



NOETZIE CONSERVANCY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

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Chairman's Chat

Robby Robertson

Three months of 2019 already behind us, the Easter Weekend shortly upon us, this is all rather overwhelming. But if time is flying, maybe it's because we are all very busy in one way or another.

As you will note from the content of this newsletter, your Committee has been fairly active. We are also very pleased to have two new committee members: Sandi Braun, who has taken on the role of treasurer and Joanna Taylor who has tackled the issue of the installation of security cameras at Noetzie.

Are we getting closer to resolving some

A new permanent Municipal Manager has been appointed, and hopefully this will lead to a degree of stability & progress on the more critical issues going forward.

of the issues raised at the 2018 AGM? I think there has been progress, but there is a long way still to go. Much has to do with our relationship with the Knysna Municipality, and their constant staff changes, which complicates matters. Possibly we placed too much into believing that with their participation we would progress. This has hardly been the case. A new permanent Municipal Manager has been appointed, and hopefully this will lead to a degree of stability & progress on the more critical issues going forward. Either way, and on the advice of the previous interim MM we will increasingly

engage with the departmental heads in future.

We have opened some conversations with our neighbours Pezula, SANParks and with Knysna Tourism. I believe we need allies if we are to have any prospect of resolving a number of the Noetzie Community concerns. Be this related to safety & security, cleanliness of the public domain (including the public toilet), resolution of access &

parking issues. In this regard I am extremely grateful for the efforts of Richard Moultrie in putting together the slide show which we presented at the 2018 AGM. This is proving to be most useful tool in highlighting the concerns to others, and forgive me for being the optimist, but I do believe that this is opening the eyes of others, and will assist us in making some long overdue progress on a number of issues during 2019. Keep watching this space.

Municipal News

by Melanie Gosling



Knysna Municipality has at last appointed a permanent municipal manager, Dr Sithembele Wiseman Vatala.

He takes up the position on April 1.

Vatala was previously municipal manager at Emalahleni Municipality in the Eastern Cape.

Knysna mayor Mark Willemse said it was good finally to have a permanent manager, as “a lot of things need to happen” in the municipality.

“Dr Vatala’s focus is on ‘consequence management’ – what happens when people don’t do their jobs,” Willemse said. Normally a municipal manager’s term is five years. However, because legally a person may not hold this position longer than a year after a local election, and the next local election is in 2021, Vatala can hold office only for three years until 2022.

The former municipal manager, Kam Chetty, resigned in July 2018 after serving just a little over one year of his five-year contract.

The NCOA hopes the new appointment will create stability in the municipality, and enable it to tackle and reach conclusions on issues that affect Noetzie, some of which have been on the cards for years.

PEZULA ROAD ACCESS

One of these issues is public access through Pezula Private Estate on the Rexford Road. The land on which the road is built was expropriated years ago and the Knysna Municipality and we maintain it should be open

to the public.

Late last year the NCOA committee was told at a meeting with the acting municipal manager Johnny Douglas and officials that the municipality intended to take the matter to court. The matter was scheduled to come before the municipality’s Section 80 committee in February 2019, a required step in the process for the municipality to be able to take legal action.

The NCOA hopes the new appointment will create stability in the municipality.

On February 14th this year NCOA chair Robby Robertson and I met Melony Paulsen, manager of legal services at Knysna Municipality, to establish

what progress had been made. The bottom line was that there had been no movement whatsoever on the legal action process.

Paulsen told us that having no permanent municipal manager had led to “administrative delays” in various matters, including the Pezula road public access issue. Apparently there was no municipal manager in an acting position who wanted to make a decision on this matter, so it did not come before the Section 80 committee in February.

That is unfortunate.

On March 28th I spoke to Mayor Mark Willemse about the matter and he said it ought to come before the April meeting of the Section 80 committee, and said he would follow it up.

However, Paulsen said in an email on April 1st that

the director of corporate services first had to discuss the matter with the new municipal manager.

THE KNYSNA SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The draft version of Knysna's new Spatial Development Framework (SDF) has been drawn up and has been published on the municipality's website for public comment.

Why should someone who does not live in Knysna, but has a holiday house at Noetzie, be interested in the Knysna Spatial Development Framework?

The short answer is because what the plan contains could affect Noetzie.

Wendy Dewberry and I attended one of the public information workshops about the SDF, where town planner Catherine Stone, the consultant commissioned by the municipality to draft the SDF, explained what it was about.

She said the purpose of the SDF was to provide a long-term vision of how Knysna intended to manage development in the town, in order to ensure predictability. It was also intended to address the apartheid imbalances, to maximise the municipality's efficiency, sustainability and good administration. It was also aimed to help increase resilience – the ability of a town to “bounce back” after a crisis – and to be able to ensure that a crisis, such as the major fires of 2017 and 2018, did not lead to regression. There are always competing interests in any town and city, and only so much land available, which means there would have to be many trade-offs in the SDF.

Stone said “overlay zones” could be introduced in some areas, for example to limit development in areas important for conservation, or to increase densification in some urban areas. These overlay zones are likely to be relevant for Noetzie.

Perhaps it is helpful to think of overlay zones as those old-fashioned overlays that we used to have for overhead projectors, where the first diagram is

projected on the screen showing one piece of information – for instance a zoning scheme – and then a second sheet is put on top of it as an “overlay” to show more information, for instance a “historical overlay” which adds certain zoning restrictions intended to preserve the historic character of the place. The same could be done for various other reasons, including conservation.

Stone told the meeting that Knysna Municipality was “not in bad shape”, but it had to confront the same issues that most South African municipalities had to face, such as poverty and unemployment.

Stone said sustainability was “a massive challenge for Knysna”, including sustainable finance. By the mid 2020s there would be more people in Knysna who would need subsidies than there would be paying people who paid rates.

“I do not want to paint a picture of gloom. A number of the challenges we face could be turned into opportunities which we can find a collective way to solve,” Stone said.

The NCOA committee will submit a written comment on the draft SDF, but anyone at Noetzie may submit a written comment in his or her personal capacity.

Find the draft SDF at: [http://www.knysna.gov.za/information-centre/document-](http://www.knysna.gov.za/information-centre/document-library/sdf)

[library/sdf](http://www.knysna.gov.za/information-centre/document-library/sdf)

If the link fails, go to www.knysna.gov.za, click on “information centre”, then on “document library”, then on “SDF” and finally on Draft Knysna MSDF March 2019 and Draft Status Quo Report.

The public is invited to comment on either, or on both, and to email comments to the Municipal Manager at: mdp@knysna.gov.za or to post them to the municipality at 3 Church Street, Knysna, 6570.

Hard copies of the reports are available at Knysna's libraries and on the second floor of the municipal offices in Church Street.

NOTE: the cut-off date for public comment on the SDF is May 21st

FIRE PROTECTION

Robby Robertson and I joined a meeting of the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association (SCFPA) on 15th February, set up by Julie Gosling and Wendy Dewberry, for the NCOA to get information and guidance about the fire protection plan.

It was the first time I learned about mandatory firebreaks.

Dirk Smit, SCFPA manager, eastern region manager, said the first thing Noetzie landowners needed to do was to be compliant with the National Veld and Forest Fire Act. This required landowners to construct a firebreak around their properties. However, regulations allowed for exemptions if a firebreak would have a negative impact on indigenous vegetation. A landowner could not make that decision. An exemption is valid for three years, when the matter would be reassessed.

Smit said although firebreaks were mandatory, they would not have helped contain the “category A” 2017 fire on the Garden Route.

Stephen Langlands, manager of protection services at Knysna Municipality, undertook at the meeting to have municipal staff come to assess all Noetzie properties and decide which needed a firebreak and which could get an exemption.

Asked for advice for homeowners, Dirk said the best thing for households was to:

- have lightweight fire extinguishers in their homes
- invest in longer than normal hosepipes
- keep hosepipes at the ready in hot, windy weather.

The water hydrant near the gate to Lindsey’s road is apparently illegal.

SECURITY

Langland also undertook to place an Allsound security guard at Noetzie at the weekends, at the municipality’s cost.

At the same meeting Wendy Dewberry asked how the municipality could help with security at Noetzie, and explained about her investigations into getting security cameras.

Stephen Langland said he hoped to get a R400 000 budget from the municipality for security cameras. If approved, he could help fund some of the cost of cameras at Noetzie. However, the amount obviously had to cover the whole municipality.

Langland also undertook to place an Allsound security guard at Noetzie at the weekends, at the municipality’s cost.

That is good news.

Financial update

Sandi Braun



With recent threats to security and the Municipality continuing to fail on service delivery, how does the NCOA best use its funds to help Noetzie remain a beautiful and safe place for residents and visitors alike?

Maybe for the first time, NC homeowners could face some tough choices among the many opportunities competing for funds this year, including:

- the installation of security cameras in public areas,
- replacing our continually raided bins with baboon/monkey-proof versions
- providing recycling receptacles/central collection point in the car park
- updating our badly worn and missing signage
- employing a guard to patrol and keep public areas tidy
- new reliable water quality test kits for e-coli, with a price tag quadrupled vs previous years
- equipment to assist any future fire fighting efforts

In addition to defining priorities, we must also make choices about how much of our reserves we use to fund these projects. What level reserve do we keep to fund any surprise/emergency projects? How would we get commitment from home-owners to fund any on-going opportunities we want to progress, eg. a guard?

The committee is working on the scope and cost estimates for these projects and also discussing how best to involve members on key decisions beyond the budget approved at the AGM. Remember, you will need to be a paid up member to have your vote.

A big thank you to all who have already paid!

Security camera update

Joanna Taylor



Noetzie homeowners and residents have been increasingly concerned about security. There have been recent break-ins at several houses. There is a perception that Noetzie has become a “soft target”. Many other tourist locations in the area now have visible security cameras, and local authorities consider these to be a strong deterrent against crime. The 2018 NCOA AGM resolved to investigate the feasibility of installing security cameras at Noetzie. Sasha Watkins undertook to assist with research and liaise with the committee on this project. The committee is mindful of the sense of place at Noetzie, the rights to public access, and an intention not to become a security estate.

Wendy Dewberry and Sasha have worked hard this year on finding out what the community’s options are and how these might best be implemented. The current proposal includes cameras in the following locations:

1. At the top entrance to the parking lot
2. At the Noetzie Castle driveway gate, at the top of the public steps between the Noetzie Castle and the Loewen Castle
3. On the junction of the Old Wagon Road and the river track
4. At the end of the Old Wagon Road, above the beach



Locations of the proposed security cameras at Noetzie.

The main questions that the committee is still attempting to resolve are whether the cameras will be monitored and if so by whom, how the project will be funded, and whether there will be a response function attached to monitoring if the cameras are monitored. Some of the technical aspects of implementation seem to be fairly easily resolved. Homeowners and residents have offered electricity and WiFi to support each camera. Other aspects may be more complicated. For instance, questions of insurance, and whether it is better to own or lease the equipment are still to be clarified.

The committee plans to elicit the views of homeowners before finalising any decisions.

The Story of the North Cottage

By MaryLou Newdigate



The North brothers bought the cottage from Knysna's first district surgeon, Dr Haw.

NORTH cottage, the little historic wood and iron cottage on Noetzie beachfront, was sold in 2018, and so passed out of the hands of the North family for the first time in over 100 years. Here Marylou Newdigate recalls some of the history of one of the oldest cottages at Noetzie. Marylou is married to Bruce Botha, Peggy North's son and great-grandson of the North brothers.

ABOUT the about the time of the Anglo Boer War, either the late 1890s or early 1900s, two North brothers, Victor and AJ North, who were born in Witney in the UK, settled in South Africa. They did various things to survive, starting off by loading a wagon with luxuries from England, and travelling across the country. Victor took many photos of his travels, and especially of bridges and bridge construction, which seemed to fascinate him. He married Helene Shernekau, who was born in Cradock, daughter of an Englishwoman and a German man. Being German was very unpopular ancestry at the time, so we were always told she was Polish.

The North brothers became successful businessmen and owned the imperial hotel in Oudtshoorn and farmed in the region too. They seemed to lead a really good life, and owned a number of cottages for fishing holidays, to escape the blistering Karoo summers. North cottage was one of those places. They bought it from Knysna's first district surgeon, a Dr Haw. (We were always

told the great-grandfathers had brought the cottage down by ox wagon, but it was a myth, I think. I am sure the cottage was there already.)

At some point Victor needed to buy a span of oxen again, and his brother AJ gave him the funds he needed in lieu of his Noetzie share. The Norths all continued to have holidays there and the cousins were all quite close, like siblings from so many shared holidays at the cottage.

At some point in the late 1970s, Herbie North, Victor's son and Peggy North's dad, wrote to AJ North and Co, his uncle's business that owned the cottage, and pleaded with them to allow Peggy first option if it ever was to be sold. They kindly agreed.

In early 1980s the cottage came up for sale at R30,000. Peggy was given first option as promised. After a very stressful time trying to raise funds she never had, her cousins Eve & Derek North, donated enough for her to buy a half share, and she went into partnership with Ronnie and Dorci Carpenter-Frank to buy the cottage. Peggy's son Bruce Botha took over her share in 2006.

Peggy really loved Noetzie. She had been going to the place for 80 or more years so I can understand why. Sadly, the challenges of running the cottage via a partnership of the next generation, was a lot more challenging than in the past. But after Bruce and I moved to Knysna, we had almost 10 years of consecutive weekends at the cottage, and soaked up



The North brothers from England, who settled in South Africa, ran a business selling goods for trade, travelling from one area to another by ox-wagon.



All the old cottages at Noetzie had wooden surfboards - used as belly boards - which were usually made of yellowwood. They were quite heavy, but fast, and many generations had fun on them through the ages.

Noetzie into our soul and our hearts, being as active as we could be in protecting the environment, before and after the Pezula development began, while slowly repairing, restoring and improving the cottage with very little funds.

When the big fires burned at Noetzie, and after Bruce spent many days fighting fires, we felt a big shift. We felt really sad that no one would come to our assistance when Pezula estate refused us access through the estate, which was the quickest and safest route to fight the fires. There was no back up at all, only excuses for Pezula. Furthermore, the challenge of renting cottage out, meeting guests - mostly complete strangers - to stay at the cottage, was also a lot of effort, and the access via the township was not making it easy. It was all work and very little fun in the sun.

When Peggy's Kalk Bay home was going to be sold – which was not our decision - we felt compelled to try and buy it, and save her memorabilia and vast art portfolio and the house, Bruce's childhood home. We were given a month's grace to raise funds before other keen buyers could make an offer.

The Carpenter-Franks had already indicated some years back that they wanted to sell their share of North Cottage. We spoke to Bronwyn of Dream Homes, and she pitched it to a few select clients and we accepted the second offer. We sold the cottage in less than a month, without advertising.

It was a big shock to our system and not what we expected that we would do. We have been unable to return since then as it makes us a bit sad, but one day we will be back.

The new owners, Simon and Sandi, are lovely and sure to be an asset to the Noetzie community, so that is at least a consolation!

And of course saving the Kalk Bay house has been an incredible experience and rewarding too. The sea views over the harbour and of the whole of False Bay are so beautiful and we are so thankful that North Cottage made it all possible.

Goodbye Noetzie. I am sure we will never, ever forget this beautiful, special, magical place and all the good times we had there.

Outdoor classroom

Wendy Dewberry



Wendy Dewberry has put together a fascinating time-lapse account of the regrowth at the outdoor classroom site. Click here to view the video:

<https://youtu.be/ZAAKgzOMi8o>

New Fisherman's Tank

By Melanie Gosling



MOST visitors drive to Noetzie, but there are quite a few local visitors who have no transport so walk the 5km road.

In summer this can be a hot and thirsty experience.

Julie Gosling, who lives just above the car park, used to see fishermen walking to and from the beach, as well as groups of local children, and decided to put in a water source for them to use as they passed by.

She put up a rainwater tank at the edge of her property, fed from the house rainwater tanks, and a hand pump to get the water to flow from spout.

Unfortunately, this burned in the 2017 fire with her house. But now she has had the time after rebuilding to install a replacement tank and pump, and in the process has saved a tiny wetland beneath it.

“There is nowhere for people to get drinking water at the beach. From when I was small staying at Wegkruip, my grandparents’ house on the beach, we used to get day-trippers and campers coming to ask for water almost every day in summer. My grandparents, Rex and Katie Metelerkamp, always gave them water. There was



Julie Gosling with the new rain water tank she put up for the fishermen and others to use for drinking water.

a red, metal rainwater tank on the side of their house – it’s still there - which the campers knew they could use and they used to come with all sorts of containers. I thought it would be nice to carry on that tradition,” Julie said.

Up to the late 1960s the public was allowed to camp in what is now Sinclair Nature Reserve and many families used to camp for several weeks in summer, travelling in ox-wagons down the Old Wagon Road onto the beach and across the river. The oxen were outspanned and wandered all over the beach.

The campers depended on residents for drinking water.

There was a small but nice ecological spin-off after

Julie’s tank had burned: It left a hole that filled with rainwater and over time became a little wetland. Frogs favoured it as a breeding spot.

“When I decided to put in a new tank, I didn’t want to drain the hole where the frogs were breeding, so decided to put concrete lintels above the water to support the 500 litre water tank, which is half in and half out of the hole. We put wooden boards around it so animals don’t fall in,” Julie said. Then came the

problem of trying to get a new hand pump. She found that new hand pumps are simply not available in Knysna.

“So I had to opt for reconditioning the old one. Luckily I knew someone who could do that, James van Rooyen, who did the tank as well, so the water supply is working again is used a lot.

And the tiny wetland is there and the frogs are happy.”

And, she says, not only those who walk use her water tank. Recently she saw a man in a Free State 4x4 get out and fill his water bottle from her pump.

The last Knysna elephant

By Ambre Nicolson

There is now only one remaining Knysna elephant: an adult female that researchers estimate to be about 45 years old.

Her existence was confirmed earlier this year by scientists in a paper titled *And Then There was One*, which used 72 infrared cameras to track movement on paths that covered an area of 185km² in the Garden Route National Park and on private land.

Graham Kerley, one of the scientists who co-authored the paper, explained that due to the elusive nature of the animals there had been debate for many years about how many elephants remained.

In an article published by *Business Day*, he said: “To have it confirmed that there is only one Knysna elephant left is a shock to many as there is a deep aura of mystique and mythology around them, fuelled by their elusiveness, and by stories like Dalene Matthee’s *Circles in a Forest*.”

“The brutal reality is there is no longer a population of Knysna elephants. All the mystique of the Knysna elephant is reduced to a single elephant left in rather tragic circumstances.”

According to Kerley the remaining elephant is in good condition although swollen temporal glands and excessive temporal streaming may be a sign that she is experiencing stress due to her solitude.

Kerley went on to say: “Hopefully we humans have learnt a nasty lesson because it is ultimately our fault that we are down to the last elephant here. She is the metaphor for our treatment of all species



The last remaining elephant is thought to be an adult female of about 45 years. Pic: L. Moolman

that live on this planet with us. The saying ‘the elephant in the room’ could not be more apt; she is telling us we are making some big mistakes and we are going to lose a lot more than her if we don’t substantially change how we treat and value biodiversity.”

A timeline of the Knysna elephants

Elephants once roamed wild along the whole of the Cape south coast and numbered in the thousands.

1876: Human settlement and hunting reduces their numbers to approximately 500.

1920: 13 animals remain after the last legal elephant hunt kills 5 animals instead of one as had been agreed upon.

1981: The Forestry Department estimates three elephants remain.

2007: A faecal DNA study suggests numbers have grown to six adults, this is now disputed.

Community News

Peggy North: 3 June 1931 to 23 January 2019

Peggy North, whose family owned one of the original Noetzie cottages from early last century, died this year at the age of 87, just months after the North cottage had been sold.

Peggy was a glamorous figure in her young days, and many of us remember her with her trademark big hoop earrings and colourful bikinis.

She was always very involved in community, both at Noetzie and in her home in Kalk Bay, where she was instrumental in founding The Haven Night Shelter.

She loved a party, and was always keen to ask us as teenagers to show her the latest dance moves and then she would give it stick at the traditional open-house Old Year's Night parties at The Castle when Alan Henderson owned it.

Peggy's grandfather and great uncle, Victor North and AJ North, bought the Noetzie cottage early last century, which was always known simply as the North's.

Peggy, an only child, grew up on a farm near Oudtshoorn in the Cango Valley. She studied art at UCT's Michaelis School of Fine Art and later in Edinburgh.

Many Noetzie people will remember seeing Peggy on the stoep of North's with her easel and paints. She loved Noetzie passionately and painted it in its many moods and seasons.

She told me once that she was lucky to have a talent for portraits, for which she became well-known in Cape Town, and which she said had been their bread and butter in the early days of her marriage.

She worked in many mediums, charcoal, water colours, chalks and oils, and held several exhibitions in Cape Town.

Peggy was first married to Immel Botha, who was a trained lifesaver and who pulled many people out of the surf at Noetzie through the years, long before there were official lifeguards. They had two sons Bruce and Rory.



Peggy North with her mother Florence on the steps of North's Cottage sometime in the 1950s.

Peggy later married John Moyle and in this phase of her life became politically active. She was a member of Black Sash and her and John's home in Kalk Bay became a "safe house" for anti-apartheid operatives during the apartheid times, particularly during Operation Vula.

Peggy was a gentle person, kind and compassionate, with a lovely sense of humour.

She also had a strong sense of social justice, and standing up for the underdog. I remember when the Pezula development was proposed, one of the first issues Peggy raised was that it must not cut off access for the local fishermen, who had been walking through that land for generations to fish on rocks. It was not a battle she won.

Peggy will be greatly missed at Noetzie.

- Melanie Gosling.

Recent rainfall in Noetzie

