



# South African National Society

History - Culture and Conservation. Join SANS.

Founded in 1905 for the preservation of objects of Historical Interest and Natural Beauty

<http://sanationalsociety.co.za/>

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## NEWSLETTER & PROGRAM FOR OCTOBER 2015

THE DATE: Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015

VENUE: KwaMuhle Museum, Bram Fischer Road [Ordnance Road] Durban.

TIME: Meeting commences at 17h30; Refreshments will be served from 16h45.

PARKING: Off Bram Fischer/Ordnance road [next to the Museum]; security person is present

FEATURE: **QUEEN VICTORIA WAS AMUSED! A presentation by Theunis Eloff**

We normally think of Queen Victoria as a sour old woman who was never amused at anything. However nothing could be further from the truth. The Queen had a great sense of humour and enjoyed a good laugh. Members may find this difficult to believe, but it was true and the serious, often miserable impression created by photographs was a public facade. Theunis plans to dispel the myth of "*We are NOT amused*".

**Killie Campbell 2014-2015 Bursary Award Winner Pranitha Bharath**

In December 2014 SANS was delighted to present Pranitha Bharath with the first tranche of her Killie Campbell Bursary and October will see Pranitha presented with the balance of her award.

### INVITATIONS:

WORLD SHIP SOCIETY – OCTOBER MEETING. John and Margaret Cooke will be making an exciting presentation about an Antarctic cruise they enjoyed a wee while back. This will take place at the Parkview Hotel on Wednesday 28 October at 17:00 for 17:30. SANS members are welcome to attend the event for which there is no charge.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please diarise Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November which is the date of this year's AGM and luncheon. We are delighted this will be held at the Royal Natal Yacht Club once again and can tell everyone that retired politician Roger Burrows will be our guest speaker. The cost of the lunch will be R150 per person with details to be provided next month.

**Killie Campbell 2015-2016 Bursary Award Winner Mr M P Dlamini**

Congratulations to this year's Killie Campbell Bursary Winner Mr M P Dlamini. How appropriate that the award could be presented by Pres Robert King at the Killie Campbell Memorial lecture at Muckleneuk.

Ian Smith provides the following report about the evening.

The Annual Dr Killie Campbell memorial lecture took place on Friday evening 25th September. This was so timed to link with the month in which Killie was born and in which she died 50 years ago this month. It marks the bequest of the Campbell collection to what was then the University of Natal. Professor Mandy Goedhals in her concluding remarks claimed the Campbell Collection to be the jewel in the crown of special collections of the present University of KwaZulu Natal. What a sacred trust this is for in 1965 South Africa was a very different country and Dr Campbell knew something of the value of her unique collection of books and artefacts which she had painstakingly built up

from her youth; initially from the money she saved from her dress allowance. Her Colonial heritage had resulted in her education at St Leonard's Girls School, St Andrews Scotland and her family's wealth which was derived from the sugar industry in Colonial Natal, secured her family home at Muckleneuk in a Herbert Baker house on the Berea of Durban. At the apex of Colonial society it was possible for her to challenge its mores and act as patron to others who shared her ideas and beliefs. Dr B W Ngcobo the guest speaker on this occasion, paid tribute to her role in the Black Sash and her support of particularly Black aspirations in the dark days of apartheid. Her home was indeed open to scholars of all races who she invited to her tea table. In the opening address Prof Blackledge paid tribute to her support of some of her other interests such as her interest in and support of the cultivation of indigenous plants and the parks and gardens of Durban.

### **In Memoriam – Barbara Tyrell**

The Killie Campbell evening was however begun on a sombre note when Mr Vusi Buthelezi brought to our notice the death of one of Killie's greatest protégées, namely Barbara Tyrell who had died just two days before at the age of 103. Her depiction of the tribal people of South Africa is like Muckleneuk, a unique contribution of Colonial Society to present day Southern Africa. SANS hopes to publish a more detailed obituary of this South African icon next month.

### **In Memoriam – Sheila Begg**

As many members will know Sheila Begg has not enjoyed good health for some time but it is nevertheless with sadness that we have to report her passing away recently. Unfortunately few additional details are known at present so we cannot provide further information yet.

## **September Meeting Report**

### **Indigenous Landscaping & Dune Rehabilitation on the Durban Beachfront Presentation by Dr Elsa Pooley**

Research on the best design for the Durban Central beachfront upgrade started in 2008. The final EIA approval only came through in 2009. This left 11 months from start to finish – completion coming a day before the World Cup Football started on 11 June 2010.

Dealing with a public open space and a tourist attraction, all plant material needed to be indigenous (southern African in origin). The conditions prevailing at the beach, with extreme winds and exposure to salt spray, allow a limited plant palette (whether indigenous or exotic). In the beach/dune area, only locally indigenous plants were used as well as exotic coconut palms. The need to use coconut palms was because no local trees grow on the seaward side of the dunes because they cannot survive unprotected from salt spray. Coconut palms do provide some shade and wooden umbrellas were used to provide additional shade.

Elsa worked with Geoff Nichols and Allister Starke to design a system which stabilized the shifting sands whilst bringing wildlife back to the beachfront. Using the mostly low growing dune plants found naturally along our coastline, new dunes were created except for the narrow central beachfront beaches. Since the 1930s, Casuarina trees have been used to stabilize sand dunes. **This project has shown that the local low growing dune vegetation is far more successful.** The days of wind-blown sand closing roads along the beachfront are over.

**Dunes are vital to the permanence of public areas and to safeguard against washaways during high tide surges**

The plan was to recreate the primary and secondary dunes, rehabilitated with natural dune plants to protect the existing dune bush and manage sand drift, even after tidal surges, as shown at Suncoast Casino where rehabilitation was done in 2003 and thereby providing an ecologically- balanced, naturally landscaped area.

Suitable access via boardwalks was provided every 50m. The adjacent areas were made uncomfortable for barefoot access by using indigenous nettles and spiny creepers.

The area between the promenade and the parking areas was planned with security in mind - no walls or bushes which could hide people. This meant using larger trees and plants with a sculptural element such as the large beach aloe, *Aloe thraskii*. The plant palette was very restricted because not many plants will withstand exposure to the wind and salt.

Lawns turned out to be problematic. Neither Buffalo grass nor Royal Blue Cynodon (Kweek) was able to handle the high foot traffic in popular areas. Ultimately we reverted to using a lot of compost in the sandy soil and planting runners of old fashioned Kweek – *Cynodon dactylon*. Management of lawns so close to the sea, dealing with sand drift, is critical. Coconut palms do offer some shade, and wooden umbrellas have also been used to provide shade.

The following method was used to recreate dunes, of heights low enough for visibility to the sea, to mark access paths/boardwalks and provide temporary fencing to keep the public off the newly planted areas.

A 'sacrificial' fence, pig netting covered with shade cloth, was installed which caught windblown sand and developed a low dune providing a bit of shelter for the dune plants "(every lump & bump was required to help build up the dune").

Compost, plants and mulch were added followed by an irrigation system of simple agricultural sprays.

Interpretive signage was erected for both public interest and to provide understanding of the process and need for dune recovery and protection.

To name a few of the fore dune plants that are thriving and attracting birds, bees and butterflies: *Barleria obtusa*, *Canavalia rosea*, *Ipomoea pes-caprae*, *Gloriosa superba*, *Scaevola plumieri*, *Chrysanthemoides monilifera*, *Carissa macrocarpa* and the handsome *Aloe thraskii*.

There were opportunities for more interesting gardens around trading nodes and the sunken gardens.

When the construction and landscaping was completed, the upgrade also included good lighting. International research showed that safety was ensured with excellent high mast lighting and visibility for 150m in each direction. Hence the design of a promenade 15-20m wide, with trading zones every 300m, ensuring good security.

Ultimately, restoring the dunes has brought wildlife back to the beachfront and enhanced the experience of all who walk, ride or skateboard there.

**This report back on the wonderfully successful September Meeting is from to Di Higginson Keath to whom sincere thanks.**

**Sometime in the future members can look forward to an outing with Dr Pooley so everyone can see how this project was run and what the results are five years from initial completion.**