

Pretoria Geselsbrief  
April 2008

Dagsê alle belangstellendes in die geskiedenis van ou Pretoria,

Probleme!! Probleme!! Na elf jaar [en 'n hele paar opgraderings] het my rekenaar nou finaal die gees gegee. Ek en die nuwe rekenaar verstaan mekaar nog nie heeltemal nie. Dit sal seker 'n paar weke neem voordat alles weer gestel is soos ek dit graag wil hê. My grootste probleem op die oomblik is die skrif op die skerm wat vreeslik klein is. Nog 'n probleem is dat ek iewers in die proses die program [ek dink dit is ADOBE] wat PDF files kan lees verloor het. Ek sal later antwoord op die briewe wat in die formaat gestuur is. Laat weet maar as julle van iemand weet wat nie meer op my nuwe adreslys is nie.

Vandag iets oor die Paleis van Justisie. Dit is gebou op erfnommers 288 [westelike erf] en 289 [oostelike erf] en beslaan die hele blok tussen Kerkplein, Markstraat [Paul Krugerstraat], Vermeulenstraat en Palacestraat. Gaan kyk gerus weer na die Pretoria Brief van Oktober 2006 waar die geskiedenis van die eerste geboue op die grond beskryf is.

Die onderstaande is 'n uittreksel uit 'n artikel geskryf deur Adolf A. Landman [Judge of the Labour Court of South Africa]. Dit het verskyn in die tydskrif Advocate van Augustus 2002. Ek plaas dit in die oorspronklike Engels soos hy dit geskryf het.

**A Palace in the Veldt-  
The centennial anniversary of the  
Palace of Justice: 9 May 1902-2002**

**A new courthouse**

On 17 June 1896 chief Justice J.G. Kotze and the *Overige Rechters* addressed a letter to the State President and the members of the executive council of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek. They had settled the plans for the new high court building with the State Architect and Head of Public Works (Sytze Wierda), but now some bureaucrats wished the court to share the building with other state departments. The judges felt that: "*De mogelykheid voor eenige conflict tusschen die Rechterlyke macht en eenige andere macht moet steeds zoveel mogenlyk uitgesloten worden*". Their complaint was to prove prophetic as the clash between Bench and State developed resulting in the dismissal of the chief justice [1]. But for now the judges had their way and the plan was revised.

A formal high court had been established in the ZAR in 1877. It was located in the government building until it moved to an unpretentious commercial building situated on the corner of Andries and Kantoor Streets [now Bureau Lane] which the government hired for £500 per year [Vir 'n foto van die gebou sien Pretoria Brief Oktober 2004]. The ZAR was a poor country and funds did not permit more luxurious accommodation. The discovery of gold on the eastern escarpment and the Witwatersrand progressively brought great wealth to the Republic (public finances stood at £30 000 in 1870 but rose to £5 438 000 in 1898). It also brought with it a great deal of envy and political instability and finally a war. One of the early harbingers of the war clouds was the Jameson raid. The raiders and the Reform Committee members were put on trial in the Pretoria Market Hall. It was at about this time that the Volksraad decided to commission the State Architect to draw up plans for a proper courthouse. The task fell to Wierda.

**Wierda**

Wierda was a new immigrant to the ZAR. He was an accomplished craftsman and prize-winning architect who had published a work with the short title *Belgische Industrie*. In July 1887 Wierda accepted the post of *Gouvernements Ingenieur en Architect* of the ZAR

at a salary of £600 p.a. He was responsible for a major building programme, including the *Leprosenhuis* near Westfort, the *Volkshospitaal*, the *Kranksinnigegeestig* (in the *oude Botanische Tuin*, now Weskoppies), the *Ontsmettingsgebou* used by the veterinarian Dr. Arnold Theiler, the *Staatsdrukkery*, the *Staatsmodelschool*, the *Staatsgymnasium*, *Artilleriegebou* and other government buildings in towns on the platteland [2].

Wierda initially produced a modest design which, after consultation with the judges and a building commission, developed into the Palace of Justice. The final design was in an eclectic style which Wierda described as "*Oud-Hollandsch*". The Palace was to be situated on the square opposite the *Staatsgebou* (the Raadsaal). A tender was awarded to J. Munro who quoted £115 260 to build it. Work commenced in June 1896.

The foundation stone was laid by President Kruger on 8 June 1897. The Bench was represented at the ceremony by Kotze, Ameshoff, Jorissen, Morice, Gregorowski and Esser. Initially it had been proposed that the *Kommandant-Generaal*, Piet Joubert, should lay the stone. Chief Justice Kotze would not have it. He insisted that it be the President. Kotze, Joubert en Kruger had something in common. They had all stood for president. Judge Kotze did so while retaining the judicial seat. He came last, having garnished only 81 of the 14 944 votes cast.

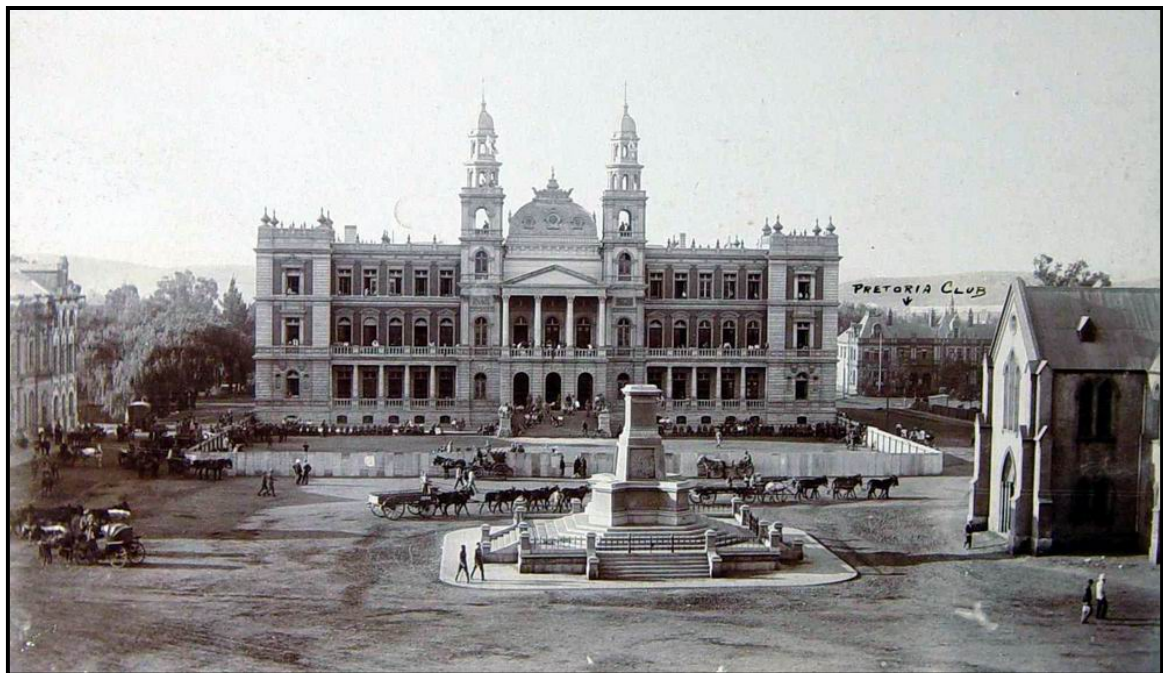
In his speech the President referred to the story of Cain and Abel and said: "Though a man might be ever so guilty of a crime, he had the right to be heard so that he might defend himself. He had a right to be brought before the court; and no man had the power to punish him but the Judges" [3]. The President could not pass up an opportunity to deal with the burning constitutional question of the day. He said: "To err is human, but the irrevocability of a judicial sentence made the functions of a Judge solemn duty, for who shall try the Judges themselves? There may be some who will see in these words an allusion to the negotiations pending between Raad and Bench ... both aim at the same object, to secure the independence of the courts without infringing upon the prerogative of the sovereign people." Nearing the end of his speech the crafty President resorted to some gentle flattery and used words which to this day warm the cockles of the hearts of judges (even those with hearts of stone) saying, "Happily we have an excellent body of Judges, but their salaries are not adequate to their high position".

Building proceeded apace and was very nearly completed when the second Anglo-Boer War broke out. The Palace had not yet been used as a court. But some use was made of it. The artist, Herr Wichgraf, used a room as a studio while painting the ZAR executive council in the act of receiving a deputation of Boer citizens. The completed work was exhibited there. After war broke out the women of Pretoria, led by Mrs. Schutte, the wife of the landdrost, set up a *Vrouwens Werkgezelskap* to make clothes for the men on the front. They used several rooms in the uncompleted Palace and met there daily in the afternoons [4].

When Lord Roberts advanced on Pretoria, thinking erroneously that by taking the capital the war would be over, the ZAR forces abandoned the tower, taking with them the artillery from the surrounding forts. It fell to some senior civil officials, including Wierda, to surrender the town to the British Army on 5 June 1900 [5]. **[Word vervolg]**



Paleis van Justisie in aanbou



Paleis van Justisie voor 1904. In die voorgrond is die eerste voetstuk van die Krugerstandbeeld.

## Endnotes

- 1 See B.A. Tindall, *Memoirs and Reminiscences – Sir John Gilbert Kotze Vol 2*, 265
- 2 See H.M. Rex, *Die lewe en werk van Sytze Wopkes Wierda in Nederland met verwysing na sy betekenis vir die Zuid-Afrikaasche Republiek*. PhD thesis, University of Pretoria – 31 October 1974
- 3 English translation by *The Press*, 9 June 1897
- 4 See Bridget Theron, *Pretoria at War 1899-1900*, 231
- 5 See the *Pretoria Friend*, 9 July 1900

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Ek het hierdie interessante stuk van David Panagos gekry. Dit is terugvoering op verlede maand [Maart 2008] se brief. Ek hoop dat ons nog baie van hom sal hoor. Baie dankie David.

Hello Rosa

Baie dankie vir jou nuutste nuusbrief.

Wat betref die sig sag paadjie tussen Johnstons Redoubt en Soutpansbergpad. Dit was deur die Engelse soldate gebou in die tyd van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog. Hulle was as "bridle paths" bekend. Daar was tot onlangs nog een tussen die Uniegebou kwekery en die westelike kant van Meintjieskop waar 'n vierkantige sinkplaat blokhuis gestaan het. Dit was verlede jaar deur 'n sekuriteitsomheining oorgebou. Die kwekery was in die tyd van die oorlog 'n "remount camp". Daar is nog een tussen die watertoring oos van die Botaniese Tuine en Pretoriaweg in Silverton wat na die 3 blokhuse op die rand daar gegaan het.

In die Magaliesberg, by plekke soos Damhoek, Nooitgedacht, Breedtsnek en Kommandonek is daar mooi eksemplare van hierdie "bridle" paadjies. Die een by die westelike helling van Kommandonek, na die opgeblaaie klipmesselwerk blokhuis daar bo, is nog in 'n mooi toestand.

Dan was daar ook nog groot sig-sag paadjies soos die een na die boonste punt van Cable Hill, noord van Mountain View. Hierdie een is nog tot vandag in gebruik om vir verskillende radio antenna by te kom. Dit was 'n pad wat deur "Scotch carts" gebruik kon word om voorraad eers na die Redoubt daar bo en later die groot dubbelverdieping sinkplaat blokhuis te neem. Maar voor hulle hierdie pad gebou het, het hulle 'n kabelspoor opgerig vir die selfde doeleinde en ek het 'n fotokopie van 'n foto van die een wat hulle by Silkaatsnek in gebruik gehad het.

Toe ek op die komitee van die Genootskap gedien het, het ons 'n brief gekry waar iemand hierdie pad 'n "kanonpad" wou noem. Dit sou baie verkeerd wees want nie 'n perdespan of 'n ossespan kon om daardie skerp draaie kom sonder om al trekkrag te verloor en die kanon sal agteruit begin storm!

Ek hoop die is baie interessant vir jou. Baie groete David Panagos

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Regstelling van Isabel Groesbeek

Beste Rosa

Kan jy moontlik 'n regstelling aanbring in jou vlg Geselsbrief - in jou Okt 2007 brief vermeld jy mbt Thaba **Tshwane** Cemeteries op p.2 die 'South African Geological Society' mbt ons Begraafplaasprojek – dit is ongelukkig foutief. Die amptelike naam van die vereniging moet lees 'Genealogical Society of South Africa (met afkorting GSSA)' in Engels & 'Genealogiese Genootskap van SA (met afkorting GGSA)' in Afrikaans?

Met vriendelike groete en dank

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Baie dankie aan almal wat terugvoering gestuur het oor die omsetting van duim na mm [dit is nou as mens die reënmeter lees]. Die volgende van Jan Pretorius.

Goeie naand Rosa

Met verwysing na jou vraag oor hoe 'n mens duime na mm reën verander: jy vermenigvuldig die duime bloot met 25,4 en dan het jy mm. Wat ook interessant is en vir baie mense onbekend is, is die feit dat mm reën gelykstaan aan liter per vierkante meter, wat m.i. 'n baie logieser eenheid is. As jy dus jou reënmeter lees, dan weet jy sommer ook hoeveel reën "werklik" op jou erf geval het - d.w.s. as dit 20mm gereent het (wat 'n baie teoretiese konsep is omdat 'n mens eerstens 'n absolute gelyk plat vlak veronderstel - wat natuurlik heeltemal onwerklik is), dan het dit eintlik 20 liter per vierkante meter gereent. Laasgenoemde kan ek baie makliker visualiseer. As 'n besproeiingsboer byvoorbeeld 'n land natspuit, dan gaan hy die hoeveelheid water wat hy gebruik het in liter per vierkante meter bepaal. Jare gelede toe ons in België gewoon het, is die reënval op TV in liter per vk m aangegee. Ons het altyd gegis oor wat dit in SA sou gewees het. Dit het my letterlik maande geneem voordat ek 'n berekening gemaak het van wat dit in mm beteken het! Hoe stomsinnig kan 'n mens nie wees nie! Groete, Jan

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Die volgende kom uit "Register van de Regenval opgesteld door Mnr. J. Lyall Soutter, Op die Goewerments Gebouwen, Pretoria Van af 1891 to 1912". Dit wil sê dit is die reënval wat gemeet is by die ou Raadsaal.

In hierdie tydperk was die gemiddeld vir Maart 3.45 duim [87.63mm]. Die laagste reënval was in 1907 en dit was .43 duim [19.9mm] en die hoogste was 9.29mm [235.97mm] in 1909.

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Die volgende van Lauren Ross. Is daar miskien iemand met meer inligting? My databasis gaan ongelukkig net tot 1900.

Dear Rosa

I have found your details on the UP website and hope that you will be able to assist me.

I attach a photograph of Government Avenue and the surrounding area in 1910. The house in which I stay, 151 Beckett Street, cnr Beckett and Government Avenue, Arcadia, across the road from the Union Buildings (the large A-frame house at the bottom right of the photograph) was apparently lived in by Sir Herbert Baker whilst the Union Buildings were being built. This information was obtained from the prior owners of our house, Tim du Toit, of Tim du Toit Attorneys, Pretoria, whom I understand has recently retired to the Greyton area in the Cape. I am led to understand that the information regarding Sir Herbert Baker having stayed in the house was passed on to Tim du Toit by his father, who previously owned the house. Do you think that it is possible that Sir Herbert Baker stayed in the house and is there any way of obtaining any concrete evidence of this?

I look forward to receiving your response.

Best regards

Lauren Ross

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Volgende maand meer oor die Paleis van Justisie. Groete  
Rosa Swanepoel