

The Hourglass / Die Ourglas

Newsletter of The Graaff-Reinet Museum
Nuusbrief van die Graaff-Reinet Museum



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GRAAFF-REINET MUSEUM

✉ 104 ☎ 049 8923801 / ☎ 049 8925650 / ☎ 049 8910664

☎ 049 8925650

✉ graaffreinetmuseum@intekom.co.za

🌐 www.graaffreinetmuseums.co.za

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Editorial / Redaksie

Articles / Artikels : Anziske Kayster, Ansie Malherbe, Antoinette Rode & Marina Rubidge

Design and Layout / Ontwerp en Uitleg: Anziske Kayster

Editing / Redigering: Peter Whitlock and Ansie Malherbe



Liewe

Vriende

Die Museum is oop, maar sodra dinge lyk asof dit weer gaan vlot, dwing mense se welstand ons terug na hoër vlakke van inperking en moet ons noodgedwonge weer ons deure sluit.

Ongelukkig kon ons nog nie ons Algemene Jaarvergadering hou nie, aangesien die inperkingsmaatreëls en departementele regulasies nie vergaderings of dergelike byeenkomste toelaat nie. Ons kan nie met sekerheid sê wanneer dit sal gebeur nie, maar ons is vasbeslote om 'n jaarvergadering te hou, want daar wag 'n verrassing of twee wat ons graag tydens die jaarvergadering met almal wil deel.

Ons dans weer, al is dit met rukke en stote. Die museumtuin is amper weer op dreef en al die uitstallings is blink gepoets. Die reuk van laventelwaks hang swaar in die lug en bring 'n glimlag na my gesig. Ek word telkens oorweldig deur 'n gevoel van dankbaarheid dat ons die donkerste tyd van die pandemie oorleef het en

ons almal nog staande is na die derde vlaag. Die woord "vlaag" is in elke geval deesdae soos 'n vloekwoord wat mense se vrees en verlies verwoord. Maar wanneer die sonstrale soggens deur die spekboomtuin draal en met die wasige stofdeeltjies speel, herinner dit my aan 2019, toe alles nog normaal was. Dis dan asof Herbert se sonwyser in die tuin, die tyd terugdraai.

Ons kyk vorentoe en met 'n 123% styging in ons jaarlikse subsidie het ons weer wind in ons seile en vaar ons voort. Ongelukkig beteken dit nie dat ons nou kan laat slap lê nie en werk ons hard om byvoorbeeld ons argiewe te orden gedurende die stiller tye, om nuwe uitstallings op die been te bring en om navorsing oor verskeie onderwerpe aan te pak. Ons het groot planne!

Gedurende hierdie tyd het ons geweldige ondersteuning van die *Rupert Historiese Huise Stigting* ontvang en 'n reuse-bedrag is as 'n Covid-19 verligtingfonds aan die museum geskenk. Die Trusteeraad het hul wonderlik van hul taak gekwyd en met raad en daad die museum en personeel deur hierdie moeilike tyd

bygestaan. Wat sou ons sonder hierdie ondersteuning doen?

Te midde van al die hartseer en verlies wat deesdae so gereeld aan ons deur kom klop, is daar darem een ligstraal: die museum is *okay!* Die hoop beskaam nie dat, met die hulp en ondersteuning van ons vriende, dit vir lank nog so sal bly.

Tot weersiens....

Anziske

RUSSIESE BALLEET IN DIE KAROO:

Die storie van Boris en Masha - deur Ansie Malherbe

Masha Arsenieva was 'n befaamde ballerina wat saam met haar man, Boris Igneff, 'n beroemde pianis en komponis, 'n balletskool in die 1960's op Graaff-Reinet bedryf het.

Die wêreld was aan Masha se voete toe sy die roem en glans van Europa se beroemde teaters verruil het vir 'n lewe in Suid-Afrika.

Masha is van koninklike afkoms en is in die destydse Sint Petersburg in Rusland as die dogter van gravin

Eswolsky gebore. Die presiese datum van haar geboorte kon nie opgespoor word nie. Haar oupa was minister van buitelandse sake tydens die keisertyd in Rusland voor die Bolsjewieke Rewolusie. In 1919 het hulle soos baie ander Russiese burgers uit Rusland gevlug en hulle in Parys, Frankryk, gevestig. Masha het daar skoolgegaan.

Haar liefde vir ballet en die besluit om 'n beroep daarvan te maak, is te danke aan haar grootoom prins Serge Volensky, die direkteur van die keiserlike teaters in Rusland. Serge het haar ook aangemoedig om ritmiese en moderne beweging te bestudeer. Sy het haar studies in Joego-Slawië gaan voortsit en 'n lid van die Koninklike Operahuis in Belgrave geword.

Masha het 'n solo-loopbaan as danser begin en 'n beurs verwerf om verder in moderne dans aan die dansakademie van Mary Wigman te studeer. Wigman was 'n baie bekende instrukteur in daardie tyd. Na Masha haar studies voltooi het, het sy haar eie balletskool op die been gebring.



**Masha Arsenieva as jong ballerina
rondom die tyd toe sy in 1936 in Berlyn gedans het.**

Gedurende 1932 het sy en haar geselskap met groot sukses deur Europa getoer. Hulle het in groot konsertsale in onder andere Moskou, Praag, Parys, Londen en Rome opgetree. Masha het ook solo-vertonings gelewer en het in 1936 'n silwer medalje in Duitsland by 'n groot dans/ballet-kompetisie gewen.

Sy ontmoet vir Boris Igneff (1895-1976), toe reeds 'n gevestigde konsertpianis voor die oorlog in Joego-Slawië uitgebreek het. Boris is in Sint Petersburg, Rusland, gebore. Hy was 'n kosak en het pianoforte en komposisie aan die Sint Petersburg se konserwatorium van musiek studeer.

In 1921 tree Boris op as hulpdirigent vir die Wurmzer-orke in Zagreb. In 1925 sluit hy aan by die Joego-Slawiese balletgeselskap as hulpdirigent en choreograaf. Hy het saam met die Joego-Slawiese span balletdansers na die 1936 Berlyne Olimpiese spele gegaan. Daarna moes hy diens in die Russiese weermag (vloot) in die Swart See gaan doen, maar toe die Russiese konflik uitbreek het hy na Joego-Slawië gevlug. Boris en Masha is in 1931 of 1933 (bronne verskil) in Dubrovnik getroud.

Masha en Boris het later in onderhoude vertel van die hartseer herinneringe wat gepaard gegaan het met die uitbreek van die Tweede

Wêreldoorlog in 1939. Die balletskool se dansers het uitmekaar gespat; baie het kontak met mekaar verloor, baie het gesterf en na die oorlog was diegene wat oorleef het, oor die hele wêreld versprei.



Masha Arsenieva is in Sint Petersburg, Rusland, gebore. Sy is van koninklike afkoms.

Tydens die oorlog het Boris en Masha deur Italië getoer. Italianers was baie krities teenoor balletdansers en hulle moes oor buitengewone talent beskik om die Italianers te beïndruk – soveel so dat die Italiaanse minister van opvoeding, Antoni Julio Bragalli, wat

ook as kunskritikus opgetree het van Masha gesê het dat sy die eerste danser is wat hy sien wat met haar verstand en bene dans. Toe die Geallieerdes van die Tweede Wêreldoorlog Italië ge-annekseer het, het Masha vir hulle 'n dansvertoning gelewer. Boris het 'n lid van die Italiaanse Kopieregvereniging geword wat elf van sy komposisies gepubliseer het.

Masha en Boris was van plan om weer met 'n dansgeselskap te toer en het beplan om deur Suid-Amerika te toer, maar hulle kon nie daarin slaag om visums vir hulself en die dansers te bekom nie. Sy het toevallig Suid-Afrika se ambassadeur, generaal Frank Theron, in Rome tydens een van hulle vertonings ontmoet. Hy het 'n ses maande-lange toer deur Suid-Afrika voorgestel en sou alle reëlings namens hulle tref. Europa was gedurende hierdie tydperk verwoes as gevolg van die oorlog en Masha en Boris het hulle ballet-akademie in die hande van goeie studente en vriende gelaat en in 1946 na Suid-Afrika verhuis. Hier is hulle gul ontvang en het dadelik 'n liefde vir dié mooi land

ontwikkel. Hulle het in Johannesburg, Durban, Pretoria asook Bulawayo in die destydse Rhodesië voor groot gehore met sukses opgetree. Masha is as 'n Russiese skoonheid in die koerante beskryf en ook Boris is baie goed in Suid-Afrika ontvang. Tydens een van hulle vertonings in Johannesburg se stadsaal is die brandweer ontbied om die mense in die stadsaal te maan dat die saal te vol gepak is. Die Suid-Afrikaanse Joodse tydskrif "The Zionist Record" het as volg geskryf: "Masha is the first outstanding artist in the field of ballet to come to these shores...." Na die sukses in die groter stede het hulle besluit om ook op die platteland vertonings aan te bied.

Die koerante het na hulle as "petite Masha" en "burley Boris" verwys. Soms moes hulle onder die vreemdste omstandighede op die kleinste dorpies optree en in 'n skoolsaaltjie dans, soms in die buitelig op 'n verhogie of in 'n bouvallige bioskoopsaal. Gewoonlik het die mense die beperkte ruimte tot barstens toe volgepak. Een van die eerste vertonings wat hulle op die

platteland gegee het, was in 'n saal op Aberdeen in die Karoo. Toe hulle na 'n ver reis in Aberdeen aankom, kom hulle agter dat die uitvoering in die marksaal sou plaasvind. Oral op die vloer het sakkies groente rondgelê, maar 'n klomp vrywilligers het van die groente ontslae geraak en die aand het Masha voor 'n wonderlike gehoor gedans. Na die vertoning is al die vrugte en groente terug gedra vir die volgende dag se mark.

Baie dorpies op die platteland van Suid-Afrika was nie baie bekend met balletvertonings nie, maar die gehore was waardierend en hulle het vir Masha en Boris met entoesiasme ontvang. Dit het hulle aangespoor om verder op die slegte paaie van die platteland te reis en die koue winters en erge hitte van die Suid-Afrikaanse somers te trotseer om gehore te vermaak.

Met Masha en Boris se aankoms in Suid-Afrika het hulle eers per vliegtuig gereis na die groter stede, daarna het hulle meer per trein en later per bus deur die platteland gereis. Hulle het baie staaltjies vertel

van hoe die bus gereeld gebreek het. Dit was beslis nie ideale omstandighede nie. Rondom 1948 het Masha-hulle ook die destydse Suidwes-Afrika besoek en is baie goed ontvang en het nog twee maal na dié land teruggekeer. Hier het hulle ook afgeleë plekke soos byvoorbeeld Tsumeb, Outjo en Walvisbaai besoek en vol sale gelok. Met hulle aankoms in Windhoek het die administrateur van die land, mnr Hoggenhout, vir hulle 'n groot tuinparty in die Goewerneurswoning aangebied. Windhoek se vroue het uitgehang met elegante rokke en hoede. Masha het nie 'n hoed besit nie met die gevolg dat mev Hoggenhout in meelewing met haar ook nie 'n hoed gedra het nie. Masha het groot waardering vir die gebaar getoon.

So het hulle meer as 250 vertonings in Suid-Afrika gehou en na sommige dorpe is hulle tot drie maal teruggenooi. Die inkomste uit die vertonings was min; hul uitgawes was hoog en hulle moes boonop nog baie aan belasting afstaan. Dit het hulle genoop om in Kaapstad te vestig en 'n balletskool te stig. Gou het hulle

baie studente gehad en met hul balletgeselskap ook baie kleiner dorpe rondom Kaapstad besoek. Baie van haar studente het eksamens afgelê wat internasionale erkenning geniet het. Die basiese opleiding van 'n balletdanser kan tot tien jaar duur en agter die grasia en skynbaar moeitelose bewegings sit ure van byna pynlike oefening en onwrikbare selfdissipline.

Boris het die eerste Suid-Afrikaanse ballet "Diamonds in the Sand" vir die Van Riebeeck-fees van 1952 geskryf. Hy het ook baie ballette vir die studente aan die balletskool asook klavierkomposies vir uitvoerings geskryf. Sy klavierkomposisies was pragtig deur hom geïllustreer en het die musiek sowel as die regie vir die danspassies aangedui.

Toe die regering van die dag 'n nuwe tegniese kollege in Oos-Londen open, is Masha aangestel as instruktrise in moderne dans asook gevorderde balletopleiding. Hulle het vir sewe jaar baie gelukkig daar gewoon en gewerk en heelwat van haar studente het balletinstrukteurs geword en klas

by die kollege in Oos-Londen en oor die land heen gegee.

Masha het gesondheidsprobleme ontwikkel en die dokter het aanbeveel dat sy die vogtige lug van Oos-Londen vir 'n droër klimaat soos die Karoo verruil. Hulle het besluit om die aanbod wat hulle met hulle laaste besoek aan Graaff-Reinet gekry het om 'n balletskool op die dorp te open, te aanvaar. Die destydse skoolhoof van Union High School op die dorp, mnr HW Arnot, asook nog aanhangers van hulle het aangebied om hulle te help om 'n dansstudio en balletskool in Graaff-Reinet te open.

Hulle het feitlik dadelik baie belangstellende studente gekry en kon op die dorp rustig hulle dansklasse aanbied asook hulle skilderkuns beoefen. In 1967 het hulle soveel as 250 studente van die drie skole naamlik Union High, Volksskool asook die Kloosterskool afgerig. Masha het ook leerlinge van die bruin woonbuurt Kroonvale op die dorp onderrig. Dit was die heel eerste balletgroep van kleur in die land. Van dié leerders het beurse ontvang om hulle studies in Kaapstad

voort te sit. Dit is net nog 'n voorbeeld van die groot voorreg wat Graaff-Reinneters te beurt geval het om sulke beroemde en geliefde mense in hulle midde te hê.

Jaarliks het die balletskool konserte in die dorp se stadsaal aangebied en feitlik hul hele opbrengs aan liefdadigheidsorganisasies geskenk. Vroeg in 1969 het Masha en vyftien van haar topstudente 'n balletuitvoering in Knysna gaan gee. Masha was die hoofdanser en Boris het haar en die studente op die klavier begelei. Masha het van haar geliefde danse soos "Humoresque", "Fire Dance", "The Blind" and "Song of Work" asook heelwat ander nommers gedans. Sy en haar dansers het twee danse, "Monument" van Tchaikovsky asook "The Gay Nineties", uitgevoer. Die studente het ook solodanse gelewer en dit was die eerste uitvoering van dele uit 'n nuwe ballet deur Boris Igneff. Boris het ook as pianis met solovertonings tussen die dansuitvoerings opgetree. Daar is 'n middagvertoning met spesiale nommers vir kinders aangebied en soos wat die gewoonte was, het die

opbrengs van dié vertoning na 'n kinderwelsynsorganisasie op Knysna gegaan.

Die topstudente wat saam met hulle gereis het was: (Union High) Stephanie Wright, Annemarie Steyn, June van Niekerk, Lyn Wessels, Kaisy Nash, Jennifer Booyens, Melanie Booyens, Minie van der Vyver en Diana Looek, (Volkskool) Hannalie Groenewald, Susanna Human, Diana Els, Elmarie Els en Karin Schoevers, (Laer Volkskool) Adelie du Toit en Gayl Coetzee.



Hannalie Groenewald was een van Masha se topstudente op Graaff-Reinet.

Die geselskap het drie dae in Knysna op die strandmeer in die Knysna Hotel gebly en dit was 'n onvergeetlike ervaring. Masha het ook in George balletvertonings gaan lewer. Elmarie Els en Hannalie Groenewald (foto links) kan baie goed onthou hoe 'n wonderlike egpaar Boris en Masha was. Hulle het ekstra balletklasse by hulle in hul blyplek, Van Rensburg woonstelblok nommer 2 in Murraystraat, geneem. Elmarie onthou die studio met sy houtvloer, "sidebar" asook 'n groot spieël.

Terwyl hulle in Graaff-Reinet gewoon het, het hulle 'n film genaamd "A Town in the Karoo" gemaak en nog films oor die res van Suid-Afrika. Dié films is in bioskoopsale reg deur die land met groot sukses vertoon. Die films was bestem om ook oorsee vertoon te word, maar daar kan nie bevestiging verkry word of dit wel gebeur het nie.

Masha was ook 'n baie talentvolle skilder en twee van haar skilderye is aan die destydse President CR Swart geskenk. Dié skilderye van Reinethuis asook Die Vallei van Verlatenheid het

Swart na bewering in sy plaashuis De Aap in Brandfort se distrik gehang.



Masha en haar man, Boris Igneff, voor hul woonstel in Murraystraat in Graaff-Reinet. Hulle het dit ook as dansstudio gebruik.

Masha het ernstige gesondheidsprobleme ontwikkel en in 1971 'n ernstige beroerte gekry. Sy is in die plaaslike hospitaal op Graaff-Reinet opgeneem. Boris het feitlik dag en nag langs haar bed gewaak. Later is sy na 'n hospitaal in Kaapstad geneem. Haar gesondheid was nooit weer goed nie en sy en Boris het in Knysna gaan aftree. Haar sterfdatum

kon nie presies vasgestel word nie, maar Boris is in 1976 oorlede.

Daar is nie meer so baie inwoners van Graaff-Reinet wat besef watter groot nalatenskap Masha Arsenieva en Boris Igneff nagelaat het nie. Hulle het soveel vir so baie jong belowende dansers beteken en het almal wat by hulle klas geneem het met soveel geduld en liefde onderrig. Twee geliefde mense wat hulle talente gedeel het met die hele gemeenskap van Graaff-Reinet. Ook met die liefdadigheidswerk wat hulle gedoen het en skenkings aan verskeie organisasies wat geldelike bydraes benodig het.



Volgens oorlewering was Masha Arsenieva die inspirasie vir minstens een van Vladimir Tretchikoff se bekende "The Dying Swan"-skildery, waarskynlik hierdie een.

KLEIN LONDON CHURCH HAS UNIQUE HISTORY

by Antoinette Rode



Source: <https://hesterrupertartmuseum.co.za/about-jan-rupert-art-centre-graaff-reinet/>

The waves of history often cause small ripples in far-off places. The establishment of the “Little Londen” church, or “Klein Londen” as it is popularly known, is an example of exactly such a ripple.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, several different Sotho-

speaking tribes lived North of the Orange River. After 1822 a succession of invasions by bellicose Nguni tribes led to the so-called Difaqane: widespread wars that left a trail of havoc and destruction which caused virtually all the Southern Sotho communities to be driven off their lands. Many fled southwards across

the Orange River into the Cape Colony. After the battle of Dithakong refugees, in a state of near starvation, drifted into the Graaff-Reinet district.

MANTATEES

These refugees were called “Mantatees”. The word is derived from MaNtatsi, redoubtable chieftains of the Tlokwa tribe, one of the farthest South Sotho chiefdoms. Together with her warriors, known for their fearlessness and cruelty, she roamed considerable distances and left many followers strewn. Incidentally, she was also the mother of Sikonyela. So the word Mantatee came to be loosely applied to refugees from trans-Orange to distinguish them from Xhosas of the eastern frontier. In 1826 the Landdrost of Graaff-Reinet reported that 49 of the Mantatees had already been apprenticed, and that more than 300 had drifted into the district.

ACTIVITIES

The London Missionary Society that had commenced its activities in Graaff-Reinet in 1801, looked after the spiritual needs of the Coloured population. The tiny group of

refugees however maintained a surprising solidarity and remained averse to joining the Coloured congregation in the chapel. The sole use of Dutch for services in all probability contributed to the problem. In 1851 the Rev Merrington reported: “without a building it is next to impossible to minister to them in this part – our temperature, for a great part of the year precluding outdoor preaching when there is no shelter from the sun”. Present day inhabitants of Graaff-Reinet can endorse his report wholeheartedly! The ambition for a separate place of worship for the black population was only realized by Merrington’s successor, the Rev Joseph Kitchingman almost twenty years later. Mrs Kitchingman, being acquainted with their language opened an evening school shortly after their arrival in Graaff-Reinet, which resulted in an increased attendance of Mantatees. It seems that the school rooms were used for the Sesotho until a suitable building could be procured.

MIDDLE STREET

In January 1870 an erf with a building in Middle street was bought for £150 from the estate of a certain Joachim Carel Marthinus Kruse. The Mantatees had raised £125 as well as another £60 for alterations and fittings. No mean feat for a congregation of 65 members! The fact that alterations had to be done points to the existing building as having been a barn, shed or workshop and very likely thatched. The full-time black teacher conducted half the services in Sesotho, but ironically the LMS missionary was expected to preach his sermons in simple Dutch (Afrikaans?) as many of the congregants had spouses who couldn't speak Sesotho. This can, on the one hand, be considered a definite sign of assimilation, but on the other hand it is quite remarkable that this minority group retained its identity and had their own church with services conducted in their own language, after two generations.

All the annual reports of the missionaries contain very positive remarks about Mantatees: "They

dress better than any other native African tribe; ... they value reading and have great fluency; ... They have shown an energy and liberality quite disproportionate to their numbers and their means".

The missionaries wanted to name the two chapels after the saints, but much to their chagrin, the names "Great Londen" and "Little Londen" stuck fast – to this day. Within ten years the Basuto congregation enlarged the building, which was considered too low and cramped, further confirming the speculation that it might have been a barn. In addition to almost doubling the floor area the walls were raised to twenty feet and a new plank floor, "handsome" lamps, and a corrugated iron roof were added. The pulpit was replaced with a stage, and the church, converted into a beautiful hall which could now seat 300 people. The cost of all these alterations amounted to £300, consequently, there was no money to finish the plastering outside or for new pews. No mention is made of demolition of the old building so it

was almost certainly incorporated into the new larger church building. Local anecdote has it that a certain Hollander, Mr Hendrik Beunderman, built the “Klein Londen” church. Since he was an able carpenter and cabinet-maker, and the greater part of the alterations consisted of carpentry work, tradition and fact could very well bear each other out.

MEMBERS

By 1890 the church had lost many members to the gold and diamond fields but continued to exist as a separate congregation. The church building remained the property of the trustees of the London Missionary Society until 1964, when it was transferred to the Kayser Memorial Congregational Church, and shortly thereafter to the former Community Development Board. This marked the end of an era.

(Note: Many members of the congregation joined the Parsonage Street Congregational Church (“Groot Londen” and the church in Middle Street closed. For many years it was used as a store until it was acquired and restored by The Save Reinet Foundation. It became known as the Jan Rupert Centre, named in honour of dr.

Anton Rupert’s brother, who died in 1984 in Stellenbosch. Presently it houses art works from the Rupert Collection and is administered by the Rupert Museum in Stellenbosch.

This article was grammatically edited.)

LONG ROAD TO THE VALLEY

Any traveler passing over the Karoo Plains cannot but be struck by their stark beauty and wonder at all who have bravely ventured here, whether on horseback, wagon or foot. Folk often return with wondrous tales of adventure, some with stories of true events and others with compellingly appealing urban legends. Artists and photographers are inspired not only by the splendour of the Plains but also by the magnificence of the Valley of Desolation with its towering dolerite columns. Geologists, paleontologists, archaeologists and a host of other researchers and scientists come here to study geological formations, the fauna and flora and the unique eco system of the area. This tale is about a road that most of the enthusiastic adventurers such as Lichtenstein, Burchell, Gordon would have welcomed.



In 1776, the intrepid explorer Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon, was commissioned into the Dutch East India Company's army and posted to Cape Town as second-in-command of the garrison. In 1777, he undertook his second journey to the Karoo area and meticulously recorded his experiences in his travel journal. His posting at the Cape lasted 20 years, during which time he travelled extensively and amassed invaluable research material. His contributions to the topography, fauna, flora, meteorology, geology and inhabitants are a remarkably complete and detailed overview of the country during the final decades of the Dutch East India Company's rule.

“Second Journey, October 1777 to March 1778: from Cape Town to the Sneeuberge and the eastern frontier; then north to the Orange River, returning along the south-eastern coast” 1777 of the "Gezicht van de Camdebo".

11th November 1777

Went to a hill half an hour E.N.E. of Brakfontein from where I took bearings on the whole horizon and which I also ordered to be sketched. Willem Basson, who lives at Brakfontein, called this hill Gordon's Kop. It is about a hundred foot high and lies in an extended plain. The cliffs on the mountain lying to one side, beside and also behind which is the district of Camdabo or Groengat, look very like the Giant's Way in Ireland, although there is no basalt and not the slightest trace of volcanic material. In particular there are very uniform, horizontal slabs, split perpendicularly like long square pillars, all composed of a single firestone. Called this mountain the Reuse Casteel. Our course was three hours north east through karoo country, the same soil. Two hours from Brakfontein we crossed the Camdeboo River which was completely dry and about thirty paces wide.

This is most likely one of the earliest documented records of the Valley. The paintings and diaries are housed in the Rijksmuseum <https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/> and Brenthurst Library in Johannesburg.

One of the lesser-known tales relates to the actual building of the road to the top of the Valley of Desolation

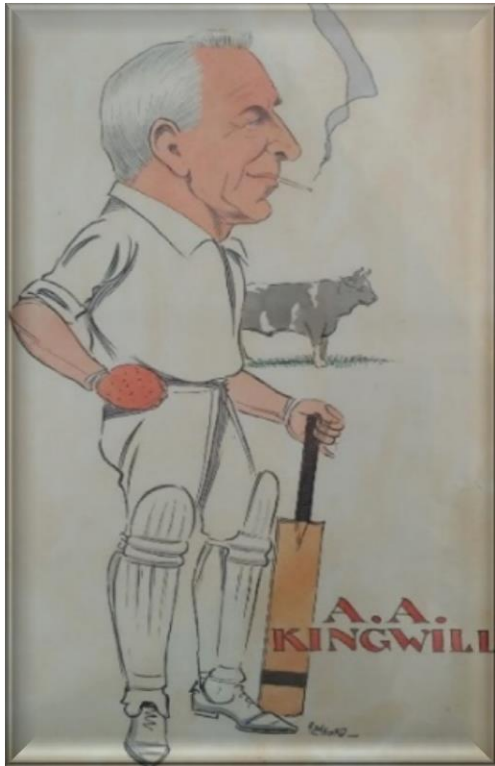
During the 1920's Graaff-Reinetters realised that for the economy of the town to survive, an alternative means of development would have to be considered. Herbert Urquhart, Graaff-Reinet's longest serving Mayor, called a public meeting where a number of townsmen concluded that the rich history of the town should be advanced as a tourism asset. On 4 June 1926, the Municipality, Divisional Council and other bodies in Graaff-Reinet held a meeting at which it was decided to consider building a road to the Valley of Desolation. An Action Committee was established with Robert Luckhoff acting as the first chairman, and the legendary AA Kingwill, a member. The first project that this committee was tasked with was the building of this road to the Valley.

A surveyor from Kendrew was approached to do a rough estimate of

costs and to ascertain the best route to follow. After some weeks, he reported that the proposed route had been beacons off, eliminating the hairpin bend west of the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam, along the ridge, proceeding up the face of the mountain in a zig zag fashion to Rooi Dam. After studying the surveyor's report which suggested that the layout of the route would cost thousands of pounds, the Committee decided that this was far more than Graaff Reinet could afford and the plan was consequently shelved.

Shortly thereafter, one Friday in the Graaff-Reinet Men's Club, Willie Dean overheard AA Kingwill express his disappointment about the decision to abandon the new road. As was his nature, Willie, joined in the conversation and volunteered to show an alternative route to AA Kingwill.

The next weekend, the Town Engineer, Purvis and AAK met Willie Dean at the entrance to the kloof, who then proceeded to lead them up the prickly pear infested kloof to Rooi Dam. AAK and Purvis excitedly agreed with Willie that the road could be built along the route. Before reporting back to the Committee AAK felt that a rough estimate of costs should be prepared.



AA KINGWILL AND WILLIE DEAN

He did a calculation, breaking the route into sections each with a separate cost, which he presented to the Town Engineer. Purvis was however not prepared to commit to the estimated cost. AAK nevertheless went ahead. He submitted his proposal to the Committee who accepted the figure of £1000 to Rooi Dam. As it turned out it was a well calculated estimate. The total cost all the way to the Valley would amount to just over £1000.

Apart from the Road Construction Committee consisting of AA Kingwill and B Burger, 40 labourers and an overseer were engaged. Picks and

shovels and barrows were the only items of equipment used. Dynamite completed the outfit.

Once the road was finally fit for cars to traverse, it was decided to host celebrations at Rooi Dam.

The Mayor, Mr Urquhart, and others appealed to those present to support the Valley Road effort financially. About £800 was collected after the grand celebrations.

The road to The Valley was opened in 1930. The Valley was proclaimed a National Monument in 1935. In 1947 King George and his family were able to view the Valley of Desolation thanks to this amazing road building feat. The specially imported royal Daimler did however struggle up the steep road and started boiling as it neared the top. (Thereafter, the road was used as a toughness test for any newly purchased vehicle. If it could climb

the pass without boiling it was deemed a good car!!)

The Camdeboo National Park, which incorporates the Valley of Desolation, was proclaimed in 2005 as one of three National Parks located in the Eastern Cape Province and is managed by SANPARKS.

Sources:

1. Rijks Museum . – Robert Jacob Gordon. His verbal and visual descriptions of South Africa (177-1795)
<https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/>
2. Blignaut , JP, Road maintenance and rehabilitation of approximately 9 km of surfaced and gravel roads in the Camdeboo National Park. ~ Civil Engineering = Siviele Ingenieurswese Vol. 27, No. 8
3. Reilly, Gerald. – A Karroo Farmer Looks Back: The Memoirs of AA Kingwill, 1953.

AANKONDIGINGS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

- * Let asseblief daarop dat die museum se openingstye gedurig verander na gelang van inperkingsmaatreëls. Ongelukkig kan ons dit slegs op ons Facebook-blad of die Toerismekantoor se blad aankondig, so wees dus op die uitkyk na enige aankondigings
- * Now is the time to buy the 750ml or 200ml bottles of Withond. We

have quite a number of wine decanters and glasses in stock, too.

- * Steggies van die Ou Wingerd sal teen einde September teen R50 per steggie te koop wees. Kontak Reinethuis by 049 8923801 en plaas u bestelling.
- * The Newsletter and Annual reports will be available as a digital copy on our website and the link will be provided on social media platforms. However, if you would prefer to have hard-copy, please contact the museum.

DIE LAASTE SÊ...

Geniet. Dans.



*Schitter en Straal
Kies er niet eentje
maar doe het
ALLEMALL!*