

Bridge Board M
full size

Elevation of Z

Elevation of Kerandah
(1/2" = 1 foot)

W. Street Wilson H.K.B.A.
Percy M. Barr Joint Architects

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SAIA KZN

EDITOR'S NOTES

Throughout history, drawing has been the architect's main medium of communication, from conceptual design to construction.

The Old Drawings Collection (ODC) of UKZN is primarily of the latter, as the original donation by the municipality was of drawings approved for construction. For its own purposes the municipality had made copies on microfiche, and these have since been digitised and need very little or no physical storage space at all.

Although subsequent collections were added at UKZN, including the older Street Wilson drawings, the collection remains mainly of 'working drawings' but despite their technical nature, many are exquisite, a few examples of which are herein featured.

Despite the proliferation of new modes for communicating architectural ideas, I am confident that drawings will remain as an invaluable resource for architecture in any computer-aided design (CAD) or building information modelling (BIM).

On another level, as we and the world remain in the grips of the Covid-19 pandemic after more than a year, the Victorian houses, such as those by Street Wilson and partners, with large, ventilated spaces, must be the best for health and wellness, as opposed to the open plan as propagated by the modern movement, which by design could become 'super spreaders'.

Following an allegation that this Journal covered only the architecture of Durban, this issue includes three examples located in the extremes of rural KZN, which innovations I trust readers will appreciate.

Walter Peters, Editor

This journal, now in its 46th year of publication, has from inception been sponsored by Corobrik.



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Editor: Walter Peters **Assistant:** Janet Whelan

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Tel: 031 201-7590 **Fax:** 031 201-7586

E-mail: admin@kznia.org.za

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SOUTH AFRICAN
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SAIA-KZN NEWS

2020 Corobrik KZN region Student of the Year

At a virtual ceremony held on 31st March, **Neeshailin Naicker** was announced the 2020 Corobrik, KwaZulu-Natal region, Student of the Year, with a prize of R10K.

His dissertation with topic 'The influence of the community on the architecture of learning spaces: towards rethink of a rural primary school' resulted in a design for the settlement of Mvumase, on the banks of the Tugela River, in the Maphumulo municipality.

A second prize of R8K went to **Adrian Govender** and 3rd of R6K to **Neshay Sirbadhoo**. For the best use of clay masonry, an award of R6K was made to **Kristen Harrington**.

2020 Peter Louis Heritage Award



SAIA-KZN Architectural Heritage Committee member Ken Lever reading the certificate before presenting it to Dr Michele Jacobs.

This award, aimed to promote, foster and advance research and conservation of the built heritage of KwaZulu-Natal is named in memory of quantity surveyor **Peter Louis** (1936 - 2002), an active member of the Institute's Heritage committee for 25 years beginning in 1977. Periodically the SAIA-KZN Architectural Heritage Committee acknowledges the substantial contribution made by a person or organisation towards these objectives and confers the award.

At a function held at the Institute on 2nd December 2020, the 2020 Peter Louis Award was presented to librarian and archivist, **Dr Michele Jacobs**. As per the



Sketches of the rural primary school at Mvumase by Neeshailin Naicker, 2020 Corobrik, KwaZulu-Natal region, Student of the Year.

certificate, the award was made in recognition of her "enthusiastic and dedicated administration" of the technical reference section of the Barrie Biermann Archi-

ecture Library, UKZN. The certificate concludes that "Her promotion of heritage through research and management of the archival material will preserve the collection as a valuable resource for future generations".

On receipt of the certificate, Dr Jacobs presented a lecture 'From Paper to Pixels: Reflections on 42 years in the library profession'.

It was particularly fitting that Peter's widow, Maggie Louis, was able to participate in the proceedings by Skype from Sydney, Australia.

Previous recipients of Peter Louis Heritage awards are Jean Powell and Helen Labuschagne, 2004; Malcolm Lawton, 2006; Graham de Kock, 2009; and Susan Burrows, 2011.

DUT Architecture Learning Site

Having secured approval from the government's Department of Higher Education & Training, as of 2021 the post-graduate degree, Bachelor of the Built Environment Honours in Architecture, is being offered at Durban

University of Technology. This new qualification of one year's full-time duration at NQF Level 8, commenced in March with 30 students in the inaugural class.

In Memoriam

SAIA-KZN Journal has learnt with regret of the death of the following members:

Bernard Rodney Whitehead (1926 -2020), partner in the practice Reginald Buck & Bernard Whitehead from which he retired in 1993.

David James Rushton (1946 - 2021), partner in the practice Fridjhon Fulford & Partners which merged with Chick Bartholomew & Poole, 1989-2006.

Helmut Jahn (1940-2021), known to Durbanites for the hi-tech octagonal glass skyscraper, 88 Field Street, died in an accident while riding his bicycle near Chicago. The associated architects for this exceptional building, 1982-1986, now named Southern Life Tower, were Stauch Vorster, see *NPIA Journal*, 3/1986.





S CUSTODIAN of the unique Original Drawings Collection (ODC) housed in the Technical Reference Library (TRL) of the Architecture Discipline of the School of Built Environment and Development Studies,

University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) for the last thirty-five years, it became clear during the course of my work, that an analysis of the drawings of Durban's colonial domestic architecture was appropriate and necessary. As I was digitising these records it was evident that the drawings form a tangible, accurate and unique connection to plan forms and room typologies, street elevations and architectural elements that inform our understanding of Durban's colonial domestic architectural past. Having assisted numerous architects, historians and interested owners over the years with drawings and information, I realised that many of the houses depicted in the drawing collection had not been sufficiently recorded in detail.

There is a sad irony that these drawings on paper and linen have outlived the bricks and mortar of a large number of houses that may not have been photographically documented or otherwise recorded. As such many of these drawings are the only surviving records of a unique built history, making this analysis all the more important to architects and historians. While many of the houses may have disappeared, others have been added to and changed beyond recognition or are hidden behind high walls, their once large properties subdivided and the context of the original houses in their garden settings lost forever. The drawings therefore, remain as the only record of the houses as their designers and builders envisaged and as it can be assumed, they were first constructed. Just as it is necessary, where possible, to restore, and conserve the built environment as a record of the architectural past, so too the drawings remain as a link to a unique past

THE DURBAN COLONIAL HOUSE AND THE ORIGINAL DRAWINGS COLLECTIONS OF UKZN

which are worth preserving in appropriate archives, interpreting and recording for posterity. Some of the drawings have been published in various books and academic papers, but a full and comprehensive list, analysis and description of the drawings of Durban's colonial domestic architecture has not been undertaken.

If the history of our built heritage can be seen as a series of temporal layers, then the drawings in this collection form a vital part of the record of these layers, where the 'new' demolishes, builds upon, adds to, replaces, changes and on occasion, conserves the 'old'.

A five-year commitment

After completing my MA (Art History) (UKZN) in 2014, and discussing these initial observations with my supervisor, Dr. Juliette Leeb-du Toit, she encouraged me to pursue my PhD utilising the original drawings as the basis of my research: *The Durban colonial house from 1880 to 1930: An analysis based on the Original Drawing Collection of the School of Architecture, University of KwaZulu-Natal.*

There is a logical reason why a PhD takes five years and longer to complete. As I have discovered, research is slow, methodical, meticulous and time consuming. Research cannot be rushed and the more recent propensity to 'just Google it' for instant research results is not an option. Numerous books, documents and journal articles are consulted for a literature review and information extrapolated and analysed to prepare a Research Proposal. Once I had prepared and submitted the proposal, I defended it before a panel of academics from the Humanities College and it was formally approved in 2015.

I envisaged my thesis to be a comprehensive document that would add to the existing recorded data of Durban's domestic colonial architectural heritage between 1880 and 1930, a coincidental and convenient fifty-year period predicated by the dates on the vast majority of the drawings of houses.

Dr Michele Jacobs, recipient of the 2020 Peter Louis Heritage Award.
Photo: Shelley Kjonstad



Michele Eileen Jacobs holds an Information Science degree conferred by UNISA in 2004, and both BA (Hons) and MA degrees in Art History by UKZN, the latter awarded *cum laude* in 2015. Her PhD degree was conferred in 2020.

In 1985 Michele commenced her present position as librarian and archivist of the Technical Reference section, now of the School of the Built Environment and Development Studies, UKZN. Her dedication including co-authoring three publications* saw SAIA-KZN confer on Michele a Scroll of Honour in 2011 and in 2020 the Peter Louis Award by the Heritage sub-committee.

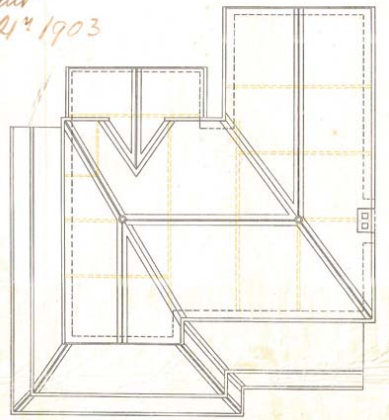
However, a distinguished record of achievements lies behind, including the appointment as Head Girl of Pinetown High School in 1976, excelling there in athletics, and in the following year chosen to be a Rotary International exchange student with Colac in Victoria, Australia. But athletics remains a life-long pursuit with the honour in 1989 of KZN colours for cross country road running.

**A Measure of the Past* (with R. Harber & B. Kearney, 2015); *The Street Wilson drawing collection* (with B. Kearney, 2016); and *The Berea Style* (also with B. Kearney, 2018), and all were published by Durban Heritage Trust.

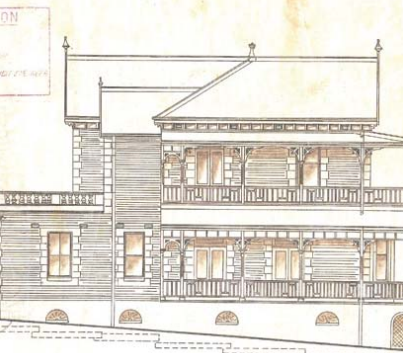
Proposed Villa Florida Road
for Mrs Joel
Scale 1/4 inch = 1 foot

W. E. Roberts
Archit.
May 21st 1903

Roberts
Archit.
May 21st 1903



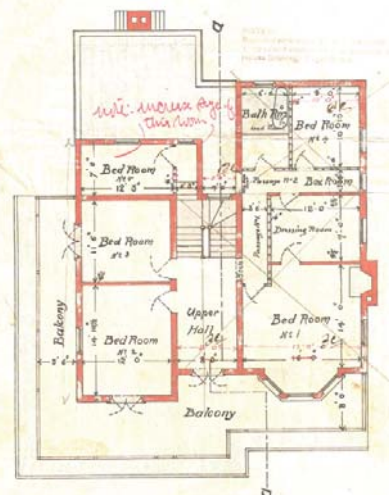
Roof Plan



Elevation facing East

W. E. Roberts
Archit.
May 21st 1903

First Floor Plan



The Original Drawings Collection

There are two drawing collections that formed the basis of my analysis; the first collection, the ODC was donated to the School of Architecture and Allied Disciplines in the early 1970s by the City of Durban's 'City Engineer's Department' after the drawings had been recorded on a microfiche system, the prevailing technology and accessioning process of the day. Prof. Brian Kearney was instrumental in acquiring a small percentage of the drawings that had survived damp, water ingress and other forms of environmental deterioration in the roof space of the City Engineer's building where they were stored, forming the core of what is termed the Original Durban Collection.

The second collection, known as the Street Wilson Collection was sourced from the successor practice, Paton Taylor and Partners, in the late 1970s when one of the partners, Bill O'Beirne made arrangements with Kearney to have the drawings of the founding practice members transferred to the then School of Architecture, Natal University. The drawings of William Street Wilson and his partners Percy M. Barr, Arthur Fyfe and Wallace Paton were integrated with the ODC, including those within the Original Durban Collection. These collections were the first of several Original Drawing collections to be donated to the Technical Reference Library (TRL), the departmental library of the then School of Architecture and Allied Disciplines, and located within the Architecture Branch Library, later the Barrie Biermann Architecture Library (BBAL).¹

The collections of the BBAL and TRL were physically separated with the TRL moving adjacent to the BBAL in December 2005 to ensure a more secure environment and to facilitate the expansion of the drawing collections and other archival records. These included the 2nd Year architecture students' Measured Drawing Collection, the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Campus Buildings Collection, the Hans Hallen Collection and other smaller collections of drawings and maps including the Goad's 1931 insurance plans, 1931 and 1949 Durban aerial photos, 1963 Durban photogrammetric maps and 1990 Durban orthophoto maps.

The need of drawings for building approval

The ODC needs to be contextualised within Durban's municipal history and the development of systems to control the built environment and extract rates. A prime characteristic of the Victorian era was global urbanisation, particularly in the last 20 years of the 19th century. During this time, in almost all the major South African cities, there was a continual and concerted effort by means of legal mechanisms to both control and ameliorate the effects of fairly rapid growth.² Having the required number of more than 1 000 inhabitants, Durban was granted municipal status in 1854 under the terms of Ordinance No.1 of 1854. It was understandable that Durban's regulatory by-laws would have been based on the British Model By-laws and many of the first by-laws were related to

public health and safety. In 1862 the Durban municipality received sanction for a new and extensive set of by-laws. Among these were by-laws pertaining to building regulations. The first building regulation in Durban was No. 21 of 1861 which prohibited thatched roofs, primarily as a fire hazard.

It was therefore inevitable that the submission of drawings for approval by the municipality would follow and became law in July 1878. This would explain the dearth of official records of the earliest wattle and daub domestic structures in Durban, termed the 'Bundu style' by Brian Kearney.³ Some early plan submissions in Durban are plans only and schematic ones at that. That elevations were not required as this was primarily an aesthetic matter⁴ has been confirmed by the ODC. Some of the earliest drawings in the ODC are rudimentary sketch plans with minimal information and it can be assumed these were submitted purely for municipal record purposes.

This could be partially attributed to the Natal Institute for Architects, established in 1901, that unsuccessfully approached the Durban Municipality in 1907 to agree that all plans submitted to the Plans Committee for buildings and building works over the value of £500 be prepared and signed by a recognised member of the architectural profession to 'put a check upon the amazing amount of work in the nature of buildings, the plans for which were prepared by anybody and everybody with no qualifications of any sort, often of the crudest type or flagrantly pirated, which were accepted and passed by the municipalities to the hurt and detriment of the profession'.⁵

The laborious process of producing drawings led to simple representations for ordinary buildings, such as small houses. The architect, builder and craftsman shared a common language of construction, which became codified and was so well understood that the builder followed standard pattern books and did not need details from the architect.⁶ These 'codes' of building and 'standard patterns' would be translocated from Britain to Durban through immigrant craftsmen and builders. So, while the individual drawings may in many cases be simple or rudimentary, the value of this particular collection of architectural drawings as a record of Durban's colonial built environment cannot be underestimated as reliable recording and documentation is all too often unavailable. If the ultimate record of our domestic built heritage must be the houses themselves, then the drawings assume added significance when the houses have been demolished or are so changed by alterations and additions that they are unrecognisable. Each drawing not only provides information on individual single and double storeyed houses and their owners, but the ODC as a whole can be invaluable as a general reference to construction details of elements such as gables, verandas, roofs, windows and doors, staircases and importantly the development of plan forms through the various periods from 1880 to 1930.

Drawing as a process

If the architectural drawing is a step along the way toward the experience of a work of real architecture, then, the architect's drawing serves three different basic functions. Firstly, it conveys to a client what a building will look like when completed. Secondly it is a record for the local authority to ensure the completed building will comply with all regulations and by-laws. Thirdly it provides the builder with the necessary information to construct the building according to the architect's design and within the necessary regulations and by-laws.⁷

Architectural drawings are not usually created as an end in themselves, they are produced to demonstrate architectural concepts, to determine tectonic procedures and to regulate functional uses for the benefit of architects, clients, or someone else.⁸ However, drawing can reveal everything or nothing about a building. This last statement is, however, partly flawed since a drawing with seemingly very little information can still provide the researcher with valuable data for analysis by what is not revealed on the drawing. From drawings that in many cases had limited information, it can be implied, that builders and artisans were skilled and accomplished enough to construct houses that had the capacity to withstand the ravages of time.

The drawings as a collection, can therefore be seen as a specific form of collective ethnographic material culture from which tacit and explicit information can be extrapolated and analysed. The ODC, then is not just an historical record of the physical built environment, existing or demolished, but a record of early architectural design, construction processes and materiality. There is still a dearth of critical engagement with architectural production in South Africa and original drawings representing architectural creative production are often hidden or lost.⁹

The value of the ODC and this research can therefore contribute to the written record, make the drawings visible and as an archivist and librarian, facilitate their access to the wider community. The ODC can go some way to address the limited engagement of architectural processes and products of important architects who have contributed to the continuum of South African architectural history. But just as important in this research of the ODC, is the acknowledgement of the anonymous and lesser known creators of original drawings in the collection that have also contributed to this continuum, despite the Natal Institute for Architects protestations at the time.¹⁰ Their contribution has been given less than satisfactory acknowledgement and this research rectifies that to some extent. Since an archive is a reminder of the past, a source of knowledge, caution or inspiration for the future, the drawings of the ODC archive contributes in part to the continuous record of the architectural and cultural achievements of Durban's domestic society between 1880 and 1930.

Primary or secondary source?

Drawings are secondary representations of buildings as well as works of art in themselves, which presents a dual problem for historians. The methodology used by historians who study architectural drawings is similar to that of most art historians who study paintings, in that they treat the representation as an artefact with intrinsic characteristics and specific meanings which conveys information about the primary object which it depicts, the building.¹¹

Architecture, together with sculpture and painting, may be regarded as material arts, because in all of them an artistic intention is forged into physical matter at one moment in time. After the building is built, the sculpture is sculpted and the painting is painted, the artefact that has resulted

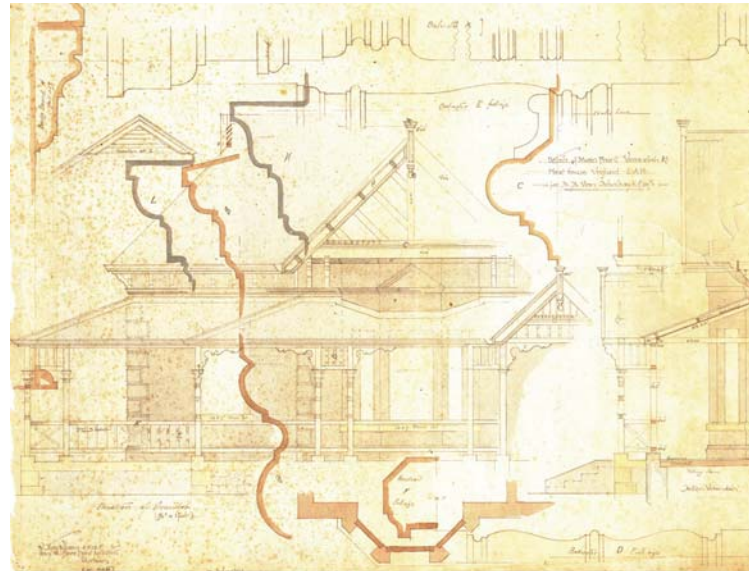
remains unchanged, save for the ravages of physical decay, accident or human malevolence.

Secondary Representations are of two obvious types: those that come before the work of art and predict what it may be like through notes, studies, models, sketches and drawings, and those that come afterward, and describe what it is or was through photographs, sketches and drawings.

The function of these secondary representations is therefore to convey to secondary audiences what the primary representation could become, what it may actually be, or what it perhaps was. As a three-dimensional material art, the full experience of architecture emerges from all our perceptual responses to the actual thing. Apart from touch, sight, smell, taste and hearing is the haptic visual perceptions of the sense of the size of a building relative to our own size, the sense of being near or far from it, enclosed or unenclosed over or under, up or down, left or right, and before or behind.¹²

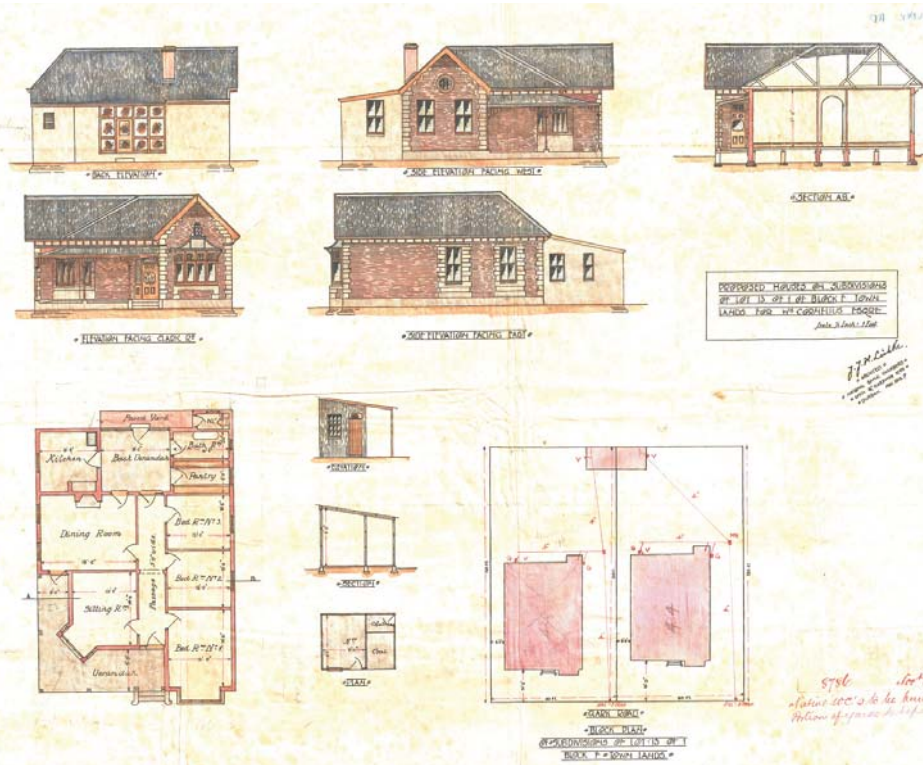
Conversely, architecture, which has always involved drawing before building, can be split into prior and subsequent activities: design and construction. The building can be discarded as an unfortunate aftermath, and all the properties, values and attributes that are worth keeping can be held in the drawing. While it is true that the imaginative work of architecture has been accomplished almost exclusively through drawing, it is manifested almost exclusively in building.¹³

The act and making of drawings is essential to all facets of architectural process. Drawings act as mediators between conception and construction,



COVER IMAGE: Drawing of an elevation and a section with the details of the veranda, bay window, mouldings and timberwork. House AA van Schalkwyk, Vryheid, by joint architects W Street Wilson & Percy M Barr, c.1893.

VERSO: Plan details of Villa for Mrs Joel, Florida Rd, Durban. W Roberts, 1903. See p.6.



ABOVE: 438 Clark Rd, Durban. Houses for Mr WS Cornelius Esqre (sic), Clark Rd, Durban, by architect JJH Lübke, 1912. Note that in realisation the house was inverted from the plan.

between architect and builder and between architect and client. This dilemma of the building as the end product of a process in which visual fidelity is now the key legal requirement where the building should look as the drawings and the drawings as the buildings. In the past drawings could be quite impure, imprecise, vague and not directly belonging to any specific moment of architectural imaging of the

professionally enforced contractual sequence of architecture services. Everybody knew that the documents were not completely veracious.¹⁴ This is true of a number of the drawings in the ODC.

In the context of my research it was necessary to focus on the original drawing as the primary source of information since a large proportion of the houses have been demolished or so changed that they are unrecognisable. If the houses derived from the drawings still existed, it was instructive to include photographs as an added layer in the documentation but this was not essential to the research.

The drawing as artefact

Historical architectural drawings such as those in the ODC, are a form of visual material culture which are the physical artefacts of a particular group of people. The drawings are physical manifestations of a specific form of production with the purpose of facilitating the construction of a building. The visual scrutiny of the drawings opens up further non-material dimensions of culture and social life.¹⁵ In this respect, artefact-oriented studies play an important role in alerting scholars and lay audiences to information and materials they would otherwise know little about – or misunderstand.

The artefact can operate in two separate ways: firstly at the socio-biological level, in which the artefact conveys information as to the social structure

of the community and secondly at the socio-cultural level in which the artefact acts as an agent for the memes that facilitate the transference of cultural information.¹⁶

The value of material objects and artefacts such as the ODC, is that they confirm that the drawings convey information about the social structure of Durban's colonial society and are the agents for the transference of cultural information, within the time frame discussed, as manifested primarily through the plan and front elevation, thereby making culture more visible, and, purportedly more real. This is relevant to the research by making the drawings, discreet objects from a particular time, valuable records that make both the exceptional and objectionable aspects of colonial culture and social life reflected in the drawings more visible to a wider audience. The artefact retains potency within the cultural realm as agent for cultural retrieval or change. The artefact, therefore, preserves its agency as message bearer in which a society's values and meanings from the past can be continuously transmitted into the present through the drawing as a meme carrying artefact.¹⁷ Furthermore, these values and meanings can be routinely interrogated contemporaneously as society changes and progresses through time.

The significance of objects, materials and their origins varies both within and across cultures, leading to artefacts such as the architectural drawings, being interpreted or read in a way that is completely different or from a different perspective or focus to my own research. Bringing artefacts into focus can open up new fields of research by others.¹⁸ The artefact is therefore active within a cultural system and past values and meanings can be continually transmitted into the present. Through interpretation the memetic content of the artefact can be decoded and anachronistic ideas and meanings can be reintroduced in novel fashion. Conversely, if artefacts evolve through natural selection, the appearance of an architectural feature in buildings will be exposed to the forces of natural selection; if advantageous and deemed valuable it will prosper and become widespread.¹⁹ These architectural drawings have the capacity to reflect those advantageous features through time. In this way, the method of arrangement and the analysis and descriptions of the drawings in my research can be valuable to reveal those advantageous features of Durban's colonial domestic architecture that have more recently been lost through evolutionary changes in the lifestyle of the organism, that is the individuals and the collective community who built the houses.

The drawings in the ODC, as the durable surviving artefacts, in which time is inscribed as age, preserve collective and personal memories that form parts of the biographies of individuals and societies.²⁰ By their very nature, the drawings are therefore not just a representation of a house, but a tangible connection between the collective memories of the culture, history and individual lifestyles of the occupiers.



Research findings

1. Insight into the development of the plan form of the Durban colonial house

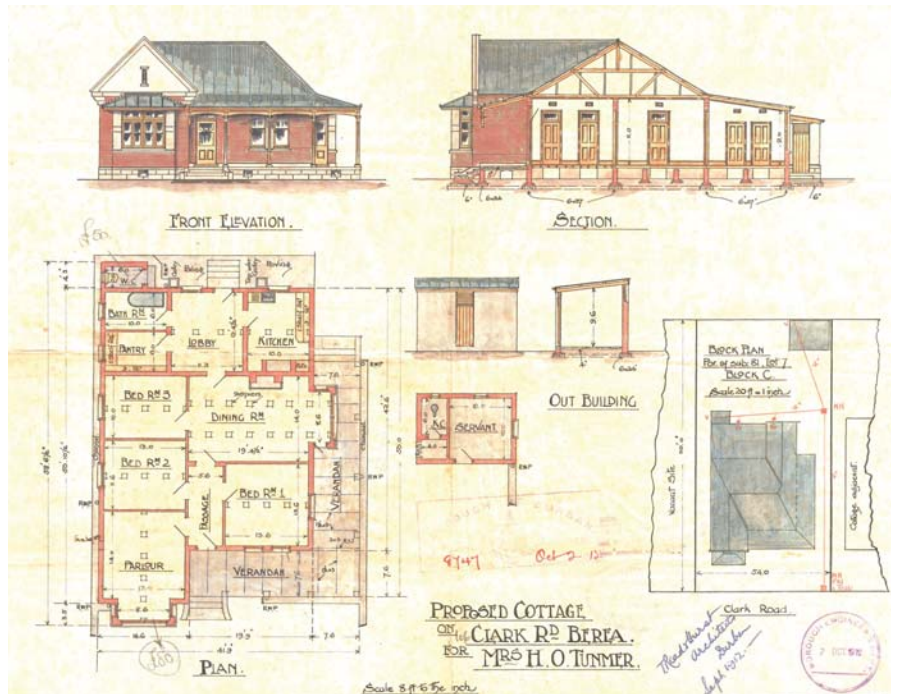
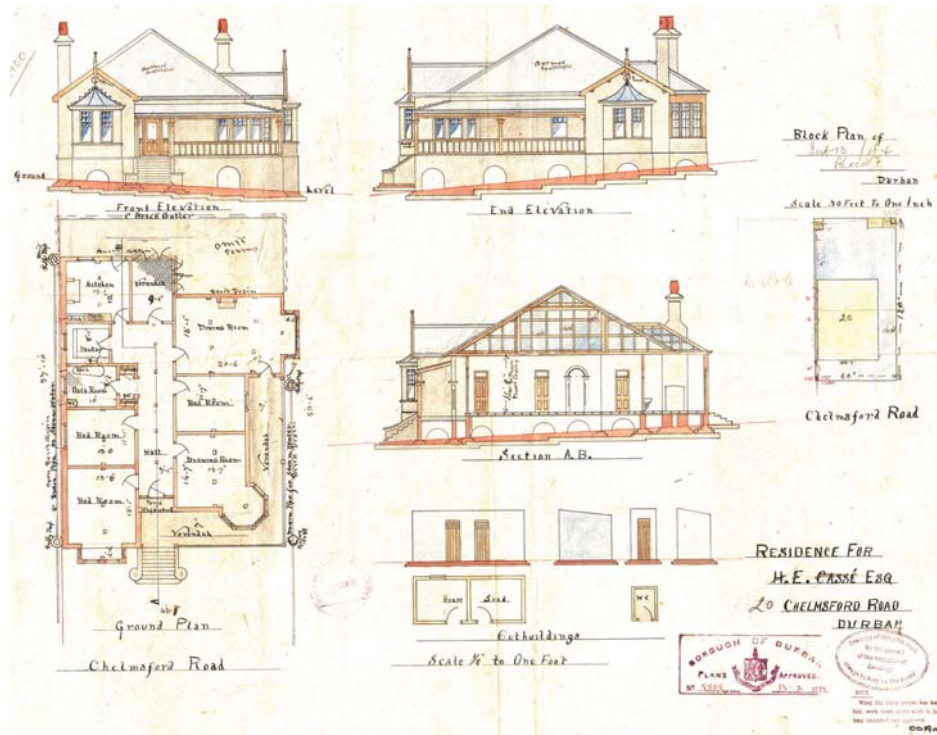
The detailed scrutiny, analyses and descriptions of the ODC provided insight into the development of the plan form of the Durban colonial house, 1880 to 1930. They confirmed the emergence of the predominant four roomed, central passage plan and its many derivatives from the early compact house and the 'Bundu style' Natal veranda house. They also confirm the concept of the 'Natal back' plan form in which the kitchen, pantry and bathroom, and eventually the WC, were attached under a veranda and onto the back of the four roomed central passage house and Natal veranda house. This was made possible with the arrival of less flammable building materials, the cast iron cooking range together with the installation of a water supply and water-borne sewerage technologies.

This plan form was also indicative of the separation of the public front from the service area at the back, the domain of invisible servants and ablution facilities. The adaptation and continuous development of the plan was a culturally conditioned agreement of what constitutes an appropriate house form. Fisher used the cultural equivalent of the gene, the meme, to explain that advantageous characteristics were maintained while any changes were facilitated by design and not by Darwinian evolutionary purpose and were communicated through the drawing as the artefact.²¹

2. The room typologies of the colonial lifestyle

This scrutiny has also enabled the critical analysis of the room typologies of the colonial lifestyle, which changed and adapted to economic wealth and constraints, technological advances, new construction materials and social realities over the time frame discussed. The critical analysis of the rooms also confirmed the assumption that in the large houses some rooms were gender specific, therefore conforming to British notions of gendered space.

The dining room was the most masculine room in the house, where men were left to drink, smoke and talk after the evening meal. The drawing room or parlour, of the house, was emphatically a female space, where women gathered for afternoon tea, before the evening meal and after the evening meal to chat and wait for the men to join them for tea or coffee. This was less prevalent in small houses with space constraints.



3. The house as an expression of self-sufficiency and independence

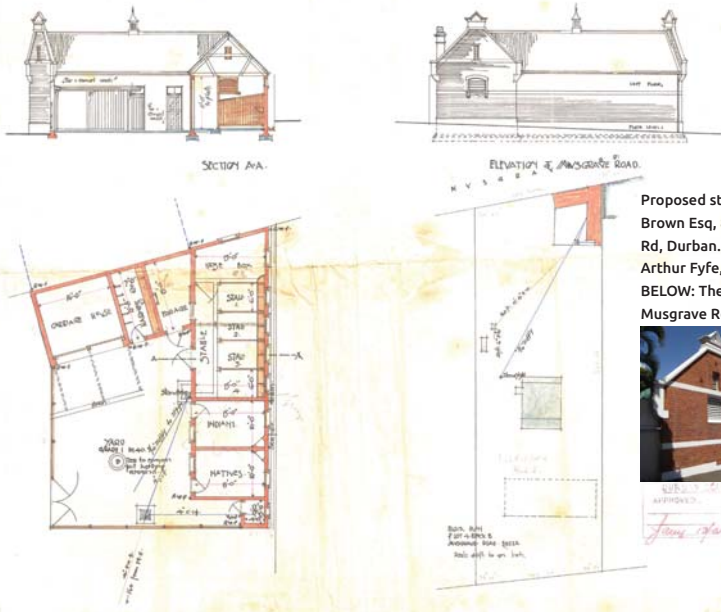
The development of the plan form and analysis of the rooms have further confirmed the translocated ideals of the British settlers; that the house was an expression of self-sufficiency and independence and that the single home was necessary for personal development and identity and for the promotion of family life, particularly the upbringing of children.

Drawings of the outbuildings also provided insight into the master-servant relationship and were indicators of wealth and status. The suburban nature of the Berea is also evident in several of the outbuildings incorporating cow and calf byres in addition to horse stables and carriage houses. Insight into the design of outside privies ranged from crude



TOP LEFT: JB Marks (Chelmsford) Rd, Durban.
RIGHT: Residence for HE Cassé Esq, Chelmsford Rd, Durban, 1912.

ABOVE: 106 Clark Road. Proposed cottage for Mrs HO Tunmer, 106 Clark Rd, architects T. Read & Hurst, 1912.



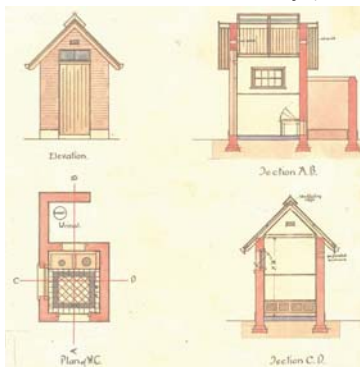
Proposed stables for WG Brown Esq, 88 Musgrave Rd, Durban. Architect Arthur Fyfe, 1904.



BELOW: The Stables, Musgrave Rd, Durban.

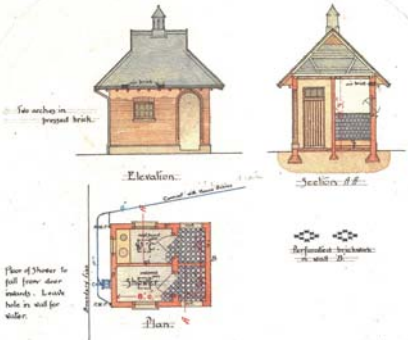
SANITATION preceding the use of septic tanks and water-borne sewerage systems.

BELOW: Outhouse with pail (bucket) closet, equipped with a seat prepared for use by both adults and children, and a separate bucket for the open but screened urinal stall behind. The toilet space, incorrectly labelled WC, had an internal floor-to-ceiling height of 7'6" (2286 mm) and was built with a pivot window for daylight and ventilation, and a ridge ventilator. Architects W Street Wilson & Arthur Fyfe, 1895.



BELOW: Ablutions outbuilding with a pail closet backed by a shower cubicle, & each was accessed across a porch. Rainwater and wastewater were linked to the drain of the house but a portable receptacle in the toilet would still have been removed and emptied by municipal staff. Because this process happened at night, the contents was euphemistically referred to as night soil, and was carried away along night soil lanes as proclaimed in the cadastre of eg Berea and Glenwood.

Outbuildings would have been placed away from houses to shun the smell. Like the example above, this toilet seat too was prepared for use by adults and children, but permanent ventilation was by way of perforations in the wall and a rooftop extractor ventilator. Unfortunately, the drawing discloses neither author identity nor date.



wood and iron structures to sophisticated face brick buildings that incorporated ridge and eave ventilation and bucket apertures to access the soil pails were also evident in the drawings of the outbuildings.

4. Design opportunities for front elevations facing the streets

The ODC also confirm that numerous architectural design opportunities for variety to the front elevation facing the street of the Natal veranda house and gabled veranda house typologies could be achieved through gables with a variety of projecting bay windows, ventilators, barge boards, finials, corner quoining, and verandas with timber or cast iron columns and later concrete Tuscan Doric columns, with combinations of balustrades, brackets and friezes. The transition from the temporary Picturesque 'Bundu style' through *skeuomorphic styling*,²² in which the styling of the later house constructed from permanent materials mimicked the original styling of the 'Bundu style' thereby creating the characteristic permanent domestic architecture from these temporary picturesque origins. Verandas could be articulated or part of the roof structure and stretch across the front, one side or around the front and two sides, adding to the overall complexity. Further variety could be achieved with various combinations of porticos, doors, and windows.

5. Numerous roof forms

The drawings also illustrate the numerous roof forms made possible by corrugated iron and subsequently clay Marseilles tiles together with roof embellishments such as chimneys and ridge friezes that further contributed to this design variety. This diversity and subsequent individuality was possible in both single and double storeyed houses, where even the most modest dwelling could present a suitable

face to the street through these numerous embellishments evidenced over several temporal periods and stylistic changes. These embellishments also contributed to the picturesque qualities that were most prevalent in the large houses on expansive plots.

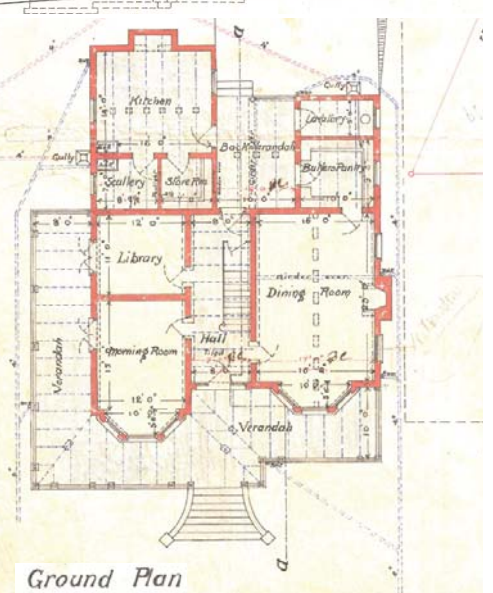
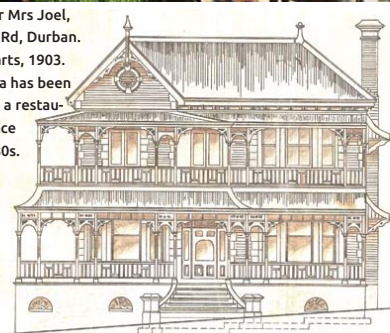
The lack of north indication on the drawings by the architects and designers, can be seen as confirmation that the primary elevation facing the street, was an important measure of status and wealth, particularly in the houses on small suburban properties where their front elevations were in close proximity to the street. The value placed on views towards the town, rather than north orientation of many of the large houses situated high on the Berea and centrally positioned on their large properties, has also been confirmed by the ODC. This further confirms the translocation of the picturesque suburban ideals of the wealthy settlers of British origin.

Conservation of the buildings

The conservation of Durban's colonial domestic heritage has been directly affected by societal lifestyle changes, changing demographics, suburban densification and urbanisation that has impacted the way in which houses have been reimagined and altered to accommodate these changes. Hence one of the principal aims of this thesis was to foreground



Villa for Mrs Joel, Florida Rd, Durban. W Roberts, 1903. The villa has been used as a restaurant since the 1980s.





the fate of the small houses, many of which have been surreptitiously demolished with little or no publicity generated around their fate.

If as Biermann²³ stated that architecture is the mirror of society, then the drawings featured in this dissertation survive as an important mirror to a past society. They are tangible records of an architectural heritage worth conserving, if only as the last remaining vestiges of the long disappeared or no longer recognisable homes of a lifestyle of a bygone era. These drawings not only reflect a colonial architectural past, as the houses that still exist are occupied by a new post-colonial, multi-racial and multi-cultural society, or have been reimagined to serve a new function. The large 'virtuoso' houses attest to the way the houses can be successfully reimagined to ensure their conservation in a changing city. This has negated the inherent power vested in the concretized physical manifestation of predominantly British-originated colonial domestic architecture as represented in the ODC.

The physical environment in which the surviving houses were originally built has radically changed from a semi-rural, suburban one in which the garden setting took precedence, to a highly urbanised one in which cars and the roads and parking that are required to facilitate them, dictates the way development around these houses is undertaken. The challenge, therefore, would be to convince the new generation of owners through education, architectural advice, even state financial assistance or rates rebate incentives, of the need to conserve what is left of this unique built heritage. It is the smaller houses, many of whose designers are 'anonymous' and owned by the people of the 'everyday' that need to be engaged with the authorities and architects to make their aspirations a reality.

Conservation of the drawings

If it is imperative to conserve the houses of past generations, then so too the drawings of these houses that are vital records of Durban's colonial domestic architecture and lifestyle. While the ODC and the other collections in the TRL are still accessible to those requiring assistance, it will fall to the younger generation to continue managing valuable archival resources for the benefit of future generations. If these records become permanently inaccessible and relegated to dusty old cabinets and shelves they will remain 'invisible' to historians, architects, and researchers.

The persistent and continuous problem of technological changes that have seen microfiche, 'stiffy' discs, CDs, DVDs, external hard drives and now the 'cloud' to record and store information records, a return to the original drawing record is inevitable, as none of these methods of recording and storing can be guaranteed to outlive the linen and paper originals. With the continued loss of the ultimate information source – the houses themselves, the original drawings as the primary record take on added significance and the value of specialist archives for the preservation of historical architectural drawings will increase exponentially as more and more houses and their requisite drawings are recognised as historically valuable. As the architectural process of producing drawings has transitioned from a paper to a computer method of production, so the nature of archival storage in the future must change to accommodate digital storage. Integrating paper records such as those in the ODC and their digital counterparts with contemporary digitally created records into archives of the future will be the challenge. ○

Michele Jacobs

This edited article is excerpted from the PhD thesis of Dr Jacobs, the degree of which was conferred in a virtual graduation ceremony of UKZN in April 2020. Editor

Endnotes

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View from west.



View from court southward to side boundary.

ABOVE: Photographs of December 2020.

TOP LEFT: With impending demolition very likely, it is apt to include this original rendered drawing by Barrie Biermann of his own house in Glenwood Drive, Durban, 1962. Compare these with his later drawings in pen & ink published in *UIA International Architect*, issue 8, 1985, and reproduced in *Journal of SAIA-KZN* 2/2020.

N

DUMO is a special place lying on the extreme north of our province, right on the border of Mozambique. It lies on the Makatini Flats which are bound by the Indian Ocean on the east and the Lebombo Mountain

Range. The latter is the start of the Great African Rift Valley and supposedly the first mountain range on Earth.

Unscrambling the brief

Rodney Harber & Associates were commissioned as the lead architects for the ambitious Inkululeko Development Project to upgrade this remote and isolated area. It was a massive project consisting of upgrading the clinic and three local primary schools, as well as a library, four buildings for the Provincial Department of Social Development, a social housing scheme, as well as lands for irrigation. The climax was the R185 million Mandla Mthethwa School of Excellence, the subject of this article.

Government educational buildings are based on standard plans issued by the KZN Department of Education. These in turn are based on a model which has remained virtually unchanged since the Industrial Revolution! Fixed area and conventional desks in rows; entrance at the front for 'chalk and talk'.

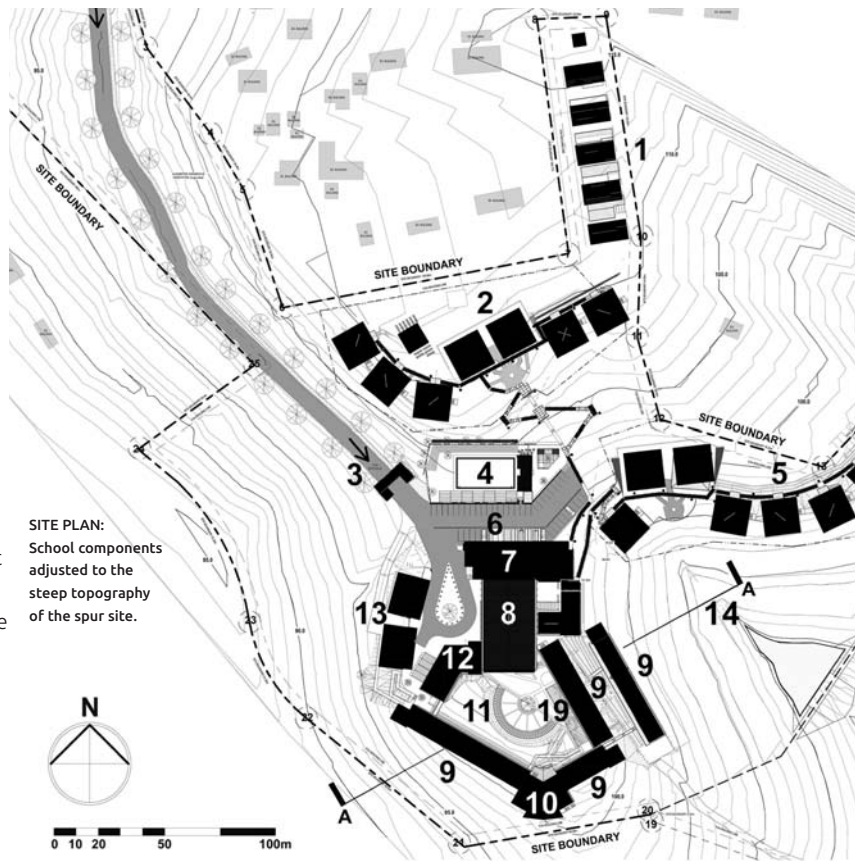
The actual building process was an experience which I would rather expunge from my memory! Suffice to say that what was supposed to be an eighteen-month contract finished after five long years, and the Cape Town based main contractor went bankrupt at the conclusion. The first batch of learners arrived with no water on site!

The KZN Premier had himself selected the costly alternative of a site on a hilltop, commanding views over Ndumo and the Makatini Flats. Since forty percent of the site was deemed 'unbuildable', the final

layout was based entirely on a slope analysis. First, the access for parking 40 cars and then classrooms, tightly arranged around the top of the original hillock in double storeys, relating to each other at half levels to reduce the length of ramps needed. The hostels were designed into smaller 'houses' to take up the remaining undulating site and since the various levels differed by over eight metres the site is interlaced with covered ramps. Levels consequently became critical and the whole site was set out on an 87mm brick scale, to regulate laying the 4 500 000 bricks.

Basically, this only left the spaces between the inherently colonial classrooms for creative energy by architects. It was decided to take the approach of 'critical regionalism', which includes a detailed environmental and social context, without resorting to the easy route of 'ethno-bongo'!

The main open circulation area is called the *Ngqukwane* [Zulu beehive hut]. The circular form is bisected along the main circulation route and defined



SITE PLAN:
School components adjusted to the steep topography of the spur site.



Scale
0 1 2 5 10 20m

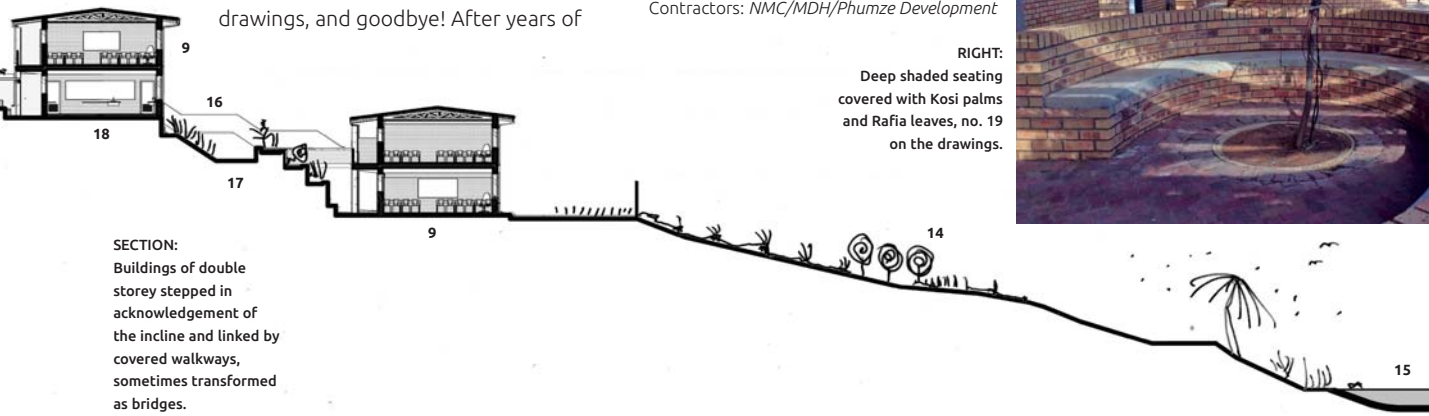
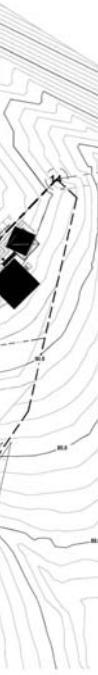
by bent steel pipes to represent the *izintingu* [laths] which are weak on their own. However, interwoven like the traditional hut, they become interdependent and strong – *ubuntu* [meaning ‘I am, because you are’]. The circular tiered seating and central stage defines a place of many varying uses, such as for choir practices, theatrical performances, or just to meet friends between lessons.

In contrast, the adjacent pergola over the curvaceous seating is covered with indigenous raffia palm leaves providing deep shade, offering an escape from the blazing sun. The area on the original hillock is planted with indigenous vegetation, with no water points. A blazing red flamboyant tree shades the stage with features consisting of four types of aloes, Lebombo cycads, agaves and firesticks surrounded by beds of crassula, wild iris, blue lilies, and *Aristida* grass. The summit is crowned by a giant *Euphorbia* below which Zulu kings are traditionally buried. To bring this symbolism up to date this feature is surrounded by 34 rocks – Marikana!

Deep time

In regard to the pergola, Kosi palms are apparently only found naturally between Mtunzini and Inhambane in Mozambique, Madagascar and Western Australia – this proves a point about their ancient roots from before Gondwanaland split apart! The leaves are over six metres, and the longest known leaves to exist. Excavations on the whole site turned up fossilised fish skeletons, shells, and giant ammonites (organic gemstones) as reminders of the inundation. In fact, only 26km from the site, at Border Cave in the Lebombos is evidence of human occupation dating back 250 thousand years. Most significantly, for a proposed school of excellence, is the 43 000-year old Lebombo bone, the oldest mathematical tool on Earth: a baboon’s fibula with 29 clear markings, similar to the magic wand still used by San people in the Kalahari to predict fertility. During the 1930s Maputoland was also the site of South Africa’s severest recorded earthquake measuring over six on the Richter scale. An elderly artist in Eshowe, over 200km away, the late Diamond Bozas, recounted how their family home was so cracked it was rendered uninhabitable!

After all this energy the conclusion of a Public Works project is very hurtful: final account, ‘as-built’ drawings, and goodbye! After years of



SECTION: Buildings of double storey stepped in acknowledgement of the incline and linked by covered walkways, sometimes transformed as bridges.



ABOVE: View across the *Ngqukane* to the library in the southern corner. The thermal chimney is placed over the media centre to encourage cooling by way of convection currents.

having to imagine social processes and innovative planning to achieve collegiality, there is not even a post-occupation evaluation. Simply *hamba kahle* [good-bye].

Are the old colonial classrooms working, and especially under current Covid-19 conditions? Imagine a moonlit evening and a choral rendition at the *Ngqukwane*? Do the learners realise how culturally rich their site is? One thing is for sure: As we enter the dystopian tunnel of the Anthropocene era (the period of time during which human activities have had an environmental impact), innovative ideas are urgently called for from learners at a school of excellence – including the reimagining of plans for classrooms! ☉

Rodney Harber

The practice of Rodney Harber & Associates has been restyled as arch urban plan cc and operates from Durban and Cape Town. Editor.

- Project Managers: *LTE*
- Architect: *Rodney Harber & Associates*
- Quantity Surveyor: *Makhoba Volbrecht & Associates*
- Structural Engineer: *Mvelase*
- Civil Engineers: *Jamela Consulting*
- Mechanical Engineer: *Charlton Mncwango & Associates*
- Electrical Engineer: *Ulungeni Consulting*
- Geotechnical: *Anderson Vogt & Partners*
- Landscape Design: *Rodney Harber*
- Landscaping: *Robin Kirkwood of Maywood*
- Contractors: *NMC/MDH/Phumze Development*

BELOW: View from south across the *Ngqukwane*. The vaulted arena in the background provides a covered space for assembly and indoor sports (Photo by courtesy of Maywood Landscapers).



RIGHT: Deep shaded seating covered with Kosi palms and Raffia leaves, no. 19 on the drawings.

SCOTTBURGH VULAMEHLO PUBLIC LIBRARY



ULAMEHLO is a predominantly rural area, inland of Scottburgh, on the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. The library is located in a pocket of higher densification along with municipal and

government offices, schools and clinics.

Funding was provided by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Arts & Culture, with the main aim being for the small public library to serve the community and predominantly, the local schools. Project implementation was provided by the Independent Development Trust.

The haphazard positioning of the existing buildings on the site presented a challenge for placing the new building. However, the remaining open space, scope, orientation, and major road passing by the site, dictated the form and layout of the building.

The building was positioned on the site with legible access from the east and west, forming a clear linear axis along with the foyer.

The main library space opens up to the south of the foyer with stairs and a wheelchair ramp. A multi-purpose area is located on the first floor that can be used as a study or meeting area, separately from the main library area, which is closed off after hours.

In an effort to facilitate reading the main library has an above average ratio of fenestration area to floor area. A large south light and high-level windows contribute further to the high levels of natural light. West facing windows have been kept to a minimum and shaded with louvres to limit heat gain. A mono-pitch roof over the main library area provides a high ceiling, that is accentuated with exposed inverted timber and steel braced trusses. The air-conditioning

plant and water storage tanks are positioned on roof level, but are hidden from view, with aluminium-clad walls providing high-level signage.

Low maintenance materials were selected, with splashes of accent colour. Colourful mosaic panels depicting local vegetation like palm trees, aloes and waves were used to accentuate the main library issue counter. The shelving and furniture in the children's section have been ergonomically downscaled and playfully adapted to suit.

The word *Library* in Zulu is *Umtapo Wolwazi*, which loosely translated means 'Foundation or source of Knowledge', and it is hoped that the Vulamehlo Library will contribute to the sharing of knowledge. ○

Renée van Rensburg

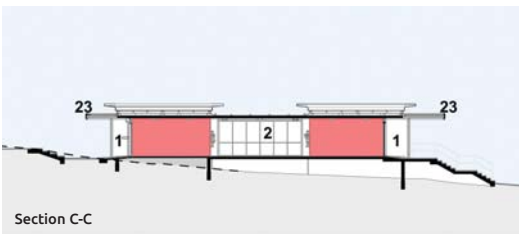
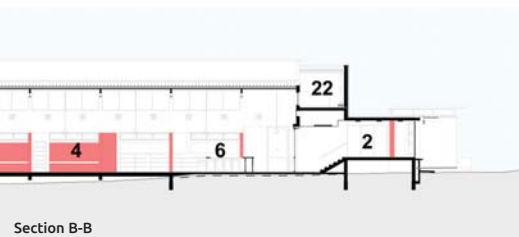
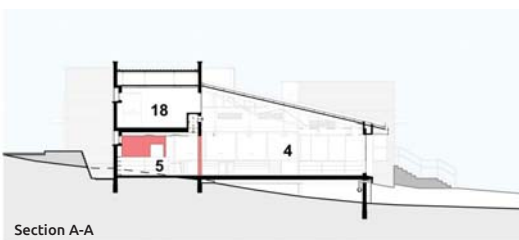
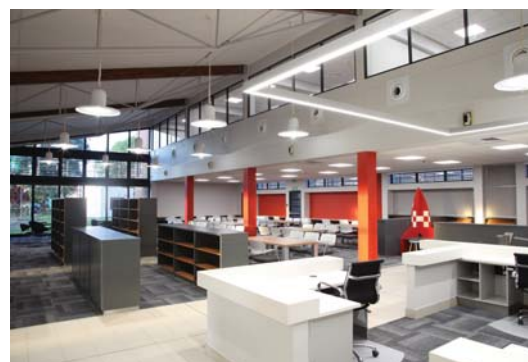
Renée van Rensburg is Director, TJ Architects South Coast (Pty) Ltd, Margate. Editor

Architects & Principal Agents: *TJ Architects South Coast (Pty)*
 Quantity Surveyors: *Taylor Volbrecht & Associates*
 Structural & Civil Engineers: *Bragge & Francis Consulting Engineers*
 Mechanical & Electrical Engineers: *Lesedi Consulting Engineers*
 Health & Safety Consultants: *KZN Safety Connection*
 Main Contractors: *Brainwave Projects 848C t/a Masakhane Projects*
 Photographer: *Craig Hudson*



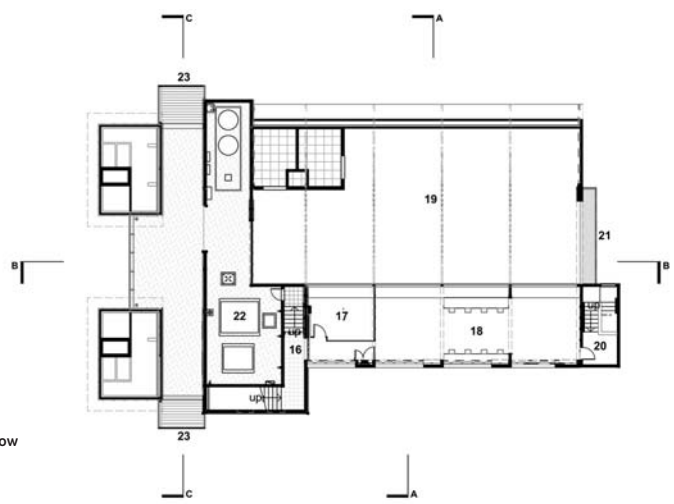
TOP TO BOTTOM:
 Entrance on east; view from north-west; and south elevation.



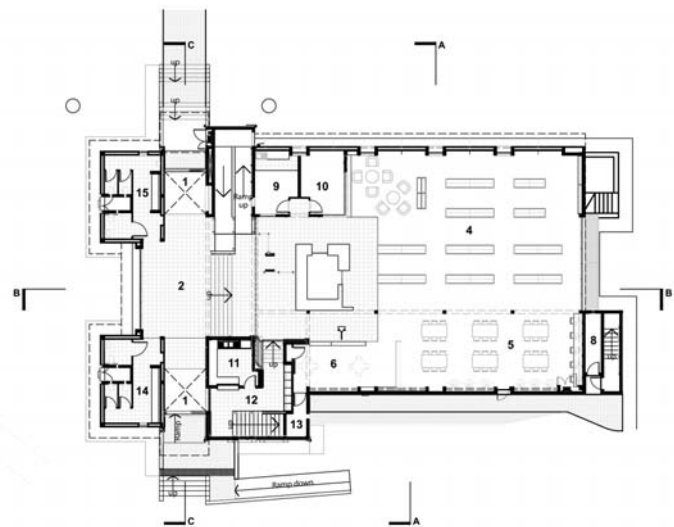


Plans & Sections Key

1. Entrance
2. Foyer
3. Librarians Station
4. Library
5. Computer Area
6. Children's Area
7. Fire Escape
8. Garden Store
9. Staff Room
10. Office
11. Kitchen
12. Lobby 1
13. Store
14. Female Ablutions
15. Male Ablutions
16. Lobby 2
17. Meeting Room
18. Computer Lab
19. Double Volume below
20. Fire Escape
21. Cleaning Platform
22. AC plant area
23. Canopy



First floor



Ground floor



Site Plan

Site Plan Key

1. Vulamehlo Library
2. Water Storage Tank & Fire Pump House
3. Existing Hall
4. Existing Municipal Offices
5. Existing Post Office
6. New Parking Area
7. Public Ablutions
8. Post Boxes
9. Existing Parking Area
10. Gate House





THE OWNERS of Bush Baby Camping Lodge located near Hluhluwe, Northern KZN, approached us with their brief for the design and conceptualizing of an energy-efficient house, which was to accommodate an open-plan living area, master bedroom with walk-in dressing room and en-suite bathroom, two guest bedrooms with shared bathrooms, a laundry and a storage room, and a covered sheltered area for two game drive vehicles (4x4 vehicles open at the top).

The client's intention was to create an open plan living space around a central protected courtyard with a swimming pool as the focal area, as guests of their adjacent lodge and camp site constantly wander around freely, invading their privacy.

The brief was that the house position, orientation and location was to be focused towards the existing purpose-made waterhole, and to maintain the links, views and vistas towards the rehydrating animals, which to enjoy and observe whilst watching the sunset. For this reason, a covered lookout viewing deck/office area was positioned on the mezzanine level, which resulted in a longer western façade but maintains the views from the main living and dining area on the ground floor. Implementation of a deep covered veranda on this façade responded to the west sun.

Our objective was that the views of the natural environment and the game animals were to be the focal delight of the design, which gave rise to approaching the dwelling as being a concept of a 'an animal viewing hide' and introducing the form of long, narrow slit 'peeping' windows, strategically placed at heights and positions to capture movement of the existing wildlife from inside the living and bedroom areas.

These 'peeping' windows assisted in minimizing solar gain and well-suited sandbag construction technology. Northern and southern light is abundantly filtered and controlled into the main living space through double volume clerestory windows on opposite ends, which are protected by a 1200mm overhang with external scissor truss for support at both the lounge and kitchen areas. The high-volume living spaces make use of natural ventilation principles with high fans to assist air flow through external façade windows and out to the open central courtyard

pool area. Installation of 50mm thick *Lambda* insulated panels of compressed polystyrene between the scissor trusses, together with 4mm *Alububble* reflective foil assisted in alleviating much of the heat gained at the roof and negated the need for air-conditioning in the living areas. ●

Greg Hendricks

Greg Hendricks is Director, TJ Architects International (Pty) Ltd, Richards Bay. Editor

Construction

A 'hybrid' sandbag construction method was the predominant construction typology throughout the dwelling from the perspective of being both environmentally responsive and ensuring that the building had a low carbon footprint whilst also being cost effective as the sand was collected from around the site.

Foundations and floor: Conventional concrete strip foundations with conventional brick foundation walls, together with a concrete slab system was used.

WALLS: Concrete columns and concrete ring beams form the skeleton of the structure. Brick walls at the bathrooms, fireplace, and at the end walls of the living area were also used. Infill walls consist of timber uprights, bags filled with sand which are supported by timber framing structures with floor plates.

ROOF: Standard treated timber roof truss construction was used, manufactured on-site for the entire house with feature open scissor trusses over the living areas to enhance the internal 'farmhouse' ambiance, as well as the external aesthetic. **Roof covering:** *Safintra* 0,55mm thick 686mm cover *Tufdek*® *IBR Chalk COLORPLUS*®.

WATER/HEAT: The main supply of water is rainwater, harvested and stored in tanks, supported by a pump system. Grey water is used both for the sewer system and irrigation purposes. A septic tank/french drain system and the recycling of grey water resolved and responded to having additional backup water supply. All cooking equipment operates off gas with all the hot water supply being provided by solar geysers which resulted in the house being energy efficient.

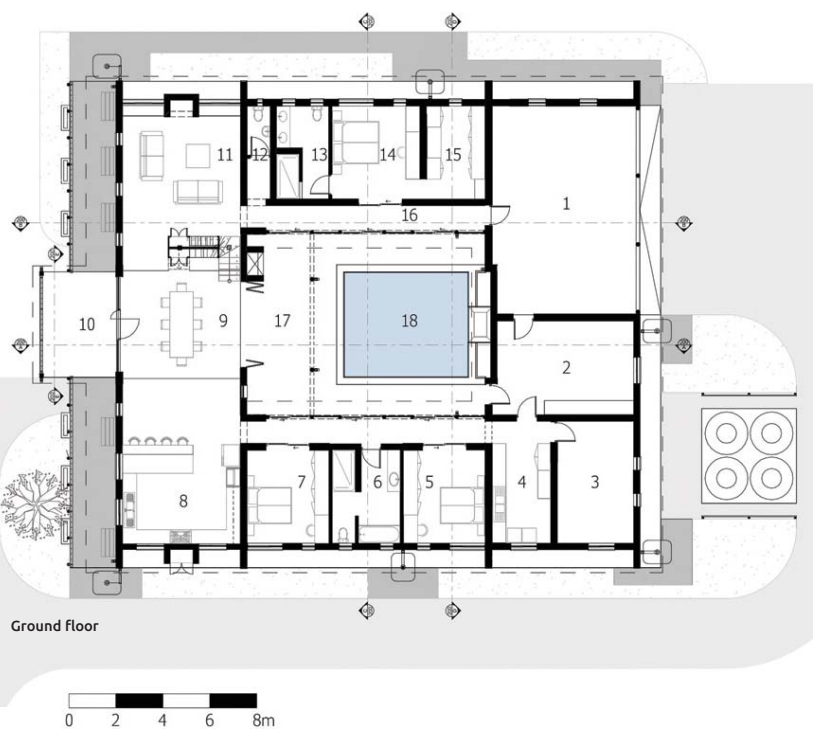
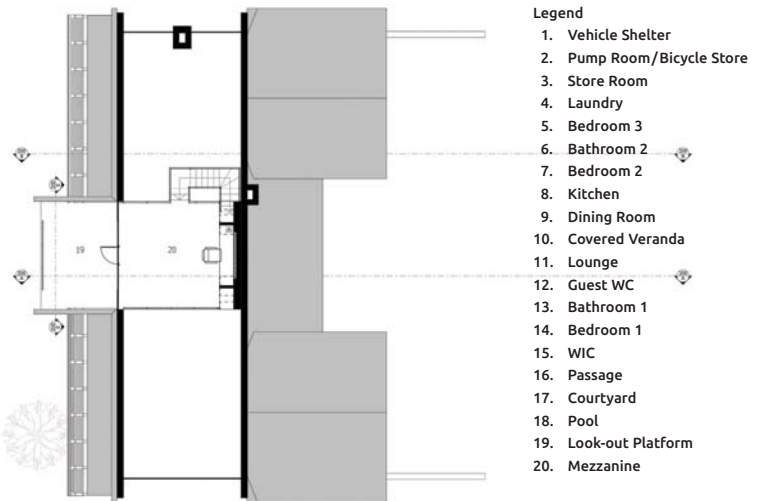
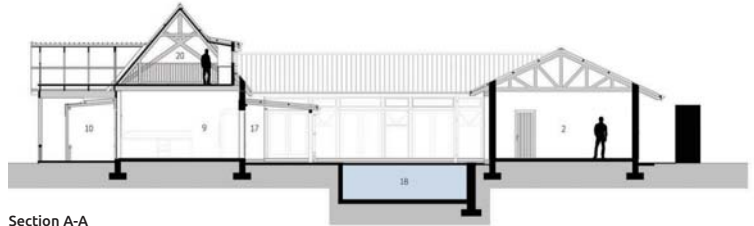
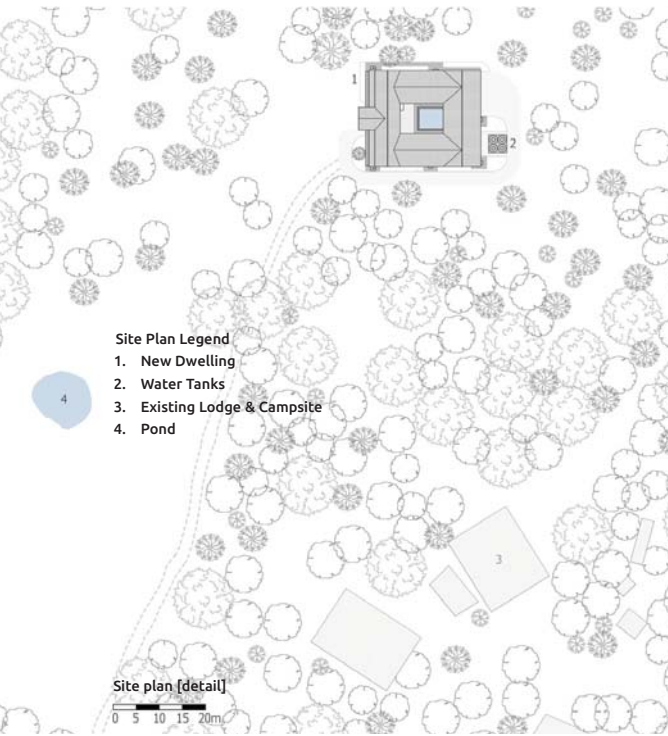
COMPLIANCE: Consultation with Mr Andy Strydom of *Green Perspectives* regarding the sandbag construction method was a necessary requirement to achieve compliance by the *Green Perspectives Agreement* certificate for the *Eco Build Sandbag Building System*.

Architects: *TJ Architects International*
(*Greg Hendricks, Suzan Meyer*)

Structural Engineer: *Anderson & Vogt Consulting Engineers*
(*Rudi Dorfling*)

Contractor: *Ground Zero Construction* (*Philip Schutte*)

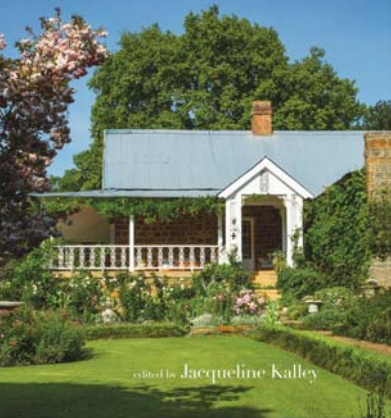
Photographers: *Construction photography – Pim Kielen (owner); Completion photography – Alex Crowie*



ABOVE: Sandbagged construction.
RIGHT: Drone view of excavated foundations.



Farmhouses of Old Natal



edited by Jacqueline Kalley

BOOK REVIEW

Kalley, J (Ed) **FARMHOUSES OF OLD NATAL**

PUBLISHED BY OTTERLEY PRESS, PIETERMARITZBURG, 2017

THE TITLE of this well illustrated and recently published book is intentionally chosen because it covers those farmhouses of Old Natal, that emerged during the time of the British Colony of Natal, 1843-1910. This was the

destination for settlement from the mid-nineteenth century by immigrants, mainly English, but also an appreciable proportion of Scots and a handful of Irish.

The editor and author, Dr Jacqueline Kalley, dedicates the book to her "great-great grandfather extraordinaire – Dick King". King is, of course, best known for his and young Ndongeni Zulu's epic 10-day ride on horseback to Grahamstown (now Makhanda) in 1842, to seek reinforcements for the British garrison at Port Natal besieged by Boers who had established the Republic of Natalia, with Pietermaritzburg as the capital.

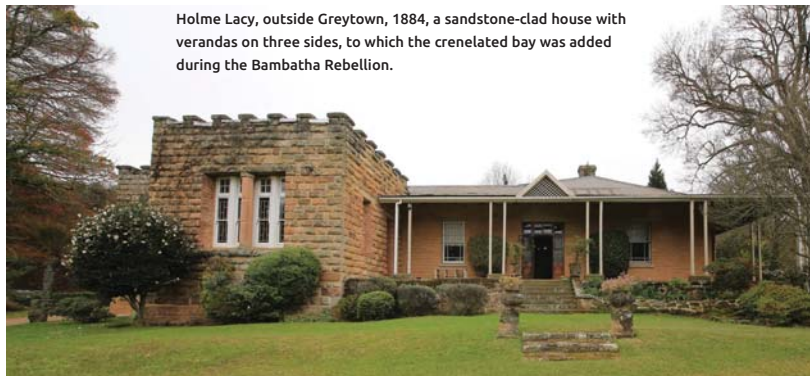
This event contextualises the situation for the content of the book. As the Volksraad of the short-lived Republic (1839-1842) agreed to submit to the Queen's authority, Boers or Voortrekkers left Natal and migrated northward continuing in search of their ideal, freedom from alien rule. There was now land available for colonisation.

Some 5000 immigrants arrived under the aegis of the emigration scheme of J. C. Byrne & Co., 1849-52, but only a few settled in rural Natal, and even fewer could make a living on the plots of 20 acres provided under the scheme. In fact, most rejected their allocations in the Byrne valley near Richmond, deeming them "only for scorpions and snakes", and disillusioned, embarked on an arduous wagon trek in search of arable, well-watered land or grasslands for beef cattle, milk, sheep and horses, and where neither was available, looked to concentrations of indigenous forests of yellowwood, sneezewood and stinkwood, which they found in the mist belt of e.g. Karkloof.

A few British settlers struck it lucky and became the owners of farms of 6000 acres in extent, which was the Volksraad's lavish standard. Among these were The Cedars, Hilton, **Yarrow** and Newstead. Settlers then changed Afrikaans names of farms e.g. Vaalkrans became Briar Lea and Maritzdal, Dargle because it reminded of the river south of Dublin,

Ireland. As the British colony of Natal asserted its culture in the region, settlements like Ongegund were renamed Hilton, and Houtbosch Rand became Balgowan, but many Boer or Afrikaans names remain, e.g. Middel Bosch and Boschfontein. Yet, interestingly there appears to have been little or no anglicisation of geographic names, like *Inhlosane* mountain which we read in isiZulu means maiden's breast.

Not all settlers were as fortunate and paying quitrent to the Crown was far more common, before working their way up, in agriculture and timber. Many lived under a tarpaulin while building a wattle and daub house. Then followed houses with bricks either sun-dried or fired, or of stone quarried on the farm, with thick walls and high ceilings, and trusses of Yellowwood covered with thatch. These vernacular farmhouses had a fireplace for winter and were surrounded with gardens and trees to provide



Holme Lacy, outside Greytown, 1884, a sandstone-clad house with verandas on three sides, to which the crenelated bay was added during the Bambatha Rebellion.

welcome shade from the hot summer sun. Cattle and sheep farming prospered from the beginning, and pig farming, for which concomitant buildings would include dairy barns with stalls and feeding troughs or horse stables with floors of flagged stones.

As the author tells us, "buildings are an important link with the past, and the ways in which their history can be interpreted and understood provides an insight into their social history of that time". With that approach, Dr Kalley set out to document the stories of a selection of farmhouses over many journeys, some in lonely and isolated places in a "wide circle drawn around Pietermaritzburg" and "throughout the midlands and its perimeter" to bring the plight of these old buildings, into public consciousness by way of the book. Consequently, family histories were sourced, today's occupants are often descendants of the original families, and historic black and white photographs collected for including in the 258-page soft-cover



Stable block at Greenfields, near Mooi River, c.1893. These spacious stables include storerooms for tack and food and a hayloft runs its length.

publication, balanced with contemporary images, larger and in colour, by photographer Hugh Bland.

The families were large and nine children not unusual, as, unfortunately, were tragedies. But this settler population played a significant role in the development of Natal, economically, in agriculture, in wattle cultivation first introduced in 1864, and in political leadership. For instance, George Sutton of **Fair Fell** at Howick, served as a minister in the 'responsible government' of Natal (as of 1893) and Prime Minister, 1903-05.

Many men saw active service in the suppressing of the 1873 Langalibalele Rebellion resulting from the demand that guns be registered, which Langalibalele refused; both the 1884 and 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer Wars, and the 1906 Bambatha Rebellion in response to the harsh policies of the colonial administration in Natal.



These uncertain times are reflected in some of the houses. For example, **Holme Lacy**, outside Greytown, was extended with a crenelated bay during the Bambatha Rebellion, and **Aberdour** in the Noodsberg district, was built with an octagonal bay projecting from each corner. Another was **Hilton** with castellated tower, 1903, built on cessation of the Anglo-Boer SA War. But the lookout tower on **Baynes House**, 1882, the farmhouse of another minister in the colonial government, was

to enjoy the view of the valley.

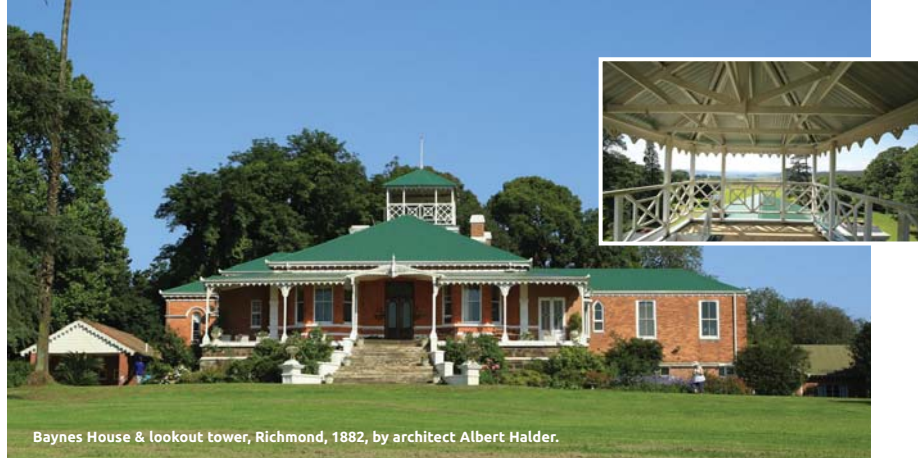
I fondly recall outings in the 1980s by the SA National Society, organised by the affable Gilbert Russel, e.g. to Benvie and Shafton Grange. This was my introduction to the vernacular farmhouses of Old Natal with wide sheltering verandas. At Benvie, the arboretum created by the first owner struck me, as did one bedroom planked in sneezewood and the others of wide yellowwood floorboards and ceilings, perhaps pit-sawed. The doors were only of 1.9m height and the walls of wattle and daub covered in wallpaper.

Though the book might give the impression of a heritage in good condition, we read that many farmhouses are "in a parlous state, neglected, abandoned and even demolished" with the explanation that "farming has become difficult" and "insecurity over the political situation" has played its part. I am therefore most pleased to learn that Lions River Heritage Society runs a programme to acknowledge and reward the conservation of these farmhouses, some of which are now 160 years old.

While architects typically look at images before deciding on reading, and therefore might lament the uncaptioned photographs, or the map which does not include all places mentioned, this publication is well researched and beautifully written. A delight for eyes and mind.

Copies can be ordered directly from the publisher, Otterley Press, Pietermaritzburg (info@otterley.com). See also www.otterley.com

Walter Peters, Editor



Baynes House & lookout tower, Richmond, 1882, by architect Albert Halder.



LEFT: Aberdour, Noodsberg district, built with defence in mind and hence replete with an octagonal bay projecting from each corner (Kate Martens Photography)

BELOW: Fair Fell with veranda to capture the view to Howick Falls, 1874-75. Built of stone quarried on the farm and self-manufactured bricks, the roof of timbers from the Dargle and Karkloof was originally thatched.

INSET: The veranda of Yarrow in the Karkloof, 1860, a structure supported on sneezewood posts and the shale stone wall.



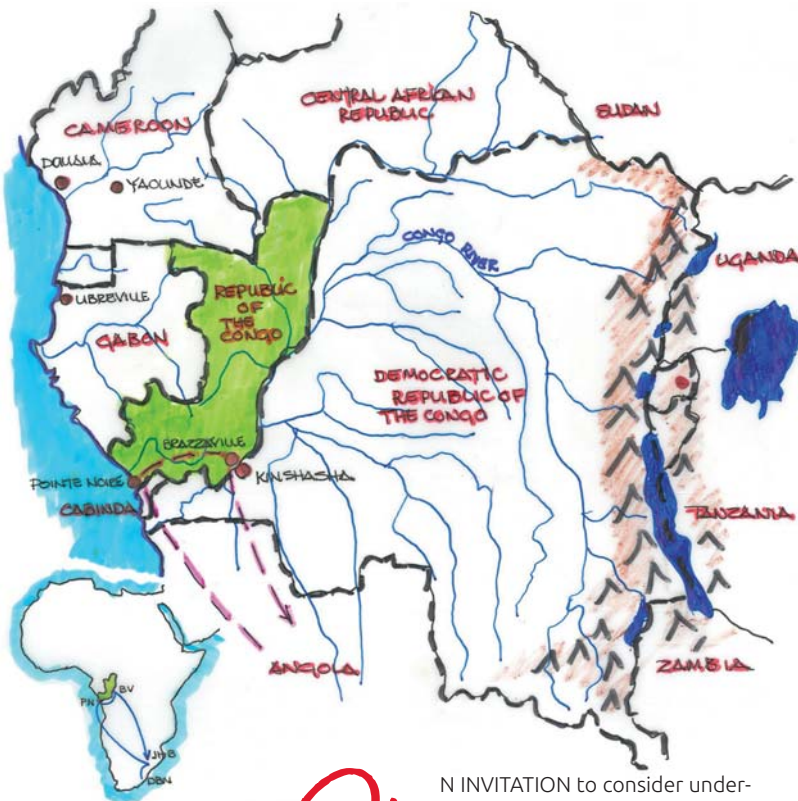
Stables and sheds on Fair Fell.



Hilton, architects Kent & Price, 1903. Built on cessation of the Anglo-Boer SA War, of stone quarried on the farm by Italian stonemasons, Mauritian creoles and Zulu labourers.



Congo: A Travel Diary



The Republic of the Congo, also known as Congo, is located on the western coast of Central Africa, and on the Equator for which reason the climate is consistent year-round.

The capital, Brazzaville, is located on the right bank of the Congo River, in the south of the country, immediately across from Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Pointe-Noire situated on the Atlantic Ocean is the main commercial centre and the second largest city, following the capital.

Petroleum extraction has become the mainstay of the economy and although independent from France since 1960, the official language is French (*Wikipedia*).

A N INVITATION to consider undertaking travel and two projects in the Republic of the Congo was offered to me through a close client, whose house I had designed on the KZN South Coast. He had grown up in the Congo and mentioned that a friend in the Congo was looking for an architect and recommended my involvement and I accepted.



Typical street view in older city.
RIGHT:
The challenge of sites in Congo.

So, in March 2012, I flew to Pointe-Noire, the industrial centre and port of Congo. A noticeably French influence in the city is still very present in the menus and wines of the many restaurants we visited. My client and his wife were most hospitable. Besides their family home with a cottage as a starter, which later was to become the flatlet for parents, I had the commission of an office block to be tenanted. I made three more trips there over a 4-year period.

The area of the city Pointe-Noire is a swampy, delta type environment caused by many small rivers and as such the stormwater drainage and founding of buildings is a challenge. The local process followed is to fill and compact river sand to be above the highest surface water-table, and to use floating pile foundations. All round large open culverts carry away rain and surface water. To complicate matters the original town planning requirements and buildings were never designed or reconciled with contemporary car parking requirements, and as basements are not possible with the high water table, land left for parking is in high demand and new buildings have to accommodate car parking at considerable cost.

Concrete and glass are the new architecture of the city which started during my visits. The alternatives were a pastiche of classical European buildings, Art Deco and tropical modernist buildings, but nearly all need lots of maintenance. The value of this architecture seems lost to the people and the buildings will unfortunately disappear in the near future. I was unable to record the buildings on film or sketching as the authorities were then very suspicious of foreigners taking an interest in such buildings. My

clients made this very clear to me on my arrival.





The second project was an office block on a very narrow site in the city centre, planned to house additional offices for an American oil company with parking.

Again, after substantial research, interfacing with client, tenant, engineers and contractors, the sketch plan package was completed with approvals. The last-mentioned Lebanese company was to build the project. The design had a two-floor, above ground parking garage, an atrium access with roof gardens and louvred screens to cellular or open plan office spaces.

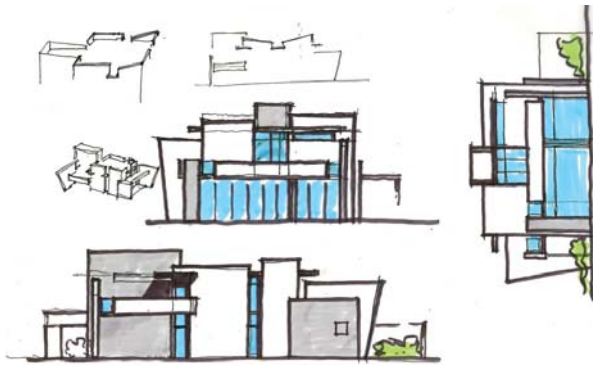
Concrete is a common building material because of the availability of sand, timber for shuttering, & skills learnt from the past. Roof materials are concrete slabs or, concrete tiles. Steel is expensive and seldom used.

Then the oil price crash hit the country, expansions were called off and the city economy slumped. So, it is now just a cemented slab on the ground used for parking for the office across the road.

On one visit we went to the 'beach shack' outside of the city on a bay with a few other beach getaways. The buildings were so simple, functional and pleasing, and were set just off the sand in the palm trees, with a simple plan of two rooms and a covered stoep, that offered to my mind the perfect weekend beach shack retreat.

Kevin Lloyd
Principal: Kevin Lloyd Architects, Kloof, Editor

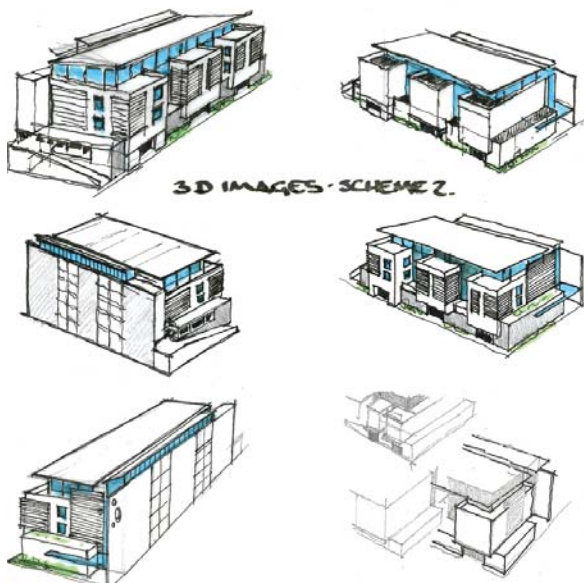
CLOCKWISE BELOW:
Pointe-Noire:
Sketch of a beach vendor's kiosk with queue of customers;
Sunday at the beach;
Beach 'shack' getaway; and
Sunset at the 'shack'.



House sketch design.
Top: House under construction.

The house project was begun with approval of the design by the client, who had requested a contemporary house. We had sought inspiration from the modernist architecture of the tropics. Drawings were translated into French for local authority approval. Local engineers employed by the successful contractor completed the design and work commenced.

The contractor was a small local French contractor and payments were done upfront in stages. At my last visit in late 2015 the house structure was complete but the finishing still incomplete. The contractor and client had fallen out and there were quality issues. At the last time of contact, a large-scale local Lebanese contractor was undertaking the finishing.



Office block designs.

