



South African National Society



Chairman's Annual Report for the Society's 2017-2018 Year

Each year as one starts to compile the annual report the hardest part is not where to start but what does one omit?, This year your Society has enjoyed an even more amazing and event studded year, thanks as always to the truly hardworking, nay dedicated elected committee.

Surely a true indicator of Society health is membership numbers and these continue to grow. Angie St George continues to find outstanding speakers talking on diverse yet enthralling subjects. Then the same well organised lady arranges outings to diverse locations which not just you but sometimes members of other societies enjoy. The tour around Ladysmith in August was surely the best Society tour for years. Dare I say that the membership increase is directly proportional to the sociability increase that Angie has brought to the Society?

No organisation thrives without financial health and one barely needs to mention the name of Myra Boyes to know from where that financial strength comes. At each committee meeting figures are there for scrutiny and discussion, monies are allocated and payments made on time.

The wonderful catering that we enjoy at our meetings is due entirely to the generosity of those members able to help and to Memory's quiet organisational skills. Combine this with David Hughes skills as a bookseller and the benefit to our finances is way beyond what we first envisaged.

Additionally several members have provided increasing financial help over the year; help that has made an enormous contribution to our wellbeing and of course our ability to support and promote our objectives.

One outcome was the provision of not one but two Killie Campbell Bursaries; bursaries which those recipients were truly delighted to receive and bursaries only made possible by generous sponsorship.

The Society has a hugely improved website and one increasingly in keeping with the image we need to project. However these improvements don't just happen. They require thought, a great deal of time and they cost money. Now I'm imposing a little on next year's chair in order to explain the full breadth of what's been achieved.

Hugh Bland joined the committee just 12 months ago. Hugh as everyone knows has a magnificent website, KZNPR with its 70000 images, and Hugh was approached by Google to ask if he'd accept adverts. Yes but under strict rules of content and numbers was Hugh's careful response. Quietly however Hugh decided that this 'income' should be recycled into heritage. You do not need much imagination to know which 'Heritage Body' has been the extremely grateful recipient of that income. Hugh thank you so much for not just your generosity but the amazing dedication, energy time and effort you have given the Society.

Now I want to trip back to finance. Nobody wants to keep asking the same people for donations and by no means all members have deep pockets, so after Myra has presented the financial report Hugh will be talking everyone thru an idea he has developed.

Our other great supporter is eThekweni or should I say the Director of the Durban Local History Museums, Snothi Thabethe and we are forever grateful that we enjoy one of the nicest venues anywhere in the city. But it doesn't end there.

Some many months ago Arthur Gammage became aware that the Ethel Campbell Plaque, donated by the Australian Returned Servicemen's League in gratitude for Ethel's semaphore greetings and farewells, was in danger of being lost. This went round and round for some time with nobody actually agreeing to help. This stopped as soon as Snothi Thabethe was approached; he simply asked for some idea of costs and then issued a requisition that saw the City architects arrange for its refurbishment and installation at Muckleneuk.

The following month, October, is now dedicated to the memory of Ken Gillings. Again supported by the DLHM.

Where to now? As outgoing chair please may I toss some thoughts into the pool of ideas?

Consider bringing the word history or heritage into the name of the Society. It will help people recognise you for what you are and do.

Embrace the Indian Heritage Community by working closer together – it will increase your strength. Then talk to history and tourism students whilst they are studying perhaps in their final year and make them aware of the Society.

Consider creating an umbrella of heritage groups possibly in KZN initially for this should add muscle to everybody and for every bodies benefit.

The Society needs a larger committee, and this casts not the teeniest bit of criticism on the wonderful team that has supported me. The Society should be playing a far greater role and be working hand in hand supporting the city that has supported you all so well.

The museum needs help from you; help in the form of Docents or Volunteer Guides. Start small and move slowly but members, and perhaps members who are retired teachers, should discuss how you can help with Snothi Thabethe and members of his team that he nominates.

The city needs to update its heritage register which is a huge task. Another small group should discuss how best to do this; do so and I promise you many citizens will join you (and the Society) in this vital task.

Durban is 200 years old in 2024. Should eThekweni create a group of related exhibitions covering the many aspects of the City's history then as a Society you should be working with the DLHM to prepare at least one dedicated exhibition which is your Society's full responsibility! You do the work and I believe the city will readily cover the costs of the display. Durban opened the first passenger railway in SA in 1860 so am also certain that Inchanga Railway Museum would provide one location – maybe even work together with RHS-KZN.

Astrea and I will soon be leaving this beautiful country to be near our daughter in Perth – age now taking a rather heavy toll. I want to thank you for all the wonderful years enjoyed as your chair for together, both committee and members, we have certainly created a dynamic heritage group.

Please give your incoming chair and committee unstinting support, for Angie St George has some outstanding ideas to take you forward.

Last of all I must thank Astrea for her incredible understanding, love and patience when my attention has been focussed on heritage affairs and we now look forward to enjoying real quality time together.

Hardy E Wilson