



SIMON'S TOWN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN



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OUR BULLETIN IS PUBLISHED ANNUALLY.

SIMON'S TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - DELIVERED TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1st JUNE 2024

For my Report this year I would like to introduce you to our hard-working Committee :

PRESIDENT : **Captain Bill Rice** is the Editor of our annual Bulletin and is always looking for articles of historical interest for publication.

VICE-PRESIDENT : **Prof. James Willis** is the son of our founder "Dumps" Willis. He attends our committee meetings and is a valuable addition to the Committee.

CHAIRMAN : **Roger Bagshaw** in addition to his duties as Chairman he serves on the Architectural Advisory Committee and is happy to advise on building plans within the Heritage Protection Overlay Zone. He is constantly in touch with the Department of Public Works and Heritage Western Cape in the Society's endeavours to address the problem of derelict buildings in Simon's Town in particular Palace Barracks and Old Hospital Terrace.

VICE-CHAIRMAN : **Eric Mawhinney**. In addition to his in- depth knowledge of Simon's Town he has placed all the Bulletins dating back to 1960 on the Society's website, which he manages, as well as a walking tour of the Historical Mile. He is also assisting the Museum in digitising the accessioned items in the collection (about 18 000) and has constructed a book scanner to scan all the Royal Naval records held in the Museum.

TREASURER : **Roy Burnie** Not only attends to the Society's financial affairs but is in charge of all the historical plaques, and has repaired the Jubilee Square clock as well as the Dockyard Church clock both of which are now chiming again.

SECRETARY : **Cherry Dilley** takes the committee meeting minutes and is also the Membership Secretary. She also assists with research and other queries.

R/Adm. Arné Söderlund : keeps the Society up to date with STADCO and The Naval Heritage Trust in particular *Project Assegai*.

Harry Croome : Keeps an eye on the Old Burying Ground, Dido Valley Cemetery and Just Nuisance's Grave. Harry also assisted Roy Burnie with the repairs to the Dockyard and Jubilee Square clocks. He is to be commended for all he does to preserve the historical fabric of the Town.

Diana Reekie : Researches and arranges for the mounting of the Memory Boards along the West Dockyard wall.

John Newton : Is involved with the replacing of the West Dockyard gate.

Esther Le Roux : Is in charge of the Society's Facebook Page and also updates the list of constantly changing traders along the Historical Mile. She is also our social media and publicity guru.

Roger Bagshaw : *CHAIRMAN.*

CATHRYNNE (Cathy) SALTER : MUSEUM CURATOR 1988 to 2024 : CHERRY DILLEY.

After thirty six years of dedicated service Cathy Salter retired on the 30th September 2024.



CATHRYNNE (CATHY) SALTER.

Cathy was born in Simon's Town on the 22nd February 1964 to Peter and Barbara Salter.

After matriculating she worked for a time as a civilian in the South African Navy and joined the Museum on the 1st May 1988.

With her artistic talents she took on the role of Display Artist and was responsible for all the Museum's displays.

In 1994 she was instrumental, together with the Curator at the time, in establishing *Project Phoenix*, formed to address and preserve the history of the 6 000 residents of Simon's Town who were removed under the Group Areas Act of 1967, a project which has grown from strength to strength over the years. Studying part-time at the University of Cape Town Cathy obtained a Post Graduate Degree in Museology and African Studies placing her in good stead for her future in the Museum world.

In 2003 Cathy was appointed Curator of the Museum, taking over from Cherry Dilley when she retired; a position she conscientiously held with dedication and efficiency until her retirement in 2024.

Cathy will be greatly missed by Museum staff and Historical Society members and she is wished a long, happy and carefree Retirement with her family and pursuing her interest in local historical research.

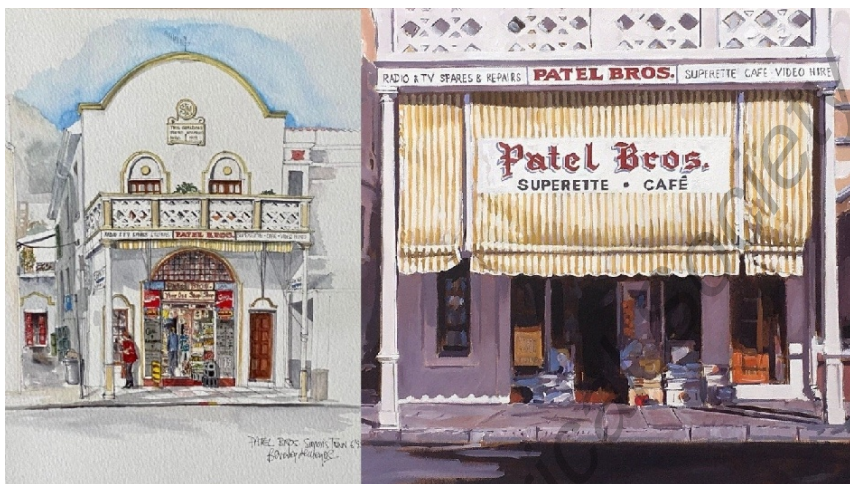
No. 120 ST. GEORGE'S STREET : False Bay Echo 22 February 2024.

The 198 years old building at 120 St. George's Street Simon's Town, known as "Patel Brothers Building" was sold by public auction on 12 March 2024. The sale was conducted by Galetti Corporate Real Estate at The Capital, 15 on Orange Street, in Cape Town.

Once the oldest school on the Cape Peninsula (1826) the building later (1885) Served as Municipal Offices. In 1905 Deeded to Municipality and in 1913 Rebuilt as Simon's Town Municipal Building. For a period it was known as Juta's Pharmacy before being purchased in 1985 by brothers Natver and Chotu Patel who had run a café in the village since 1956. Although Simon's Town was a "White Group Area" in terms of the prevailing laws, the Town council gave the Patel brothers a special dispensation to purchase and occupy the property.

The distinctive building has a total floor area of 495 square metres, of which 335 square metres is residential, above the retail area. The upper floor has five bedrooms and three bathrooms.

During the 1980s and 1990s as well as groceries and sweets Patel brothers sold a range of electronic equipment.



Patel's Building

OBITUARY : SAS SOMERSET : R Adm (JG) A. G. Söderlund SAN (RETD).

Conceived on 15 April 1941 and born and baptised six months later at Blyth (Northumberland) UK on 21 October the same year, the young HMS BARCROSS took her first steps to commissioning on 14 April 1942 - 364 days after conception. Moving to warmer climes soon after she arrived in Saldanha in September 1942.

She soon took South African citizenship and on 21 January 1943 joined the S A Naval Forces and became HMSAS BARCROSS. With the re-establishment of a permanent navy in April 1946 she became part of the 'Permanent Force' based in Durban with the rest of the Navy and in 1951 changed her name to SAS SOMERSET before moving to Simon's Town in 1957.

She had a varied career in South African waters, serving mainly in the Western Cape but with forays up the coast to assist in salvage and recovery or more mundane dumping of (obsolete) explosives – unforgettable experience for the young officers sent to accompany her and her legendary captains who normally operated alone on the bridge and not usually out of sight of land.

For those who had these unique opportunities it was a step back in time and not unusual to come back on watch with the same chart that you had handed over to your relief still on the table. The radar hut at the back of the open bridge, initially with its antiquated A-Scope and only relative bearings, did provide

short term refuge in bad weather.

She always had the most amazing Senior Ratings, all past their prime in years but with the most experience that could be found in the Navy when it came to seamanship and rigging as well as operating steam machinery. For years Warrant Officer “Lofty” van Wyk was the Coxwain and he would bring her alongside no matter what the Captain ordered.

Sadly those legendary Captains have all passed on – Jerry Germishuis, Brian Duncum, Dennis “Lew” Mallalieu, Spencer Claydon-Fink and Bob Hind among others.

She finally retired on Friday 21 March 1986 after 43 years of dedicated service. It was a very special day with a final sail around the Bay and full naval honours on her return escorted by tugs with water jets and the ship’s company of SAS TAFELBERG manning the ship’s side to cheer her as she entered the basin for the final time.

In May 1988 she moved to her retirement home in the posh Victoria and Alfred Waterfront as part of the now defunct Maritime Museum. Initially treated with love and care she soon seemed to become a burden and was later relegated to an obscure spot and was ignored for many years, open to the elements and on the verge of sinking with little hope of recovery.

Finally on 27 March 2024 she was admitted to the Robinson Dry Dock which was to be her final resting place.



The remains of SAS SOMERSET in the Robinson Graving Dock at Cape Town.

On Thursday 24 April 2024, at the age of 82 years, she was finally gone and “knackered” to boot – an ignominious and sad end for a “Grand Old Lady.”

She will be missed by all who had the privilege to serve in her during her career in the S A Navy.

SAS SOMERSET was named after the horse ridden by Richard Phillip (Dick) King on his epic 600-mile, ten-day, journey from Port Natal to Grahamstown in 1838. Her sister ship SAS FLEUR was named after the stallion ridden by General Christiaan de Wet. – Ed.

CHARLES DARWIN BUST : NATASHA BEZUIDENHOUT

A proposed memorial bust of naturalist Charles Darwin to commemorate the role his visit to the Cape of Good Hope played in the development of “one of the most influential theories in the histories of science” could be on the cards for Simon’s Town.

The project is supported by the Geological Society of South Africa, Cape Town Heritage Foundation, Overberg Geosciences Group and Simon’s Town Historical Society.



Sculptor Johan Steyn with a clay maquette
Of the proposed bust. – Photo : Mike Bruton.

According to Dr Craig Smith, Executive Manager of the Geological Society of South Africa and project manager Professor Mike Bruton, the proposed bust will depict the twenty seven years old naturalist as he looked in June 1836 in the sculptural style of the eighteen thirties.

A fundraising campaign has begun to produce a bronze bust that will be created by renowned sculptor Johan Steyn. According to Steyn “Professor Bruton proposed it to the Simon’s Town Historical Society to be placed in Jubilee Square.” He added that the process to complete the bust could take up to ten

weeks. “I have already made the clay bust and the foundry process is eight to ten weeks,” said Steyn.

A request for permission to install a bust of Darwin at Jubilee Square was submitted at Subcouncil 19 in January for consideration by the Department of Arts and Culture. Subcouncil 19 Chair Simon Liell-Cock says the process has reached public participation.

“There needs to be a reason why there should be a memorial to Charles Darwin and what connection he had with Simon’s Town, if any.” Says Liell-Cock.

In a statement Smith and Bruton explain the motivation behind the memorial bust. “His (Darwin’s) discussions with the astronomer/natural philosopher Sir John Herschel at the Cape were crucially important to the development of his groundbreaking theory of evolution by natural selection.”

Charles Darwin’s nineteen-day visit to the Cape in May and June 1836 during the five-year voyage of HMS BEAGLE was the first opportunity he had to discuss his embryonic ideas on evolution with knowledgeable English-speaking scientists.

They add that Darwin had a thorough understanding of geology when he embarked on the five-year voyage of HMS BEAGLE in December 1831.

“His insights into geology made him realise that contrary to contemporary teaching, the Earth is much older than previously thought and that the crust is continually changing due to forces that are still active today.”

It was during this period that Darwin reportedly realised that if physical environments change, plants and animals would need to change in order to be well adapted, thrive, breed and pass their genes on to the next generation.

This article was published in the False Bay People’s Post on Tuesday 28 May 2024. In August 2024 members of Simon’s Town Historical Society voted to contribute R 5 000 to the erection of the bust. – Ed.

THE ROAD FROM CAPE TOWN TO SIMON’S TOWN : JAMES HOLMAN (1834) : CAPE TOWN ARCHIVES.

There has been an attempt made to establish a regular stagecoach between Cape Town and Simon’s Town but not being found to answer, was speedily given up. The failure of this speculation is not surprising, owing to the difficulties of the road, which, on the last eight miles, is at times almost impracticable to a wheeled carriage, and in consequence of the intersection of the various bays, as Kalk Bay, Fishhook Bay &c, &c, it would require no ordinary share of skill to

construct a road that should be fully available. The bays are now crossed on the loose sand when the tide is in; and lower down on the hard sand when the tide is out; in the latter case, the path is occasionally very dangerous, as the land springs frequently produce quick sands, which have been the cause of several serious accidents; in some instances with even the loss of life. The small snatches of road between the bays have been repaired and are very good, which seems all the amendment which the present line of road is capable of receiving; and, if another were made around the heads of the bays, the distance would be considerably increased.

This plan, however, could not be executed without incurring an immense expense; even more, probably, than the Colonial Government would be willing to grant. There cannot be any doubt, that if a good and safe road were made to Simon's Town, so that travellers might journey securely by night, as well as by day, it would greatly benefit that town—a circumstance, by the way, to which the inhabitants of Cape Town would be very likely to object; since, in the same proportion as it served Simon's Town, it would injure the local interests of Cape Town.

Major Mitchell, who is the present engineer of the Colony, and who is a very scientific and intelligent person, seems the most fitted to undertake the work, and there is little doubt that if the Colony would consent to bear the expense, he would be able to design a plan for overcoming all seeming difficulties. Setting aside the convenience of travellers, and merely considering the matter with reference to the transportation of goods, it seems to me that an efficient road is an absolute desideratum; especially as the safety of their respective harbours varies with the seasons, being one half of the year exclusively in favour of one, and the other half in favour of the other. It is also said that many masters of vessels prefer incurring the risks of Table Bay, rather than putting into Simon's Bay, knowing that their supplies must come from Cape Town, and that they must endure a thousand vexations arising out of the inconvenience of the land carriage.

James Holman (1798 – 1858) was invalided out of the Royal Navy when he became blind and spent the rest of his life travelling the World and writing about his travels and adventures. Known as the “Blind Traveller” he was the only blind man to have circumnavigated the Globe.

Major Charles Cornwallis Mitchell, the Cape Colony's first Surveyor General, was born in Exeter, Devon, in 1793 and died in Eltham, in Kent, in 1851.

THE ROCKY ROAD TO SIMON'S TOWN: Mrs A. F. TROTTER

Eleven years earlier (*in 1687 - Ed*) Simon (*van der Stel Ed*), going by sea, had discovered and named Simon's Bay. Now the Commissioner, Daniel Heyns, with the new Governor, the Rear Admiral, two skippers and two Councillors, started off on a land journey in that direction.

Steep and high mountains were said to intercept their journey, across which the tracks were so perilous that they had to walk all the way. Their cattle became exhausted, their wagons were only got over the rocks with danger and difficulty. Finally the boat not being able to reach them on account of the wind, they were unable to pass the mountain facing them. After a night in the sandy creek where there was not enough fuel to stock a good-sized return ship, nor soil enough to grow vegetables, they returned home discomfited, saying that the anchorage was foul.

Now that civilisation has made rough places smooth, the difficulties of the Pioneers are hard to realise. They had been as far as Kalk Bay, to which the children of the Cape now go in half an hour by rail for their holiday afternoons. But it is good to remember our own advantages. The path over the headland to Simon's Bay was only cut with much trouble and expense many years later; and a very short time ago indeed, travellers were very glad to make use of "Farmer Pecks" old inn at Muizenberg as a place to rest and bait the horses before crossing the dangerous sands of Fish Hoek.

Mrs. Alice Fame Trotter was born in Dublin around 1862 and died on 21 December 1961. Copies of her books are kept in the Cape Archives and are also available for sale on the Internet.

SAS ASSEGAI : BASED ON AN E-MAIL CIRCULATED BY RADM (JG) A. G. SÖDERLUND SAN (RETD).

On Saturday 20 July 2024 at 12:47 the submarine ASSEGAI, formerly SAS JOHANNA VAN DER MERWE, was successfully lowered onto a prepared platform alongside the NSRI base at Simon's Town. She will now be cleaned up and painted prior to becoming the only submarine in Africa to be opened to the public. Hopefully this target will be achieved in time for the influx of holiday visitors in December.

The move was carried out by Vanguard, a company which moves extreme loads including ships built at the Damen Shipyard in Cape Town which have to be moved to the Table Bay Synchrolift for launching.

Dockyard staff worked wonders fabricating and fitting the strengthening beams and plates over the weekend and until late in the evenings during the week and the job was completed by 14:00 on Wednesday 17 July, allowing Vanguard to resume equipment and load tests on Thursday. Everything was thus ready for an early start on Friday for the 280 metres trip and by 09:50 ASSEGAI was underway astern. By 10:00 she was at the point to begin her 90° turn to the site.



SAS ASSEGAI being moved on steerable trollies supplied and operated by Vanguard. Photo : Heritage Portal Article – Commander Leon Steyn SAN.

Whilst all had been worked out on paper it soon became apparent that the three-point turn was optimistic due to a number of factors necessitating the moving of containers, lambda walls and even a lamp post which was in the way. The rain which came in squalls did not make the task any easier. It was a long day but by 16:00 she was finally heading in the right direction and shortly thereafter we cleared the final hurdles, getting her protruding sonar dome over the foundations, in some cases with only a millimetre or two to spare, the thickness of the plastic coating.

On Saturday morning the final few metres were covered and by about 09:30 she had reached her final position and the rest of the morning was spent lifting tar and breaking concrete to allow her to be lowered onto the foundations without the sonar dome being damaged. At 12:47 the boat was lowered and was in her final position. The ASSEGAI Team then took a short break before meeting on Thursday to plan the preparation of the “shoreside” facilities as well as to prepare safe access to the boat for visitors of all ages. There remained much to be done in order to prepare the boat to be open to the public during the Christmas Holiday period.



SAS ASSEGAI formerly SAS JOHANNA VAN DER MERWE at her new home close to the NSRI Station. When open to visitors she will be accessible from the Cole Point parking area. – Photo: R Adm. (JG) A. G. Söderlund SAN (Retd).

JOHANNA VAN DER MERWE (1825 – 1888) :

Johanna Cornelia van der Merwe was born in Makhanda, then known as Grahamstown, on 7 March 1825. On 17 February 1838, at the age of twelve years, she survived an impi attack although she sustained more than twenty assegai wounds.

She later married Hendrik Frederik Delport and bore him seven sons. She died in Rouxville, in the Orange Free State, on 15 January 1888 at the age of 62.

Her name was proudly borne by the third Daphné Class submarine acquired by the South African Navy during the nineteen-seventies. – Wikipedia.



SAS JOHANNA VAN DER MERWE sailing from Toulon on 4 May 1972. She arrived in Simon's Town on 19 June 1972. photo: S A Navy official.

OBITUARY : CAPTAIN TONY DURELL :

Captain A. J. (Tony) Durell died in Panorama Hospital in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town on 27 July 2024.

Tony, who spent the last few years in Montagu, lived in Glencairn for several years and was an active and generous supporter of the Historical Society and other local institutions. He made an annual donation of R 6 000 to be divided between the Simon's Town Historical Society and Simon's Town Museum and recently donated R 5 000 to the Darwin bust project mentioned earlier in this Bulletin.



Luncheon at Noordhoek – fltr Captain Tony Durell, Captain Terry Korsten SAN (retd), Christine Durell, Colin Belshaw, Des Korsten, Hon. Editor and Sheila Belshaw. – Photo : Sheila Rice.

Tony was born in Kent in South East England and attended King's School in Rochester before joining the Training Ship WORCESTER to prepare him for a career at sea. Throughout his life he remained in contact with T S WORCESTER and Kings School Old Boys organisations.

At one stage when he was between jobs at sea he managed a club in Chatham. The Kray Twins, notorious London gangsters, would occasionally call in with their parents for a quiet drink and Tony had photographs in his collection of himself with Ronnie and Reggie Kray.

He spent some time aboard World War II vintage cargo ships operating between Hong Kong and North Vietnam before settling in the USA and becoming a tanker master, commanding very large crude carriers (VLCC, formerly known as Supertankers) until he retired.

Tony was a dog lover and devoted much of his time in Montagu to working with rescued animals at the SPCA. He and Christine adopted a donkey at the Donkey Sanctuary in McGregor.

Captain Tony Durell was predeceased by his wife Christine and is survived by his nephew Simon Durell who lives in the UK.

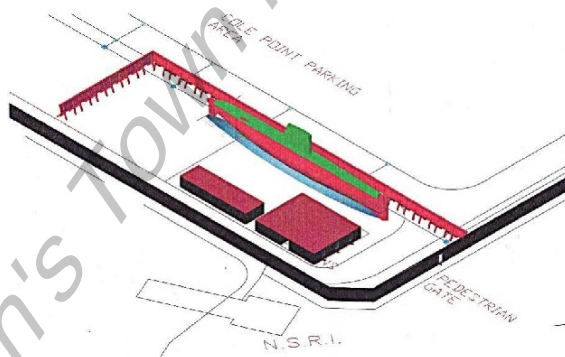
NAVAL DIGESTS 38 AND 39 :

The SA Naval Heritage Trust has recently published Naval Digests 38 and 39.

Digest No 38, Author Commander Leon Steyn SAN, deals with the establishment of the South African Indian Corps Training Battalion at Salisbury Island, in Durban. The Battalion trained Indian volunteers to serve in the S A Navy, becoming the fully-fledged Naval Unit SAS JALSENA.

Digest No 36, Author Captain Chris Manig SAN (Retd), deals with Operation CARAWAY, a very successful visit by the frigate SAS SPIOENKOP to Singapore, Shanghai and other Far Eastern ports between 16 September and 6 December 2008.

Both books may be purchased from Captain Glen Knox SAN (Retd) (glenknox090@gmail.com) at the SA Naval Heritage Trust Office beside the NSRI Building and SAS ASSEGAI at Cole Point.



Artist's impression of the submarine and ASSEGAI museum offices. – Heritage Portal article – Commander Leon Steyn SAN.

116 St. GEORGE'S STREET : SIMON'S TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.



The Rectory Building, situated at 116 St. George's Street, dates back to 1815 and was built on open land (previously the Government owned "Shambles," or abattoir) alongside the newly erected St George's Church as a parsonage. The land was granted by Colonial Government. In 1816, a school room, the first school in Simon' Town, was added. In 1819, a flood destroyed the church and badly damaged the parsonage which was later repaired. In 1849, the property was transferred by Deed to the Anglican Church. An 1890 photograph shows a simple two storey building with covered veranda. In 1904, the building was converted to shops and in 1909 an upstairs balcony was added and advertised as the St Leger Balcony for fine meals. In 1930 the back rooms were consolidated to a two roomed flat and an identical upstairs floor was added. The Kalidas family have been in business in Simon's Town since 1909 and the building is currently home to Kalidas Clothing, Footwear and Swimwear and Harry's Surf Shop.

Your Hon Editor was told that in the days when naval ratings had to go ashore in uniform, lads would leave a set of civilian clothing with Harry Kalidas and change before going off to town. On their return they would change back into uniform before rejoining their ships.

THE SIMON'S TOWN WEST DOCKYARD CLOCK : ROY BURNIE.

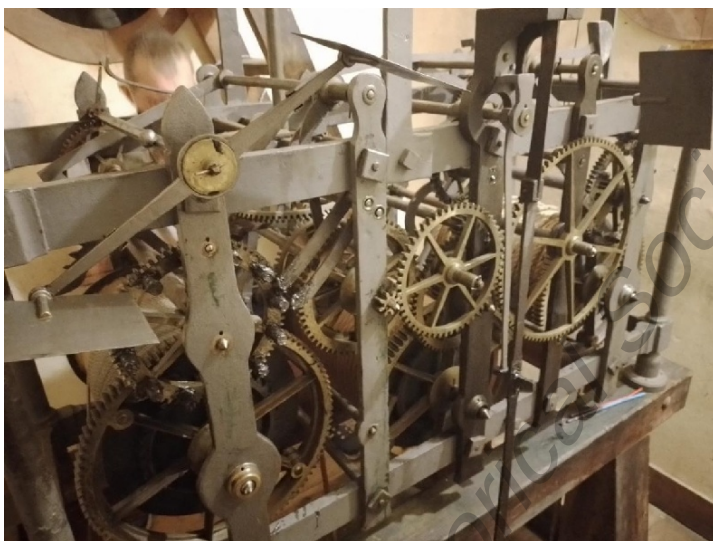
The Simon's Town West Dockyard Clock is chiming again after being silent for over a year, due to the crucial spring clutch breaking and allowing the 120 Kg "Going Weight" to run backwards at high speed down the shaft and ripping the winding rope off the drum.



The hour bell rope drum. – Photo : Roy Burnie.

The clock has been maintained for a few years by volunteers, and currently by retired SA Navy WO Harry Croome, Glencairn resident Stewart Neville and Simon's Town resident Roy Burnie. He took over from David Erickson, a past Chairman of the Simon's Town Historical Society, who regrettably had to stepdown from maintaining the clock due to ill health, and sadly subsequently has passed away in England.

The spring clutch had been giving trouble over the pasts few years, with numerous repairs being carried out to keeping this historic clock going.



Close up of the clock mechanism. — Photo : Roy Burnie

When the troublesome part broke on this occasion, it literally flew apart with no hope of any “Heath Robinson” repairs being carried out. The team considered the option of a total rebuild of the clock by a professional clockmaker, but the cost was eyewatering.

Contact was made with Thwaites & Reed in England, who originally manufactured the clock for the Royal Navy in 1816, to determine whether they would have been able to manufacture the part, but this would have required numerous other crucial large parts to be shipped to the UK.

We were extremely reluctant to send the requested parts in case they were lost in transit, which would have spelled disaster of ever getting the clock going again.

The other option was to find a local engineering company to manufacture the replacement part. We approached numerous companies but all were reluctant to even consider making this part, as the original part was handmade like the rest of the clock using wrought iron.

Stewart finally tracked down a company near Stellenbosch, “Extreme Waterjet Cutting”, who specialize in manufacturing precision parts using very high-pressure water cutting equipment. The process involves scanning the original part and producing an exact replica in high grade tool steel.



(Above) The new spring manufactured in Stellenbosch using a high pressure water jet to cut high grade tool steel.

(Below) The new spring in its place in the clock mechanism. Photos : Roy Burnie.



It is truly amazing that this crucial part, made by a highly skilled blacksmith over 200 years ago, has now been replicated using state of the art water jet cutting technology. When we finally installed the new part, it fitted like a glove without any adjustments.

The Simon's Town Dockyard Clock is now keeping almost perfect time, within 1 minute per week, which is remarkable for a 200-year-old clock. As it is an 8 day clock, which requires winding weekly, the adjustment to the time is a quick and simple process.

We have received numerous compliments from residents who love hearing the bells chiming again. Unfortunately, there has been a single complaint, and it is regrettable that you can't please everyone.

As the clock is of historical significance and importance to the town, the Simon's Town Historical Society generously covered the cost of re-manufacturing the part, and our gratitude also to Extreme Waterjet Cutting for manufactured the part at cost.

The Simon's Town Royal Navy Mast-House and Sail-Loft were built in 1815 in the West Dockyard and the Turret Clock was installed in the tower in 1816. The clock was supplied by Dutton & Sons of London and manufactured by Thwaites & Reed who were established in 1740, and are still maintaining famous clocks around the world, including the British Houses of Parliament Clock in the St. Stephen's Tower now renamed the Elizabeth Tower, better known by the 15-ton bell Big Ben.

Ironically, the Mast House looks more like a church and is often referred to as "Dockyard Church", and from its earliest time church services were held in the Sail-Loft. With the advent of steam its use as a sail-loft fell away, and it was finally converted to a church shortly before WW2 and consecrated in 1946. The Mast House and Sail-loft are now part of the SA Navy Museum complex and exhibits are housed in the Mast House section of the building, while the Sail-Loft remains a church for special occasions.

Following some basic research regarding Public Turret Clocks in South Africa, the Simon's Town clock might very well be the oldest public turret clock in South Africa and possibly the oldest even in Africa.

We were under the impression that the clock, manufactured in Amsterdam and installed in the Groote Kerk in 1773, was the oldest, but have since discovered it was replaced in 1829 by a clock manufactured by John Moore, an associate of Thwaites & Reed. Another old clock is the Lutheran Church clock in Strand Street installed in 1820, also manufactured by Thwaites & Reed.

If anyone can dispute our claim that Simon's Town has the oldest Public Turret clock in South Africa, and possibly in Africa, we would appreciate hearing from you.

William Heath Robinson (1872 – 1944) was an English cartoonist, illustrator and artist who drew whimsically elaborate machines to achieve simple objectives. The earliest Oxford English Dictionary reference to “Heath Robinson” as a noun describing an unnecessarily complex and implausible contraption is from 1917. – WIKIPEDIA.

OBITUARY : HELEN MATHERS (1943 – 2024)– ERIN CARELSE.

Helen Mathers, known for her contributions to the local theatre scene and her commitment to community service, has died. Ms Mathers was born Helen Joy McCreadie to Herbert and Helen McCreadie and died on Thursday August 22 at the age of 81.

According to her daughter Kathryn Mathers her passion for the theatre began at the age of nineteen and remained a central part of her life.



Helen Joy Mathers nee McCreadie
25 May 1943 to 22 August 2024

She was a member of several local theatre groups including the Anchor Players, Fish Hoek Dramatic Society and the Muizenberg Amateur Dramatics Society (MADS).

Her notable roles included the amoral matriarch in *The white sheep of the family* (2006), the haughty Empress in *Alladin* (2012) and Miss Burgess in Agatha Christie's *Cards on the table* (2017), all performed at the Masque Theatre. Daniel Enticott, Chairman of the Masque Theatre, spoke highly of her impact, saying "Helen Mathers was a legacy volunteer at The Masque for many years. She was always a familiar face, whether on stage or running front-of-house refreshments. Helen was an integral part of the Masque and will be deeply missed."

Ms Mathers was also involved in various community activities after moving to Fish Hoek in 2001.

She participated in a women's aquarobics group, volunteered with Meals on Wheels; was involved with the library and read to residents at Nerina Gardens old-age home.

For fifteen years she worked at Simon's Town Museum as a bookkeeper and schools guide.

"Helen was the bookkeeper at the Museum but her extensive knowledge of Simon's Town and the Navy made her invaluable in education programmes and tours. She also played a key role in organising events, commemorations and fundraisers for the Museum," said Museum Manager Cathy Salter.

Ms Mathers had four children – Anthony, Kathryn, Barbara and James – and seven grandchildren.

"She was known for her bossiness and her stern looks if anyone cut into a queue, but she was extremely loyal and reliable, as shown in her work in the amateur dramatics world, and always ready to help her friends," said Kathryn.

In her later years Ms Mathers shared her life with David Biggs, a well-known wine writer and columnist, in Fish Hoek.

"We will miss her chocolate squares, her cutting-out of interesting newspaper articles, her endless cups of tea, and her updates on the latest book she was reading," Kathryn said.

This obituary is based on an article published in the False Bay Echo on Thursday 5 September 2024.

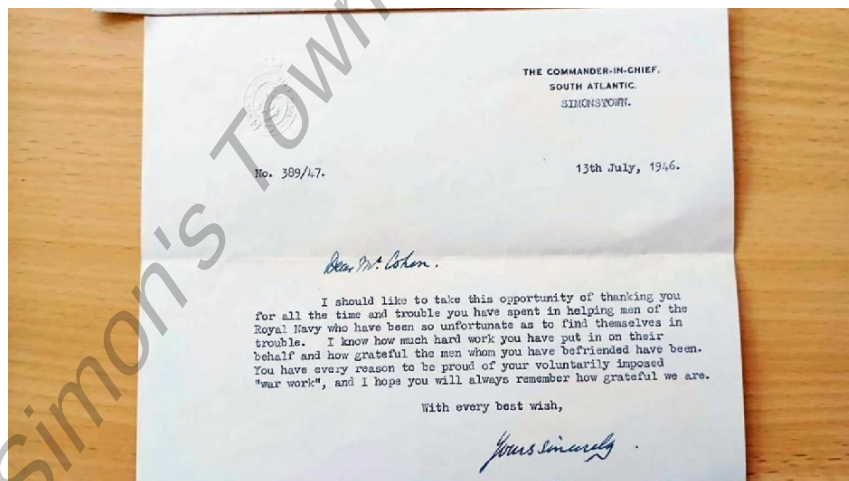
VIC COHEN'S LEGACY IN LAW AND TUNA FISHING : YOLANDE DU PREEZ.

Vic Cohen, father of fishing legend Brian Cohen, is remembered for his profound contributions to the legal world and the fishing community of Simon's Town.

Brian established the All Africa Junior Record at sixteen when he caught a 600 pound (272,23 Kg) tuna and was winner of the State President's Award for Sport on two separate occasions. He still holds the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) record for the largest bluefin tuna ever caught in Africa on a rod and reel, which weighed in officially at 845 pounds/383,4 kilograms (A tale of celebs, spies and very big tuna" Echo 12 August 2021).

According to Brian his father served as the legal adviser to the Royal Navy stationed at the Simon's Town Naval Base throughout World War II. before retiring. "He was the only lawyer in Simon's Town and practised law for fifty two years, and his dedication to the Naval Personnel, both Officer and Ratings, earned him respect and gratitude from the entire community. He offered his services free of charge to sailors who often found themselves in "various predicaments."

Throughout the War Simon's Town was a crucial naval port, with ships arriving two to three times a week."



Letter from Vice Admiral Sir Robert Lindsay Burnett

After Vic's death in 1983, Brian discovered a letter from Vice Admiral Sir Robert Lindsay Burnett GCB KCB DSO C StJ RN, a senior figure in the Royal Navy. The letter expressed profound gratitude for Vic's selfless contribution during the war effort, recognising the pivotal role he played in supporting the naval personnel.

However, Vic Cohen's legacy is not only tied to his legal work. He pioneered the sport of game fishing from boats in the 1940s and discovered the existence of bluefin tuna in Fish Hoek Bay in 1964. He began amateur fishing from a modest thirty foot boat named DOREEN. As his love for the sea and fishing grew he acquired two former naval vessels, SALLY and, later, LA MORVA. It was aboard LA MORVA, bought for £400, that Vic made history, catching the first bluefin tuna just one hundred metres from Fish Hoek Beach.

LA MORVA holds a special place in Brian's memories, not only as his father's prized fishing vessel, but also as a boat with its own significant history.

During World War II, he says, LA MORVA was the last British vessel to leave Singapore carrying survivors and Naval personnel as the Japanese invaded the City. Following Vic's death LA MORVA was sold to a diver on the West Coast and subsequently changed ownership multiple times. According to Brian the last known report was that LA MORVA had been wrecked off the coast of Namibia.



The motor launch LA MORVA heading into Kalk Bay Harbour with Vic Cohen at the tiller.

Photo : Cape of Diab.

Editor's note : After leaving Singapore loaded with men, women and children the motor launch LA MORVA motored and sailed across the Indian Ocean to Durban and was handed over to the S. A. Navy. The boat had a drop keel and a considerable amount of lead ballast for sailing. She was used as a training vessel and was based at Saldanha and later at Simon's Town where she filled up and sank whilst moored overnight alongside a minesweeper. She was raised and lifted out by the gooseneck crane and placed on C Wall, where she lay in the sun and dried out over a period of about nine months before being purchased by Vic Cohen, who owned her for 25 years. She was later sold to Sammy Collins of Marine Diamonds fame, and was lost while working on the diamond grounds off the West Coast of South Africa and South West Africa.

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