

## THE DROSTDY MUSE NEWS



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**As e.e. cummings had it:**

*Spring has sprung  
The grass has riz  
I wonder where dem birdies is!*

Spring is certainly here in all its flighty moods – sudden sunshine, sudden cold breezes, sudden blossom burgeoning into magnificent blooms, and sudden tourists! The Museum site is once more alive with visitors after a slow winter. We hope you will enjoy news of our activities in this season. It is interesting to note the threads of community involvement and cultural diversity that run through a number of the reports in this issue.

**Women's spring tea**



On the 25<sup>th</sup> September the Drostdy Museum hosted Swellendam women from all walks of life to a special tea to commemorate both Women's Day and the start of spring. Myrtle van Deventer welcomed the guests, and Museum Manager Tizzie Mangiagalli spoke briefly about famous women of the past who had visited Swellendam, including Lady Anne Barnard. Leslie Howard, author of *Overberg Tapestry*, read some of her own poems about women's issues, and a poem by an American slave woman about

women's rights. Sister Arendse, well-known member of the nursing community, reminded women of their special role in family life and the importance of self-value. Myrtle van Deventer took a different tack, reading poems by WEG Louw and Van Wyk Louw on the subject of love and longing. Lastly, our special Xhosa women dancers sang and danced for guests, and were enthusiastically joined by Miemie Rothmann, who remembered the Xhosa songs she had learnt as a child. Guests enjoyed this light-hearted look at the role of women in society, and it was another opportunity for local women to share their diverse cultural identity.

### **The interpretation of an historical site - a lively workshop**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> June, social history archaeologists Antonia Malan and Carohn Cornell conducted a workshop at the Drostdy on the interpretation of this historical site. Discussions with staff about the role of various groups in the early history of Swellendam in the context of broader social issues at the time were followed by a walk-about of the entire Drostdy Museum site. The two experts recommended a multi-cultural approach to the exhibitions. This would reflect the lifestyle of the Khoi who lived on the banks of the Koringlands River, the Xhosa people as far as the Eastern Cape border who fell under the jurisdiction of the local magistrate, the Dutch, German

and Huguenot settlers, the slaves who laboured for them, and the British influence during the years of the British occupation of the Cape. Antonia and Carohn emphasised the importance of gathering oral histories before they are lost to future generations, and organising live exhibitions, such as demonstrations of Dutch and Khoi cooking, and live interpretations of the diaries of women such as Lady Anne Barnard and Augusta de Mist. They also suggested a proper recreation of rooms, as they would have been under the magistracy of Anthonie Faure. To sum up, the two experts concentrated on the importance of appropriate multi-cultural displays and community involvement. The challenge to Drostdy management and staff, who received the suggestions with enthusiasm, is not only to organise these changes, but also to find the funding required for such an upgrading of the Drostdy's exhibitions.

In keeping with the knowledge that many people were responsible for the smooth running of the Drostdy in days gone by, including the slaves, the following poem sent to us by Carohn, provides food for thought!

**Questions of a Working Man  
who Reads, by Bertolt Brecht**

*Who built Thebes of the seven  
gates?*

*In the books you find the names  
of kings.*

*Was it the kings who hauled  
chunks of rock to the place?*

*And Babylon, many times  
demolished,*

*Who raised it up again so many  
times? In what houses*

*Of gold-glittering Lima did the  
builders live?*

*Where, in the evening that the  
Great Wall of China was finished,*

*Did the Masons go? Great Rome  
Is full of triumphal arches. Over*

*whom*

*Did the Caesars triumph? Had  
Byzantium, much praised in song,*

*Only palaces for its inhabitants?  
Even in fabulous Atlantis,*

*The very night the ocean engulfed  
it,*

*The drowning still roared for their  
slaves.*

*Young Alexander conquered  
India.*

*Was he alone?*

*Caesar defeated the Gauls.*

*Did he not have a cook at least in  
his service?*

*Philip of Spain wept when his  
armada had sunk.*

*Was he the only one to weep?*

*Frederick the Second won the  
Seven Years War. Who*

*Else won that war?*

*Every page a victory.*

*Who cooked the feast for the  
victors?*

*Every ten years a great man.*

*Who paid the bill?*

*So many accounts.*

*So many questions.*

**The Memory Project –  
honouring a multi-cultural past**

As **Samantics**, the journal of the South African Museum Association reported in their May 2005 issue, over many decades the lived experiences of a cross-section of communities have largely been ignored. Many could be forgiven for thinking that we celebrate only our colonial past.

UniCity Mayor, Nomaindia Mfeketho has joined efforts by both government and province to ensure that our democratic values are recorded adequately within shared collective spaces and in localised communities.

The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation together with the City has embarked on an initiative to bring together stakeholders committed to the work of memory and community healing. Such a project has huge potential for developing communities, and could be rolled out into all areas of the province. Oral history projects such as the one launched in Caledon by Tizzie Mangiagalli form very useful links to the memory project, and should be fostered within communities wherever possible.

**Museum celebrates Heritage  
Day**

The Drostdy celebrated Heritage Day in style with a musical evening provided by the

Swellendam Ensemble, led by John Hely-Hutchinson. The selection of pieces and the use of old instruments ensured a feast of eclectic music, from Mozart to familiar English airs and traditional Cape Carnival music. John demonstrated the trek organ and ethnic African instruments and the concert also featured his kwela composition and Nguni arrangement. The Ensemble performed for an appreciative audience, which included the young members of Kosie Sefoor's Christmas Choir. A splendid way in which to celebrate our diverse cultural heritage! The Ensemble performers are Floris Coetzee on flute, Gillian Rattray on descant recorder, Annetjie Uys on harp, Sue Watermeyer on both violin and piano, John Hely-Hutchinson on viola and keyboards, and Pim Stalling on 'cello. Thank you all for a most enjoyable evening.

### **Caledon hosts important cultural history events**

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport used Caledon Museum as the venue for an indigenous food day on 23<sup>rd</sup> September and the launch of the Western Cape's Oral History Project on the 24<sup>th</sup>. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the general public, museum staff from Caledon and Swellendam and other role players were treated to a programme of talks about and tasting of Khoisan, AmaXhosa, Boere and Malay food. The guest speaker was Mrs Cass Abrahams, who spoke

about the history and culture of Cape cuisine. Different aspects of food preparation from all 4 cultural groups were demonstrated throughout the day. It was a tasty and interesting precursor to the launch of the oral history project next day.

### **Oral history project resuscitated**

In 1970 the Caledon Museum was established with a mission to collect cultural objects for display purposes. There was little emphasis on community involvement and identity. During 1992 the Caledon Museum Board of Trustees, under the leadership of the then museum manager Tizzie Mangiagalli, decided to become more inclusive and launched the community research project.

In-depth research into the role of Caledon families was launched. Old photographs were traced, copied and documented, which enabled the development of the community to be traced and recorded. The research also documented the changes experienced under the Group Areas Act of 1950. A community archive including more than 1000 photographs covering aspects such as education, sport, family life, music and trades was begun. Caledon's family links to the communities of Genadendal, Tesselaarsdal, Botrivier, Hawston, Stanford and Greyton were also recorded.

A number of benefits have resulted from the project, including the museum's assistance with the land restitution claims in Caledon, which were paid out in 2004. During the Photographic Festival in March 2002, the photographs were on display in the Cape Legislature. Although the project was well supported by the community, it did not receive much recognition by the authorities, and despite one donation of R5000 from province, owing to a lack of resources the project remains unfinished with much of the archival material remaining undocumented and still in storage. It is to be hoped that before it is too late the project can be properly concluded and linked to the new oral history project that was launched on Heritage Day this year. The guest speaker was Mr Cornell Balie, who paid tribute to the considerable contribution of Tizzie Mangiagalli to this important work. The workshop was enlivened by the performance of Kosie Sefoor's Swellendam Youth Band, whose music helped to set the tone for the event.

The initiative started by Tizzie in the 90's is now to be taken up throughout the province. Each museum will be tasked to produce a scrapbook depicting the lives of those families who have stories to tell. The project will enhance the recording of the cultural history of Western Cape towns and people in times gone

past. Oral history remains an invaluable tool in the preservation and interpretation of social history.

**Green fingers –  
Museum nursery news  
*An ode to the humble hellebore***

*'Flowers are not dead curios. They are the immortals, the living things that tie together our forefathers' yesterdays and our todays, as they will link our own time with endless tomorrows.'*  
Dit is die baie raak aanhaling uit Joan Parry Dutton se boek: *The Flowering World of Williamsburg*. Soos ek deur die bronne gaan, besef ek dat plante isolasie nie bestaan nie.

Hier sit ek in Suid-Afrika en dra 'n ode op aan 'n veldblommetjie van Europa wat ewe-eens besing word deur 'n skryfster in Amerika. Plante wat in die veertiende eeu geblom het, doen dit vandag nog.

Die Hellebore – Helleborus Orientalis of Lenten Rose – is 'n blommetjie waarvoor mens lirie kan raak. Daar is omtrent vyftien spesies wat oorspronklik uit die suide van Europa en westelike gebiede van Asië gekom het. Ek klassifiseer hierdie een in die kategorie van die affodille met 'n verskil. Sy laat my dink aan 'n regte dametjie.

Sonder die hellebore is geen outydse tuin of woudagtige tuin volledig nie. Selfs die tuiniers wat net pers en wit blomme

aanplant, maak 'n uitsondering met dié een. Die meerjarige plant is baie gehard en vorm 'n pol of blareknoets met leeragtige blink, donkergroen blare en die blommetjies, drie tot vier aan een steeltjie, groei vanuit die pol ongeveer dertig sentimeter hoog. Die skaam blommetjie met kleure wat wissel van wit, ligpienk tot pruimpienk, is pragtig en nog nie oral bekend nie. Die dametjie knik altyd haar koppie asof sy ekskuus wil vra vir haar teenwoordigheid.

Dit verkies goed gedreineerde grond, vol son of skadu, en dit wil nie versteur word nie. Wanneer die blommetjies volwasse word, verkleur dit groen en die saadhuysies bars oop. Baie min versorging is nodig, maar dit sal dankbaar wees as alle droë, digte en oorgroeide blare en stingels uitgesny word. Van die interessantste spesies is die Krismis-roos, wat wit is. (Dit het niks met ons Hydrangeas te doen nie.) Laastens is die Helleborus foetidus net soos sy naam – dit stink! Dis 'n erg lelike etiket vir so 'n mooi dame!

Helleborus is baie mooi in 'n pot of rangskikking saam met ander ongekunstelde blommetjies. Swellendammers is ook bevoorreg, want dis in die museum kwekery beskikbaar. Geniet julle tuine, en onthou, ons plantjies is beslis die goedkoopste!

Vriendelike museumgroete  
Jomien

### **Tribute to Mr Mike Reid, indeed a museum friend!**



Last year's Barry celebrations would have been an appropriate time to pay tribute to Michael Barry Reid. However, there was an unfortunate oversight then, and at the request of Dr PD Toens of Somerset West, we wish to put that matter right now.

Michael Reid's niece, Mrs Margity Sands, who lives in historic Shand Street, has fond memories of her uncle, who lived in the Auld House. Michael Reid not only served as Swellendam's Mayor and Deputy Mayor in successive terms of office that spanned over 30 years in the period 1934 to 1966, but he also worked tirelessly alongside Mr Lance Tomlinson to found the Drostdy Museum. Many elegant items of furniture currently housed in the museum were donations from Mike Reid's home.

Margity Sands, who recalls happy school holidays spent with her cousins at uncle Mike's house ('he spoilt us rotten', she

recalls), also remembers how hard he worked on the museum project and on many other Swellendam projects for the benefit of all Swellendam's inhabitants. 'Everyone loved him,' says Margity. 'He was fondly known as Uncle Mike by people of all ages and all race groups.'

Says Dr Toens: 'I was only a young boy at the time, but I clearly remember Mr Reid as a fearless fighter for the rights of the underdog in those dark days.'

It was Mike, working with Dr Mary Cook, who was responsible for ensuring that the Auld House, the Tuishuisies on Shand Street, the Oefeningshuis and other historical buildings were declared national monuments. The Freedom of Swellendam was conferred on Mike Reid in September 1967 in recognition of his services to the town. In his turn Mayor Reid conferred the Freedom of the Town on Anna Rothmann, Swellendam's famous author, daughter of MER. Margity Sands proudly remembers the occasion. 'I was there,' she says. And so in the spirit of honouring one who held the interests of Swellendam and the Drostdy Museum close to his heart, we say 'May you long be remembered by the inhabitants of Swellendam'.

## Opvoedkundige programme raak meer gewild



Met die druk programme van skole en onderwysers wat al meer my simpatie verdien vanweë groot klasse en nuwe kurrikulum uitdagings, is ek so bly dat daar wel nog groeiende belangstelling vir museumaktiwiteite is.

Die ideaal, meins insiens, is dat ons saam moet werk om die onderwyser se taak te vergemaklik en die leerders op so 'n positiewe manier beïnvloed dat die museum al meer en meer toeganklik is en voel. Waar was die dae dat die kinders grootoog in museums met hul hande agter die rug net moes kyk en luister en nie 'n dooie woord geuiter het nie.

Die Vulindlêla kleutergroep wat elke Donderdag kom kuier, is al so tuis dat hoenders, ganse, haas, kat en toeriste moet ligloop vir die woelige spannetjie. Dit is werklik dié projek wat vir my groot bevrediging verskaf, want ek kan sien hoe die outjies ontdooi en die stimulasie hul nuuskierigheid prikkel. Ander kleutergroepe besoek ons ook en dit is ewe-eens geslaagd.

Die plaaslike skole, sowel as besoekende skole wat vir 'Die koring verbouing' - praatjie hier was, het dit gate uit geniet en stokbroodbak is 'n treffer.

Die klaskamer wat nou in gebruik is, maak alle aktiwiteite net soveel meer sinvol en dit bespaar tyd. Die plaaslike Voortrekkers, Kinderkrans en Die Gemeenskapsjeugaksie maak ook van ons dienste en fasiliteite gebruik.

Daar is nog baie om te beplan en te doen, maar ons is tog dankbaar vir die positiewe en suksesvolle deelname van die leerders en fasiliteerders. Die grense van ons mikpunte verskuif steeds en hou ons doelgerig.

*Without a doubt, Jomien Havenga's educational programmes for the youth of Swellendam are making a huge contribution to the lives of our youngsters, and to the Museum's efforts to make it a user-friendly place for all age groups. - Ed*

As this newsletter bears witness, staff at the Drostdy Museum, whether it be in the limelight or behind the scenes, is always working towards the achievement of another goal. Spring is a good time for all this energetic activity, which we hope, will continue well into the summer. We look forward to reporting on progress in our Christmas issue. Meanwhile, drive safely on our roads, and remember to look out for all the heritage icons you pass along the way!

Best wishes  
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*AWARD: BEST MUSEUM IN THE WESTERN CAPE 2004.*