being ordained in Cape Town on 9 July 1962.

From 1969 until 1985 Father Reg Cawcutt served as Roman Catholic Chaplain, ministering to Roman Catholics in the South African Navy and their families. He was very popular with both Permanent Force and National Service Personnel as well as with his fellow Naval Officers. Many will remember his rather unruly red setter, George, which roamed the Town and regularly rode on the ferries between the East and West Dockyards.



Father Cawcutt was ordained as an Auxiliary Bishop in Cape Town on 26 August 1992. His coat of arms reflected his connection with the Catholic Church, the South African Navy and the horse racing fraternity and bore the motto “Nisi Dominus in Vanum” – “Without the Lord (we labour) in vain.”

For Personal reasons Bishop Cawcutt resigned from the Roman Catholic Church on 17 July 2022 but continued to minister to Catholics in need. He died on Friday 5 August 2022 following a lingering illness and will be fondly remembered and sadly missed by many in Cape Town and the South Peninsula.

Bishop Cawcutt’s funeral service was held at Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church in Lansdowne at 11:00 on Wednesday 17 August.

TRAMAKAS (SEA) FESTIVAL: SIMON'S TOWN MUSEUM 28 to 30 JULY 2022:

Connecting with the ocean and our environment lay at the heart of the Trammakas Film Festival held at Simon's Town Museum in July this year. According to the Museum Manager, Ms Cathy Salter, the Afrikaans expression *tramma kassie*, used as an alternative to *baie dankie* when expressing gratitude, is a derivative of the Malay *terima kasie*. In this case, advises the Museum, the expression reflects a connection to the ocean while telling a story of slavery, of exile and a reconstitution of home.

Tazneem Wentzel, Simon's Town Museum's Education Officer, told the False Bay Echo reporter that the Museum partnered with Nature, Environment, Wildlife and Film (NEWF), the Cape Town Museum of Childhood, the Princess Vlei Forum, Arkys Outreach and Oceaneers to host the festival.

As part of the festival the Museum ran an education conservation programme which included shoreline and wetlands workshops which exposed pupils from Bonteheuvel's Brambleway Primary School to the coastal environment and showed them how species are connected.

A Rocky Shore Workshop was conducted by Sally Sievewright, Projects Director of ARKYS Outreach, a non-profit company which organises upliftment and training projects.

The Wetlands Workshop was led by Denisha Anand on behalf of the Princess Vlei Forum, an organisation which focusses on wetland restoration and community conservation.

The lecture hall at the Museum was transformed into an interactive space where participants in the workshops could touch, taste feel and discuss.

This item is based on an article by Erin Carelse, which appeared in the False Bay Echo on Thursday 11 August 2022.

OBITUARY : REAR ADMIRAL (JG) V. F. HOLDERNESS SM MMM SAN (RETD) :

Born in Cape Town less than three weeks after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, Victor Holderness matriculated from the SATS General Botha in 1956. He was awarded the prize for Rule of the Road at Sea, a Husun sextant, which he used throughout his career. In 1957 he joined Shell Tankers, serving on eight of the Company vessels and qualifying as Third Officer before resigning to join the South African Navy, in which he was commissioned as a Sub Lieutenant on 1 August 1960.

After gaining experience as a watchkeeper in *SAS Transvaal* and then *SAS Mosselbaai*, he attended the Sub Lieutenants' Qualifying Course in 1961 before being appointed to *SAS Vrystaat* as assistant Navigator and was awarded his Bridge Watchkeeping Certificate in March of the following year. In April he was appointed First Lieutenant of *SAS Port Elizabeth*, rejoining *SAS Vrystaat* at the end of the year as Gunnery Officer.



On 1 December 1963 he was promoted to lieutenant and joined *SAS President Steyn* as Navigator. In July of the following year he was sent to *HMS Dryad* in Portsmouth and completed the Long Navigation and Direction-Finding Course, followed by sea time in a NATO Exercise. He then attended the Minesweeping Officers' Course at *HMS Vernon* with a short appointment to the Coastal Minesweeper *HMS Repton* as Navigator. He returned to South Africa in July 1965.

Appointments to *SAS President Steyn* and then *SAS Jan van Riebeeck* as Navigation and Communications Officer were followed by appointment to *SAS Johannesburg* in command.

Shortly afterwards he was transferred to *SAS Tafelberg* as Navigating and Communications Officer for the ship's courtesy visit to Argentina.

In mid-1968, as a Lieutenant Commander, Vic was appointed to the frigate *SAS President Steyn* as Squadron Navigation Officer for a courtesy visit to Australia.

Selected for submarine training and now married to Nicki he joined the *Daphné* Project in 1969, receiving training in several French submarines, including *FNS Euridice* which was lost with all hands just three weeks after he left her. Qualifying as a Submarine Commander he was appointed Reserve Officer Commanding for the Project and in January 1971 returned to south Africa as Executive Officer of the new Submarine Base *SAS Dromedaris*.

Victor and Nicki Holderness owned a house in Disa Road, Murdock Valley, before purchasing and renovating The Old Farm House at Froggy Farm.

As Submarine Squadron Operations Officer he was promoted Commander on 1 May 1972 and in February 1974 he was appointed Officer Commanding the Unit, serving until April 1976 when he was appointed Project Officer Project Picnic, which involved the acquisition of two corvettes from France. In addition, he was appointed Officer Commanding *SAS Springer*, the Temporary South African Naval Base in France and Officer Commanding (Designate) *SAS Transvaal*, the second of the two ships to be built.

Unfortunately the Corvette and Submarine acquisition Projects were cancelled unilaterally by the French Government for political reasons and he returned to the RSA in 1980 and attended Naval Staff Course 13, of which he was the Senior Student.

During the following year he was appointed Senior Staff Officer Operations at Naval Command Natal, returning to the Cape as Senior Staff Officer Training at Naval Operations Command. In February 1984 he was appointed Officer Commanding Naval Operations Command. Two years later he was appointed

Chief of Staff at the recently formed Naval Command West, serving until March 1989 when he took early retirement.

In 1992, as an officer on the Naval Reserve, he was called up as Navigation Instructor to a class of Midshipmen embarked in the helicopter carrier *SAS Tafelberg*. During a training cruise which took the ship up the East Coast of Africa he, and his son Simon who was one of the midshipmen on the Course, were able to visit the grave of his Father who had died there in 1944.

As a founder of St Luke's Hospice he joined the Board in 1995, serving as Chairman from 1998 until 2002. He remained a Trustee of St Luke's Foundation until January 2020.

In 2009 he was installed as an Ancient Mariner of the Seven Seas Club, having achieved the age of seventy years and having been a loyal Club Member in good standing for at least thirty years.

In addition to being a skilled navigator and ship handler Vic Holderness had a variety of interests and hobbies including speleology and skindiving and he renewed his private pilots' licence at the age of sixty.

Simon's Town Historical Society is grateful for the support it received over the years from both Victor and Nicki Holderness.

Victor Frederic Holderness died (or "Crossed the bar" in Naval parlance), at his home in Froggy Pond on the afternoon of Thursday 3 June 2021, following a long illness borne with great fortitude; leaving his widow, Alderman Nicki Holderness, and sons Simon and Luke and their families.

In accordance with his wishes a Requiem Mass was held at Saints Simon and Jude Catholic Church in Simon's Town on Saturday 12 June 2021, followed by burial in the Naval Section at Dido Valley Cemetery. Due to Covid restriction the mass and burial were attended by family and invited friends only.

This item is based on the obituary published in July 2021 in Spindrift, the monthly magazine of the Naval Officers Association of South Africa, by the Editor Rear Admiral (JG) Arné Söderlund.

SAYERS LANE BURIALS:

Human remains excavated from a building site in Sayers Lane when foundations for a three-storey block of flats were being dug, were re-interred in the Old Burial Ground at Seaforth during August 2022.

Sayers Lane is adjacent to Studland, built as a brewery in 1797 and is some 150 metres from the site of a hospital which treated crew members of the Dutch East India Company ships between 1765 and 1796. The bones unearthed by the contractors were carefully collected and taken to Simon's Town Museum. Half of them were sent to Holland to be analysed by the Laboratory for Human Osteoarchaeology of the University of Leiden, the Earth Science Stable Isotope Laboratory of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the Centre for Isotope Research at the University of Groningen.

The project was funded by the Cultural Heritage Agency and in August 2022 the bones were placed in six coffins and were taken by hearse from Simon's Town Museum to the Old Burial Ground at Seaforth, where two graves had been dug. The burial service was conducted by Dominie Martin Barnard, minister of the Fish Hoek Dutch Reformed Church in Dutch, Afrikaans and English.

Among those attending the service were representatives of the Dutch Consulate, the Western Cape Government and the archaeologists who had been involved in the excavations. The City of Cape Town was represented by the Ward Councillor, Simon Liell-Cock.

Ms Cathy Salter, the Manager of Simon's Town Museum, stated that she and her staff were happy that the remains which had been in their custody had at last received a dignified burial.



One of the coffins being lowered into the grave.



Harry Croome; Colette Scheermeyer; Jessica Glendinning Policy Officer Culture & Media, Consulate of The Netherlands in SA; Cherry Dilley (STHS); Roger Bagshaw (Chairperson of STHS) and Michael Fortune.



Antonia Malan (historical archaeologist and member of Belcom); Colette Scheermeyer (Manager: Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites Unit at South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA); Michael Janse van Rensburg (Director: Museums, Heritage and Geographical Names); Horst Kleinschmidt (Chairperson of the STM Board) and Michael Fortune (historical photographer archivist). Horst Kleinschmidt (Chairperson of the STM Board) and Michael Fortune (historical photographer archivist).

Further information is available in the following articles –“Let sleeping bones lie” – Echo September 5, 2019; “Origins of Sayers Lane Bones traced” – Echo, November 12, 2021; “Final Resting Place for Sayers Lane Bones” - Echo September 01, 2012.

Simon's Town Historical Society

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Articles dealing with matters of historical interest in Simon's Town and the surrounding area will be considered for publication.

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