

SECRET CAPE TOWN



JUSTIN FOX AND ALISON WESTWOOD



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

CITY HALL CARILLON

Cape Town City Hall, Darling Street

- By appointment only
- Tel: 021-465-2029
- Free entry

9



**A WWI
memorial rarely
heard or seen**

The Cape Town City Hall on the Grand Parade is a familiar landmark, but less well-known is that inside its 200-foot tower, just under the large clock (modelled on London's Big Ben), is a wonderful 39-bell carillon. It is the only playable carillon on the African continent. Although it is seldom rung these days, curious and intrepid visitors can arrange to see it by making an appointment with the city council.

Commissioned by the women of Cape Town as a monument to those who died in the First World War, it was proposed by the mayoress of Cape Town, Anna Thorne, just five days after the armistice. This was the first carillon conceived as a memorial to the Great War and many others followed in Allied countries. The bells are named after war zones in which South African troops fought.

The carillon was manufactured in 1923 by the English bell foundry Taylor & Co in Loughborough. The bells cost £3,300 (about £180,000 in today's money) and were transported free of charge by the Union Castle Mail Steamship Company. The carillon was inaugurated on 30 April 1925 on the occasion of HRH The Prince of Wales's visit. The first concerts were given by the Belgian carillonneur Anton Brees and the first song played was the hymn 'Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past'.

The carillon weighs 15.5 tons and is arranged in three layers, each with two rows of bells. It is played using a baton clavier (which looks like a cross between a loom and an organ) and there are hand batons and foot pedals connected to the bells by a complex system of cables. Using the clavier, a carillonneur can play any music from Beethoven to the Beatles. A room below the bells houses a practice clavier and a main clavier as well as a change ringing drum (which looks like a giant music box device) that can be used to play two different sequences. The tunes it plays are not identifiable.

The last master musician to play the Cape Town bells was the German carillon expert Ulrich Leykam in 2010.

Unfortunately, the bells and the steep narrow staircase you climb to reach them are somewhat dusty and neglected, so it's recommended that you bring a good head for heights and a torch if you visit.

A CARILLON PLAYED ON THE RELEASE OF NELSON MANDELA

It was the sounds of the Cape Town carillon that the world heard on 11 February 1990 on the release of Nelson Mandela, who gave his first public speech as a free man from the balcony of the City Hall.

THE HERITAGE VINE

Corner of Bree and Shortmarket Streets
 Courtyard accessible via Heritage Square Hotel
 • Free entry

10



**Probably
 the oldest
 wine-producing
 vine in the southern
 hemisphere**

In a courtyard surrounded by historic townhouses grows an ancient vine that still produces a few litres of wine each year. Estimated to have been planted in 1771, it's likely that this is not only the oldest vine in South Africa, but also the oldest wine-producing vine in the southern hemisphere.

Wine making in the Cape dates back to the first days of the Dutch settlement. Scurvy, caused by Vitamin C deficiency, was the scourge of sailors of the day. It was the main reason Jan van Riebeeck was sent to establish a refreshment station at the Cape in 1652. Commander van Riebeeck had been an assistant surgeon in Batavia and believed (incorrectly) that wine could cure scurvy. Naturally, planting vines was among his first actions on arrival. Seven years later, on 2 February 1659, he wrote in his diary, "Today, praise be to God, wine was made for the first time from Cape grapes."

The vines of The Company Gardens did not last long before wine-making moved first to Constantia then Franschhoek, Paarl and Stellenbosch. However, it remained common for the burghers of Cape Town to plant vines in their gardens and make their own wine. This was probably the case with the vine at Heritage Square. The townhouses were built in 1771 and in a journal dated 1785 the first landlord wrote, "Drinking wine under the grape tree." In 2008 (223 years later) the vine again produced 15 litres of excellent wine, made on the premises and bottled with the label 'Heritage 1771'.

That the vine exists at all is something of a miracle. In the mid-1800s, European vineyards were obliterated by the Phylloxera aphid in The Great French Wine Blight. Phylloxera spread to the Cape in 1866, causing widespread devastation. Probably owing to its isolation, the Heritage vine escaped the blight, making it one of the few remaining original French *vinifera* rootstock surviving today.

Then, in the 1960s, the townhouses were threatened with demolition in order to build a multi-storey car park. For over a decade, the square was left abandoned and the vine survived untended, fed only by rainwater. Luckily, the car park project fell through and the Cape Town Heritage Trust, formed in 1987, undertook to renovate the square.

The Heritage vine is so old that it is difficult to accurately identify the variety. Initial research suggested it was a Crouchen Blanc, one of the first varieties to arrive in the Cape from the western Pyrenees. However, when winemaker and viticulturist Jean Vincent Rindon sent cuttings to the French National Institute for Agricultural Research, he was told the vine is probably a Gros Chenin, better known as Chenin Blanc.

TAFELBERG DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH

17

- Corner of Buitenkant and Commercial Streets
- Tel: 021-461-2682
- Church services: Sundays at 9:30am

“**Booming hymns from the green organ**”

The building at the corner of Buitenkant and Commercial Streets doesn't look at all like a church. With its three gables, dormer and bay windows, it appears more like a grand colonial home than a religious building. Although the façade depicts a hodgepodge of styles, the interior is very fine indeed, with a magnificent organ as its centrepiece.

This complex dates from 1892 and includes the church building, Cornelia House, and the William Frederick School. Built for the Tafelberg Congregation (the architect was HJ Jones), it was inaugurated in 1893. The complex was declared a national monument in 1984.

Entering the church via a steep flight of steps between bay windows topped with pediments buttressed by Flemish scrolls, the visitor will discover a narrow foyer paved with ceramic tiles bearing biblical symbols from the Crucifixion and Judas's betrayal, a wooden spiral staircase that leads to a cast-iron gallery and a vast main hall with a high ceiling and simple, stained-glass windows of bright colour blocks. Its roof is supported by timber beams and trusses with trefoil motifs. The beautiful organ was installed in 1892 and has 1,164 pipes and a walnut case (the inner workings have been renewed).

The Tafelberg Dutch Reformed Church began life as a mission hall, the Cornelia Saal. It was part of a complex that included the adjoining building (for indigent women), the William Frederick School (closed in 1907) and an apartment on the building's second floor. The complex was given in trust to the church by Susanna Maria Hertzog in memory of her parents, William Frederik Hertzog and Susanna Cornelia Hertzog (née Hiddingh), and was built on the site of their old home. She stipulated that when a self-supporting congregation came into being, the complex would be transferred to the Dutch Reformed Church.

Dr JJ Kotzé, Dr Andrew Murray and Professor Marais conducted the inauguration ceremony on 27 January 1893. Cornelia Hertzog had the honour of unlocking the front door. Although services were held regularly from then on, the Tafelberg congregation was only founded in 1944, 47 years after Cornelia's death. The longest serving minister of the Tafelberg church was the Reverend JD Vorster (1935–1982), brother of former prime minister and state president John Vorster.



THE PUMP TREE

The Company's Garden, Queen Victoria Street

- Open: 7am-8:30pm in summer and 7am-7pm in winter
- Free entry



Visitors may come across the stone well in the middle of the lower section of the Company's Garden. Those with sharp eyes will notice the pump handle and spout protruding from the stump of an oak tree a short distance away.

The remains of the hand pump are dated 1842 and the well it adjoins was built at the same time. The old oak was felled by a storm in 2015, but the city restored its stump, with the embedded hand pump, for posterity.

The pump was connected to the well by an underground pipe. Looking down into the well it's possible to see a small section of the original slate covering juts out over the top of the red brick.

Constructed from imported bricks, the well had a depth of 2.7m (9 feet). The reason the well is relatively shallow is that it was built like a sump. At regular intervals down the shaft are wooden layers, on top of which rest layers of brick and shale. This allowed ground water to filter into the well.

Before 1850 there were a number of wells in the Garden, but when a proper water service was provided, they were abandoned and filled in.

An old pump embedded in a tree stump

THE OLDEST TREE IN THE GARDEN

The saffron pear tree in the Company's Garden is probably the oldest cultivated tree in South Africa. It was brought from Holland in Van Riebeeck's time, about 350 years ago.

One of the original varieties of pear, *Pyrus communis*, it is known as the common or saffron pear and bears small fruit. Traditionally, the leaves were used to dye wool a distinctive saffron yellow and the fruit was used in pickles and preserves.

The tree's original trunk collapsed many years ago. What remains are four sprouts that emerged from the roots. The ancient branches are held up by metal crutches and cables and protected by a fence.

In August 2013, cuttings were taken to preserve the tree's genetic material. Should the original tree die, a clone could be planted in its place.

REMAINS OF THE MOUILLE POINT LIGHTHOUSE

5

Cape Town Hotel School car park, 3 Beach Road, Mouille Point.

- Entrance is free: walk past the barriers into the car park and turn right. The base of the lighthouse is near the terrace of the Hotel School Restaurant



The obsolete lighthouse

Completed in 1842, Mouille Point Light was the second lighthouse in South Africa. It was operational until 1908, when the Table Bay Harbour breakwater light was built. Today, all that remains of the original Mouille Point Lighthouse is the four-metre high, brick and slate base, situated in the grounds of the Hotel School of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Granger Bay. This is also the former site of the old Mouille Point Battery.

The name 'mouille' comes from the French for anchorage or mooring. In the early 18th century, wrecks were common in Table Bay and the Cape governor decided that a breakwater ('moeilje' in Dutch) was needed to shelter vessels.

Work began in 1743 and all farmers delivering goods to the city were required to load their wagons with stones, drive to Mouille Point and offload. Primarily slaves and convicts were used to build the breakwater, but after three years of hard labour and high seas, only 100 metres had been built and the project was abandoned. In 1781, the French arrived, and constructed a gun emplacement near the unfinished breakwater, naming it Mouille Point Battery.

Built on the same site, the lighthouse was an elegant structure, about 11 metres tall and comprising a cylindrical brick tower with a gallery and an octagonal lantern imported from Paris. A four-metre hollow foundation in the bedrock provided for oil storage. The tower was plastered, painted with red and white bands and had a dioptric lamp which used about 730 gallons of sheep-tail oil per year.

The Mouille Point Lighthouse sadly failed to meet the stringent requirements of naval captains entering and leaving Table Bay. Many regarded the light as too dim and easily confused with shore lights. Indeed, during its lifetime, a number of ships ran aground on the rocks in front of it. The most



notable of these was the RMS *Athens*, wrecked with all hands just below the light, during the great gale of 1865. The tower was decommissioned on 15 April 1908 and demolished soon after.

Today's famous Green Point Lighthouse, a beautiful red-and-white structure near the site of the old lighthouse, is often erroneously referred to as the Mouille Point Lighthouse.



CHAMPION TREES AT THE ARDERNE GARDENS

222 Main Road, Claremont

- Open: Daily 8am-6pm
- Free entry / Donation box
- A map of its noteworthy trees can be bought for R10 from the Scala pharmacy across the street

“The largest collection of remarkable trees in South Africa

A small botanical garden in the heart of Claremont features six of South Africa's most remarkable trees. When the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry introduced a law in 2003 protecting designated 'Champion Trees' (i.e. trees of exceptional importance and heritage value), the Arderne Gardens turned out to have the largest single collection of trees worthy of protection.

Most impressive, perhaps, is a 37-metre (120-foot) tall Moreton Bay fig. With its sinuous spreading roots, it's one of the largest trees in South Africa and is affectionately known as the Wedding Tree, as many generations of Capetonians have had their wedding photographs taken with it. An Aleppo pine, towering to a height of 40 metres (130 feet) is double the usual height for the species and thought to be the largest of its kind in the world. And a 43-metre (140 foot) high Norfolk Island pine is the ancestor of the first Norfolk Island pine in South Africa. Bought for the princely sum of £5, the original tree was planted at the centre of the gardens in 1847, but died in 1914. It is possible that all Norfolk Island pines in South Africa trace their origin to it. The three other designated champion trees – an ancient Turkey oak, a wizened cork oak, and a Queensland kauri – are possibly less spectacular, though no less beautiful.

Most of the trees were planted by the gardens' creator, Ralph Henry Arderne, a timber merchant who bought the land (originally part of the old Stellenberg Estate) in 1845. Using his connections in the timber trade, Arderne was able to gratify his love of exotic trees and plants, amassing one of the finest collections in South Africa. An amble around the gardens will take you past a monstrous dragon tree from the Canary Islands, Australian bunya banyas with 5kg cones, giant tree ferns from New Zealand, parana pines from Brazil, Himalayan deodars from India, Californian redwoods and probably the only Rule araucaria from New Caledonia in South Africa. After his death, Arderne's equally passionate son Henry continued to add to the collection, most notably with the rare flowering *Watsonia borbonica Ardernii* – which was named after him when he discovered it on a hike in the Cederberg.

The gardens are now a national monument, maintained by the City of Cape Town and the Friends of the Arderne Gardens.



THE ENDEMIC PROJECT

Rhodes Drive
Constantia

19



A secret night-time nature tour

Driving towards Hout Bay at night, on the forest road between Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and the Constantia Nek traffic circle, you'll notice a strange phenomenon. Along the side of this dark road, which is unlit by any street lamps, your headlights will pick up a cryptic sign that simply says, "once upon a time", followed by a procession of glowing creatures: butterflies, frogs, sunbirds, antelope and tortoises.

They are all part of an immersive installation experience by local filmmaker and artist Bryan Little. Tired of creating conventional videos, Little wanted to experiment with the traditional film experience and find a new way of telling stories. The Endemic Project is one of his first attempts at what he calls 'future film'. He decided to remove the camera and place the audience inside the scene, making the car's motion the element of time and narrative. Little says he wanted to "turn people's cars into spaceships to take them on a journey to explore their back garden."



Made from reflector tape on dark backgrounds, the 'light paintings' depict species of plants and animals endemic to the Western Cape that are no longer found in this suburb. The soundtrack was created by sound designer Simon Kohle and uses atmospheric music accompanied by the sounds of the animals. When you take the tour, watch out for the geometric tortoise, the Table Mountain ghost frog and the orange-breasted sunbird.

EXPERIENCING THE PROJECT

You'll need a smartphone that has GPS enabled. Install the free 'VoiceMap: Audio Walking Tours' app from the iTunes Store or Google Play. Look for 'The Endemic Project' in the Cape Town section and download the free geotagged soundtrack. Use a handsfree kit or play through your car sound system using Bluetooth or an auxiliary cable.

Once you're in your car, open The Endemic Project in the app and push START before you set off. In the 'Start route' menu, select 'YES' and listen to the instructions (this is a good time to set the volume). Leave the app running and drive past Kirstenbosch Gardens en route to Hout Bay. After the bottom gate main entrance, continue on to the T-junction and turn right. The soundtrack will start automatically as you go up the hill. The route distance is five kilometres and the tour takes about six minutes. For the best experience, drive the route at night at 50km/h.

