



THE HISTORY OF THE KNYSNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

1893 The early years.

The first Museum in Knysna was housed in the small entrance hall of the 1893 Knysna Library. The exhibits were housed in glass cases containing geographical specimens and Mrs. Metelerkamp's beetle collection and also included a collection of guns.

The next attempt to establish a museum was made much later when in 1969, Ernest Meyer, the Mayor of Knysna, suggested the Council approve the calling of a meeting of interested local bodies to form a museum as a Town Project. It was proposed that the Provincial Administration would run it. This project was unsuccessful.

1972 Third time lucky.

The need for a museum in Knysna became an issue again when it became clear that elderly folk in Knysna, who wished to donate old and valuable possessions and historical records to a museum in Knysna, had no choice but to send their possessions to museums in neighbouring cities.

As an example, a collection of old furniture belonging to Sister Roelofse of West Hill was presented to the Port Elizabeth Museum.

Others donated with conditions, for example, a valuable painting from the Duthie family had already been promised to the Knysna Museum, but only when it came into existence!

Alerted of this situation by Mrs. Lorimer of Port Elizabeth, Rosalind Thesen and Margaret Parkes decided to gather like-minded people of Knysna together to establish a Knysna Museum.

The first challenge was to identify and acquire a suitable building for housing the old possessions and records.

The old Mortimer Hall was selected as a suitable building for a new museum, only to discover that it was already in the process of demolition. However, directly across Queen Street stood the empty home of shoemaker Willie Cook. Assisted by Dorothy Burger they "took possession" of the old Millwood House in Queen Street, which was standing empty, and derelict. The owner, Len Silberman, impressed by the work the ladies were doing to renovate the building and establish a museum, donated the building to the newly formed *Friends of the Museum* society and offered to continue to pay the rates and taxes for the land, on its behalf.

A committee, operating under the umbrella of the Historical Section of the Outeniqua Naturalist Club, was elected in August 1972.

The committee and early members were:

Alan Telford (A retired Architect, was the first Chairman of the Society)

Joyce Telford

Daphne Letty

Ros Thesen,

Dorothy Burger,

Margaret Parkes

Eleanor Lorimer,

Eddie Bakker.

The Millwood House Museum was officially opened on 1 August 1972.

Millwood House

This house apparently belonged to a Scot, James Young Scott, who traded at Millwood. He was the grandfather of Daphne Letty mentioned above. Scott left Millwood and opened a shop in a wooden building where the church flats are today. Scott eventually sold the business to his son-in-law Olaf Franzsen, which later became known as the Knysna Trading Company.

The *Millwood House* was brought down piecemeal from Millwood and re-erected near where the St George's church hall is now, before being moved to its present site by the owner Scotsman William Duncan McFarlane on the land bought at a public sale in January 1909 from Donald Benn. In 1912 William Cook became the owner of the house after renting it initially from McFarlane.

1976 Alan Telford dies.

Alan Telford dies after only a short period as Chairman, on 11 January 1976.

1976 Dorothy Burger

Dorothy Burger was appointed the Chairman after his death.

1989 The Knysna Municipality agrees to take over the Millwood House Museum.

On 1 August 1989 the Municipality agrees to take over the running of the Millwood House Museum, which was officially handed over to the Knysna Municipality during a Council Meeting in early 1990.

1991 Geo. Parkes & Son's Limited

Two old wooden buildings, which were on the old sawmill site of Geo. Parkes, are acquired. The *Friends of the Museum* negotiated for them at the time of the building of Woodmill Lane Shopping complex.

1992 The old Gaol is re-cycled

During this year the old Gaol is transferred to the Knysna Municipality and becomes a centre for Art and History in 1993, comprising the art gallery of the Knysna Art Society, the Angling and Maritime museums, a gift shop and restaurant.

1993 Dorothy Burger dies.

Dorothy Burger dies after an unfortunate accident at her 77 Main Street home on 8 May 1993.

1993 Eddie Bakker

Eddie Bakker is elected Chairman of the *Friends of the Museum* in July 1993 after the death of Dorothy Burger, but due to other commitments steps down as Chairman in January 1994.

1994 Margaret Parkes

Margaret Parkes is elected Chairlady of the *Friends of the Museum* after the resignation of Eddie Bakker.

1997 Celebration of the first 25 Years

A function was held at the Knysna Yacht Club in 1997 to celebrate the completion of the first 25 years since the society was established.

1998

Three wooden Pitt Street cottages are dismantled to make way for the Woodmill Walk Shopping Centre. One is re-constructed and is now part of the Millwood House collection.

2000 The Elephant display at the Old Gaol Museum was completed in November 2000..

2002 Margaret Parkes retires as Chairman.

Margaret Parkes retires as Chairman and from the Committee and the *Friends of the Museum* proposes to change the name of the society.

On 6 June 2002, at the 28th Annual General Meeting of the *Friends of the Museum*, with 10 members in attendance, Margaret Parkes, the then Chairman, tendered her resignation from the committee.

A further four committee members also resigned from the Committee.

Unfortunately, no successor for the position of Chairman could be found and the society was in danger of closure.

However, on the insistence of Gillian Carter, a decision was taken to form an Interim Committee and to advertise for new membership.

At the first meeting of the Interim Committee the decision to change the name of the society to the *Knysna Historical Society* was approved.

8 July 2002 Inaugural Meeting of the *Knysna Historical Society*

The first committee elected under the new name was:

Mike Lawson (Chairman)

Dr Pat Gillies (Vice Chairman/ Secretary)

Stuart Blackstock (Treasurer)

Melanie Groenewald (Museum Curator)

With other members in attendance:

Margaret Blackstock

Jean Gillies

D Melamdowitz

Lorraine and Stan Stainer

Maurice Weighell

2003

The name change was constitutionally adopted at the Annual General Meeting held on the 12 May 2003.

During this year the Coelacanth and Angling Collection was removed from the Old Gaol Museum, subsequently re-installed.

On 4 October 2004 Mike Lawson indicates that he will be stepping down as Chairman in the near future due to his relocation.

2005

Mike Lawson resigned as Chairman at the AGM of 3 May 2005, and Henry Barrington is nominated as the new Chairman.

Henry Barrington is appointed as Chairman on 5 June 2005.

2008

The Bondi Bull-dog celebration is revived in conjunction with the SA Navy.

2010

Henry Barrington retires as Chairman, Philip Caveney is appointed the new Chairman.

The Ox-wagon shelter is completed and the ox-wagon installed.

Heritage Plaque project commenced and 36 plaques completed by year-end.

2011

Digitising of photographic archives commenced.
Heritage Plaque project continues, 54 plaques completed by year-end.
Additional George (II) & Jessie Rex footstone installed at the George Rex gravesite.
Membership: 96 members.

2012

Maritime Museum exhibits re-arranged and given fresh look.
Maps & Models Room and new Mayoral Room introduced.
Enhanced emphasis on Thesen involvement.
Heritage Plaque project continues, 58 plaques completed by year-end.
Membership: 108 members.

2013

Heritage Plaque project continues, 64 plaques completed.
Membership: 115 members.
A new website: www.historycape.co.za is set up.

2014

Digitising of photographic archives completed.
Living Heritage project commenced.
Membership: 148 members.

2015

The William John Burchell Bicentenary Commemoration is held in George,
culminating in the unveiling of the Burchell Memorial in the Garden Route Botanical Gardens.
Membership: 167 members



APPENDIX A

The story of the new logo of the Knysna Historical Society.

The initiative to prepare a new logo for the Knysna Historical Society was motivated on the grounds of the need to have a distinctive and easily recognisable brand mark, which gives some background to the origins of the Society.

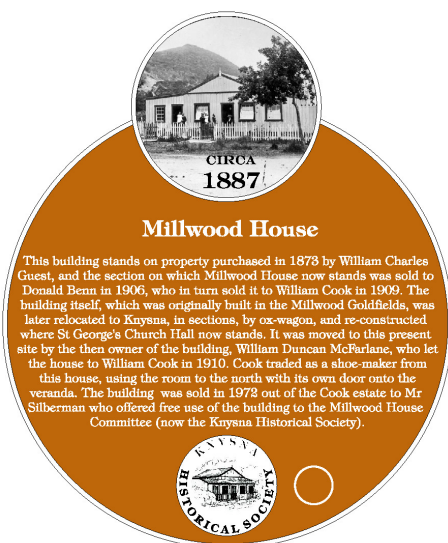
This was required due to the planned Heritage Buildings signage project as it was an opportunity of promoting the Society on these heritage signs by incorporating a logo in the design.

A number of alternative logos were considered, including the “Hourglass” design and the “Sailing Ship” design, which had been in use some time earlier, but finally it was agreed to use a picture of the Millwood House building, which building has been used as the core of the Millwood House Museum in Queen Street.

Numerous pencil sketches were available for this purpose, but the drawing by Malcolm Fraser, brother of Margaret Parkes, was selected due to its relative simplicity. Malcolm Fraser B. Arch, ARIBA, was an architect.

This sketch was first used in the booklet by Margaret Parkes called *Exploring Knysna's Historic Countryside*, first published in 1989.

The design of the logo, with its *coinage* border, was designed by Sue Maule in 2009.



Heritage plaque for Millwood House.

APPENDIX B

Historical Outings and Activities over the years

2003

9 August 2003 The visit and talk about Scarteen South was most successful.
25 October 2003 Visit to the Knysna Fort, with talk by Ian Uys

2004

28 March 2004 Visit to Portland manor, talk by Henry Barrington
27 June 2004 Visit to the Millwood Goldfields, Bendigo Mine, Hyne Tredoux
13 November 2004 Visit to Nelson's Cave, Robberg
4 December 2004 George Rex bicentenary, celebratory dinner.

2005

28 July 2005 The Epic journey of the Thesen family, by Mike Lawson
29 September 2005 150th Anniversary of the Holy Trinity Church, Belvidere

2006

23 March 2006 The Battle of Delville wood, a talk by Ian Uys
26 September 2006 South African cultural history, Cyril Hromnik
19 November 2006 All day outing following the tracks of the South Western Railway, a tour led by Allen Duff.

2007

22 July 2007 Bergplaas settlement/ Ruigtevlei outing, Allen Duff.
17 September 2007 Centenary celebration of opening of George Railway Line.
4 October 2007 Launch of "Vanishing Knysna" by Margaret Parkes.
26 November 2007 Opening of the Titanic Room, Ian Uys.

2008

27 March 2008 Presentation on the restoration of Naval Cutters, Steve Eriksen, braai.
17 April 2008 Re-opening of Angling Museum.
10 July 2008 Bondi Celebration.
7 September 2008 Visit to Millwood Goldfields, talks by Allen Duff.
4 November 2008 Talk on Knysna Heritage Buildings, Andre Vercueil.

2009

26 March 2009 Talk on Memories of Knysna, Robin Abbott, with braai.
20 May 2009 Shipping in the Southern Cape, Mike Wilkinson.
18 June 2009 AGM & Presentation by Phyllis Terblanche of her new book on the Terblanche family.
11 October 2009 Visit to San Ambroso Church, Gouna, Ryno Sciocatti.
23 November 2009 Presentation on Knysna Library additions, Andrew King, Architect

2010

4 March 2010 Talk on George Rex, by David Metelerkamp, with braai.
6 June 2010 Replacement of "bronze" sword on War Memorial.
12 May 2010 SAARP Visit to Portland Manor, Lorraine Stainer.
10 June 2010 AGM and talk by Ray Monk about the history of fishing on the lagoon
17 July 2010 Talk on the Union of South Africa, Allen Duff.
9 November 2010 Visit to Belvidere Church with talks, Lorraine Stainer & Henry Barrington. Church tour led by Margaret Parkes.

2011

- 7 April 2011 Talk on the Woodcutters by Delena Wolmarans
5 May 2011 Talk on William John Burchell, Stanley Caveney
24 September 2011 Heritage Building walk, Market Hall talk, visit council Chambers, braai.
6 November 2011 All day outing to Deepwalls Forest Station,
Philip Caveney, Dave Reynell, Melaney Barrath

2012

- 11 March 2012 Visit to Redford House, John Noble
13 May 2012 Visit to Gansvlei Farm, talk by David Metelerkamp
18 April 2012 Placement of footstone of George (II) & Jessie Rex's grave,
talk by Lorraine Stainer
2 August 2012 Talk of Professor John Phillips, Philip Caveney
24 September 2012 Heritage Day visit to Millwood House Museum, talk by Margaret Parkes
18 November 2012 All day outing to Bracken Hill, de Poort & Fisanthoek
Talks by Margaret Parkes & Philip Caveney

2013

- 14 March 2013 Talk on the Millwood Goldfields Society, with braai. Theo Stehle and
Ron Etter.
17 April 2013 AGM, followed by talk on Knysna and the building of the RN Fairmiles,
by Mary van Eeden.
29 May 2013 Leisure Island "bring & tell" function, arr. Carol Kennedy.
12 June 2013 Talk on Crossing the Knysna River, Murray Douglas
18 October 2013 Talk on Captain Robert Hart, Philip Caveney
17 December, 2013 All day outing to Ruigtevlei, Karawater & Zwart river.
Talks by Allen Duff & Philip Caveney

2014

- 24 February 2014 The Power Ryan family and Scarteen South.
Talks by John Clement Ryan and Philip Caveney
18 March 2014 Building the Brig Knysna, a talk by Chris Henwood & Mick Furman
8 April 2014 AGM and talk on the Heads Houses, Philip Caveney
17 June 2014 History of the old Schools of Knysna, by Lorraine Stainer
19 September 2014 William John Burchell Bicentenary Commemoration.
14 October 2014 Talk about Robert Jacob Gordon, Philip Caveney
28 October 2014 Presentation of display on history of Andrew Hepburn in Knysna.
30 November 2014 All day outing to the historic Oakhurst Farm, Wilderness,
led by Murray Douglas.

2015

- 3 February, 2015 Life at The Heads – A slide show and talk by David Wightman.
Author of the book *Heads and Tales, 50 years: 1945-1995*.
17 March, 2015 Annual Braai followed by illustrated talk by Murray Douglas on the history
of the Dumbleton Family.
28 April, 2015 AGM and illustrated talk on the early history of Karatara, Philip Caveney