

Lokomotief en rytuig van die Nederlandsche
Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorweg-Maatschappij
(NZASM) op die perron van die hoofspoor-
wegstasie te Pretoria

Foto: C. de Jong, 1985

'n Traliehek om die lok en rytuig hou die publiek op 'n afstand, maar 'n trap stel die nuuskieriges in staat om op te klim en in die rytuig te kyk.

Die salonrytuig wat die NZASM aan president Kruger geskenk het, staan in die Krugermuseum in Kerkstraat-Wes.

Pretoria, die hoofsetel van die NZASM, is gelukkig met die besit van hierdie herinneringe aan dié maatskappy.

GEDENKTEKENS VIR MINDER BEKENDE PERSONE IN EN OM PRETORIA (2)

Herman J. Coster

Bespreking van: Jan Willem Meijer, "Dr. H.J. Coster 1865-1899", M.A.-verhandeling Geskiedenis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, November 1983, 202 pp. deur C. de Jong

In die Paleis van Justisie aan die Kerkplein in Pretoria is 'n reliëfportret van Herman Coster, afkomstig uit Nederland; generaal J.C. Smuts het dit op 23 Augustus 1923 onthul. In 1983 het Coster 'n ander waardevol gedenkteken gekry. Dit is die lewensbeskrywing wat Mnr. J.W. Meijer oor hom saamgestel het en wat Mnr. Meijer as Magisterverhandeling by UNISA gedien het.

Hermanus Jacob Coster is gebore uit Doopsgesinde ouers te Alkmaar in Nederland op 30 Juni 1865. Sy vader is oorlede toe hy 13 jaar oud was, maar sy welgestelde oom, die geneesheer dr. T.H. Blom Coster, het veel tyd en geld bestee om met sy begaafde neef uitgebreide reise in die buiteland te onderneem. Herman het regte in Leiden gestudeer. Ook sy voorsitterskap van die Leidse studentevereniging het tot sy vorming bygedra.

Hy het volwasse geword in die jare kort na die eerste Anglo-Boere-oorlog 1880-81. Die ekonomie en kultuur van Nederland het toe opgebloeï en talle nasionaalgesinde Nederlanders wou hul beskawing na die Nederlandse kolonies en Suid-Afrika uitdra. Die belangstelling vir die stamverwante heldevolk van Boere in Suid-Afrika het opgevlam. Voorbeelde van kultuurbewuste Nederlandse immigrante in Suid-Afrika was N. Mansvelt, W.J. Leyds en H.J. Coster. Coster het 'n veelbelowende loopbaan in Nederland, Oos- of Wes-Indië of die Verenigde State laat vaar en hom in 1890 in Pretoria gevestig. As idealis wou hy die Nederlandse beskawing in Transvaal versterk en dié land help ontwikkel en teen verbruitsing behoed, aldus tipeer Meijer hierdie geesdriftige Nederlander.

Na 'n moeilike begintyd as advokaat het hy van Staatsekretaris Leyds regeringsofdragte ontvang om wette te indekseer en op te stel. Sy bekwaamheid het spoedig geblyk en in 1895 is hy as Staatsprokureur benoem. Leyds het hierdie belangrike amp in 1884-89 beklee. Coster het in 1896 opgetree as Staatsaanklaer teen die Reformers, dit was die Johannesburgse medestanders van dr. L.S. Jameson wat die regering van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) wou omverwerp.

Reeds in 1897 het hy ontslag geneem en na die advokateberoep teruggekeer. Hy het egter voortgegaan om die regering sy dienste te lewer, onder meer vir die grondwets hersiening wat weens die oorlog in 1899 nie in werking



Dr Hermanus Jacob Coster
na 'n tekening deur
Anton van Wouw

Voorbeeld vir die Reliëfportret in die Paleis van Justisie
aan Kerkplein te Pretoria.

getree het nie.

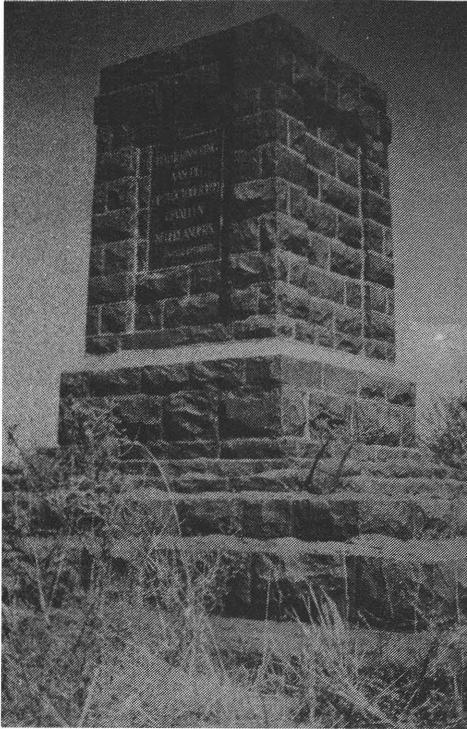
By die nadering van die oorlog het hy hom as luitenant by die Nederlandse vrywilligerskorps aangemeld en met die Hollanderkorps onder generaal Jan Kock na Natal opgeruk. Hy het saam met ander Nederlanders op 21 Oktober 1899 by Elandslaagte gesneuwel. Deur sy krygsmansdood, 34 jaar oud, het hy in Nederland en Suid-Afrika helderoem verwerf.

Mnr. J.W. Meijer het in sy biografie van Coster 'n uitstekende bydrae gelewer oor "Krugers Hollanders" wat sowel geprys as verguis is. Hy lê tereg die nadruk op Coster as bekwame regsgeleerde en as idealis vir die Nederlandse beskawing in Transvaal in plaas van op Coster se kort optrede as krygsman. Hy verklaar Coster se onverwagte aftrede as Staatsprokureur in 1897 nie uit wrok oor President Kruger se neerhalende opmerking oor die Hollanders in Transvaal, waarvoor Kruger hom trouens grootmoedig om verskoning gevra het —, ook nie uit wrok oor die verafrikaansing van die Staatsdiens waarin die een Nederlander na die ander deur Suid-Afrikaners vervang is nie —, maar uit die intrekking van die vreemdelingewet deur die Eerste Volksraad onder druk van die Britse regering. Hy het dit as 'n ontoelaatbare toegewing aan Britse druk beskou. Meijer skryf dat Coster toe in sy ideaal van onafhanklikheid vir Transvaal teleurgestel is, maar lojaal jeens die regering gebly het. Hy het hom in September 1899 nie by 'n Boerekommando nie maar by die Hollanderkorps aangesluit om die Nederlanders se loyaliteit jeens die ZAR te demonstreer, aldus Meijer.

'n Vergelyking tussen Coster en Leyds is myns insiens interessant. Leyds was Staatsprokureur en Staatssekretaris onder Kruger. Hy en Coster was baie bekwaam en daardeur gerespekteer, maar Coster was 'n eenvoudiger, emosionele en warmere mens as die koel, ietwat snobistiese Leyds wat nooit populêr was nie. Byvoorbeeld Coster het Afrikaans gepraat, Leyds nooit nie.

Coster se vroeë dood was 'n tragedie. Volgens Meijer het tragedie ook sy gesin getref. Hulle het in 1901 na Nederland teruggekeer. Sy tweede seun is, 14 jaar oud, by 'n skietongeluk dood. Sy oudste seun is in 1942 in 'n Japannese krygsgevangenskap in Oos-Indië oorlede. Sy jongste seun is as versetstryder deur die Duitse besetters in Nederland in Maart 1945 tereggestel. Hy het blykbaar die opofferingsgesinde idealisme van sy vader geërf. Daar is geen kleinkinders nie. Toestemming om haar in Suid-Afrika te vestig is aan Coster se weduwee in 1938 geweier. Sy moes van lae inkomste leef totdat Eerste Minister D.F. Malan haar in 1950 'n Staatspensioen toegestaan het. Sy is, 85 jaar oud, in 1953 oorlede.

Volgens voorstel van Dr. W.H.J. Punt is Coster in 1961 in die Ou Begraafplaas te Pretoria herbegrawe. Herinnerings aan hom is die bogenoemde portret in die Paleis van Justisie en sy naam op die muurborde met name van Nederlanders wat deur die oorlog in 1899-1902 omgekome het, in die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk aan Du Toitstraat te Pretoria en die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Tweekoringkerk in Bloemfontein en op die monument vir gevalle Nederlanders te Elandslaagte wat deur Gerard Moerdijk ontwerp en op 19 Desember 1925 onthul is. Op 4 November 1901 is 'n gedenksteen vir Coster in die gewel van die Akademiegebou te Leiden en op 6 Desember 1967 is 'n groot monument op sy graf in Pretoria onthul. Die Costerstraat op Voortrekkerhoogte te Pretoria en in 'n paar voorstede in Nederland met name uit Suid-Afrika herinner nog aan hom.



Elandslaagte die einde
 Monument vir lede van die Hollanderkorps wat by Elandslaagte op 21 Oktober 1899 gesneewel het, merendeels van Pretoria; die eerste naam op die lys van gevallenes is die van luitenant H.J. Coster. Die monument staan op die koppie waar die geveg gelewer is.

Foto: C. de Jong



Gedenkteken vir Herman J. Coster op die Ou Begraafplaas in Kerkstraat-Wes, digby die Helde-akker, op die plek waar hy op 11 Desember 1961 herbegrawe is. Die gedenkteken is op 6 Desember 1967 deur kommandant-generaal R.C. Hiemstra onthul. Die bostaande foto is dadelik ná die onthulling gemaak.

Foto: C. de Jong

Little did President Kruger know

THE FIRST MOTORCAR IN PRETORIA, 1897

by **Arnold Kretzmar**

from *Pretoria News* Wednesday 15 February 1984

When President Paul Kruger told his coachman on the hot summer day of January 4 1897 to inspan the horses and get his State coach ready to take him to Berea Park, he could not have foreseen that this day would inaugurate the dawn of a new era in the history of South Africa.

The age of the ox-wagon, the horse and buggy, the hansom cab, the Cape cart and Zeederberg's coaches would be coming to an end.

The unpredictable Horseless Carriage, with who could tell what promise and menace, had arrived.

Precisely at 4 o'clock the President stepped out of his coach accompanied by his State Secretary, Dr. Leyds.

Others in his entourage were Mr. A.D.W. Wolmarans and Mr. J.C. Smuts, the State Attorney.

Also among the notables was a Mr. Conyngham Green, carrying in his head who knew what secrets of events still to come, but hardly visible under the inconspicuous title of British Agent.

The President was introduced to a tiny gentleman in a large top hat, a Mr. J.P. Hess, and his partner, A.E. Reno, pioneers of the first motor car in South Africa – a 1½ horsepower Benz Voiturette. They had imported it from Germany a few weeks before.

Curiosity about the new vehicle was tremendous and the largest crowd in the history of Pretoria had assembled at the Berea Park.

Enormous anticipation had already been aroused by the following announcement of the event.

“The Invention of the Age. The First Exhibition In South Africa Of The Horseless Carriage – In full work in the Berea Park on Monday, January 4th at 4 pm.

“Under the rules of the South African Cycling Club and under the auspices of the Pretoria Mechanics Amateur Cycling Club.

“Price of admission 2/6 per head. Photographers free.”

Oom Paul gave the signal to Mr. Hess to start up the Horseless Carriage; there was a roar of cheering as it sputtered and fumed around the Berea Park.

When it stopped, crowds of sightseers broke loose like schoolboys after a rugby test, bursting with curiosity – fingers touching the spokes of the wheels, the glittering brass lamps, the shining leather seats.

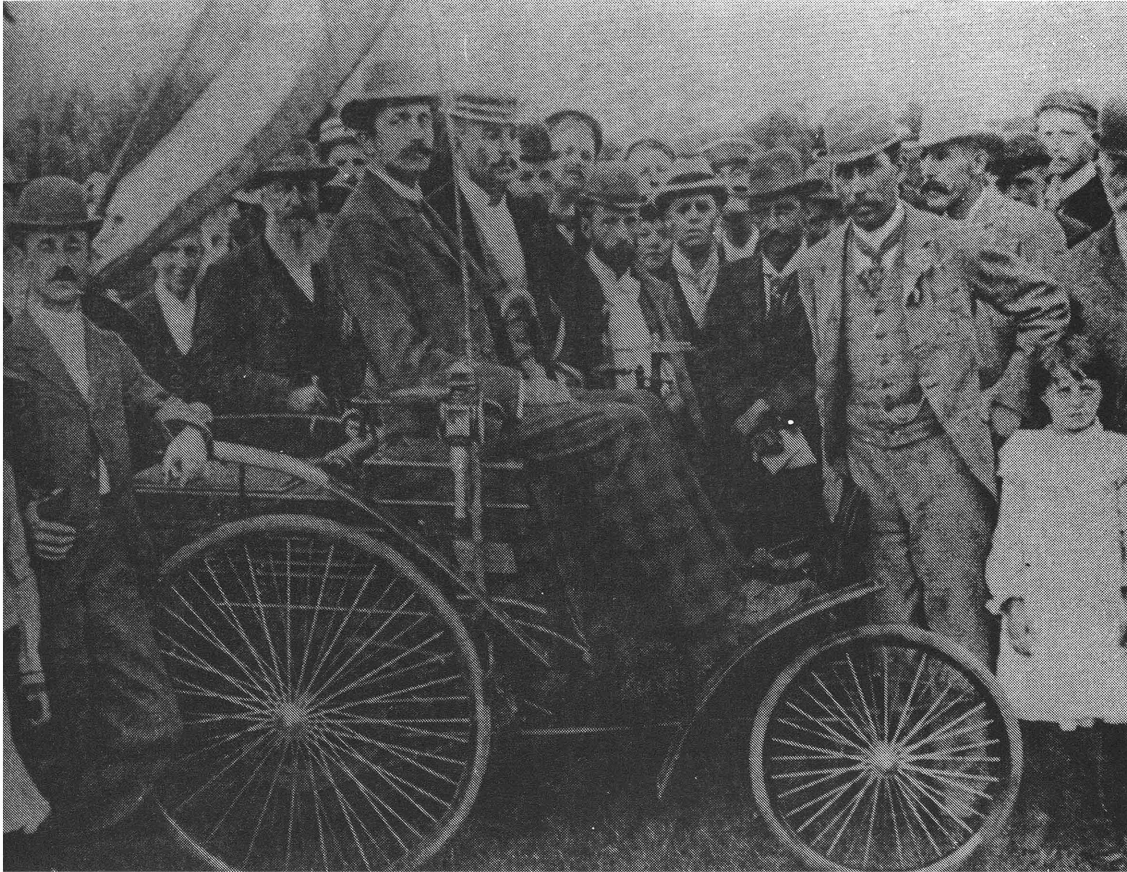
Mr Hess stepped down from the high seat. The President congratulated him upon his invention. State Secretary Leyds whispered into the President's ears that Mr. Hess was the importer and not the inventor.

The President accepted the correction with a smile, and promised Mr. Hess he would present him with a special medal to mark his great occasion.

The President was asked “Would Your Honour care to take a ride with us?” Oom Paul declined and, with a twinkle in his eye, said “No, thank you, a dog might bark, the car might buck and throw me out.”

The promise of a medal was honoured. It read: “Presented by His Honour Paul Kruger, President of the Transvaal Republic, to Mr. J.P. Hess on Monday the 4th January 1897, in honour of his having introduced the first motor in South Africa.”

After the great day the town buzzed with talk and speculation about the



Een van die foto's wat gemaak is van die eerste motorvoertuig in Pretoria in Bereapark op 4 Januarie 1897. Die voertuig is ingevoer deur J.P. Hess en A.E. Reno. Op die sitplek vooraan sit die Staatssekretaris W.J. Leyds. Wie kan my inlig oor die identiteit van die oranje persone?

Die diepers op die gesigte is tipies vir die Viktoriaanse tydperk

future. What would it now hold for South Africa and the world?

There were far-seeing men who saw great benefits immediately.

They said the new machine could now be inspanned to an oxwagon, and so goodbye to the rinderpest, and all the other pests more numerous than the plagues of Egypt – horse-sickness, tsetse flies, heartwater, miltsiekte, and the like.

Others rejoiced: “What about the savings of forage, expensive harness, lazy grooms, runaway horses breaking disselbooms, and throwing drivers and passengers into the street?”

An end also, they said, to intractable oxen, unmanageable mules and obstinate donkeys.

Then there were others who, looking far beyond the rinderpest and shrewdly anticipating the age of speed traps, alcohol tests, drunken driving and parking-meter fines said: “Our motor carriages can now stand in the street unattended and the bumptious Zarps dare not interfere.”

They did not live long enough to be sadly disillusioned.

The Press had its say, and said much. *The Standard* said: “The long-expected motor, the first of its kind in South Africa, imported by Messrs Hess and Co, was tried in the Berea Park. The exhibition was a great success and the carriage was much admired.”

The Advertiser also expressed its satisfaction: “The car ran very smoothly and the quicker the motion, the less noise could be heard from the machinery.”

Another newspaper in anticipation of the event said: “Messrs Hess and Co are the introducers of this wonderful invention in South Africa and Pretoria will count it a redletter day that they will be the first to set eyes on the workings of this great scientific invention.

“If 250 000 people waited with eager eyes to see the first motorcar move on that rainy autumn day in London only a few weeks ago, we think that 3 000 Pretorians present for the honour of being the first people in South Africa to see a machine which will supercede all locomotion by the end of the century.”

Johannesburg’s turn to see the first horseless carriage came nine days later on January 13 1897 in the presence of a vast gathering, at the Wanderers ground.

The importers took no risk in bringing the car from Pretoria to the Wanderers. They railed it from Pretoria, the official reason being: the Jukskei River as well as Six Mile Spruit might be in flood.

The explanation did not sound very convincing – that January was a very dry month.

A week after the Johannesburg exhibition, the car was bought by Mr A.H. Jacobs (better known as “Coffee” Jacobs).

Being a shrewd businessman, “Coffee” Jacobs mounted the horseless carriage on a stand, where it gleamed brilliantly in the sun. You could view it by buying a pound of tea or coffee and presenting your ticket. Vast amounts of tea and coffee were drunk in those weeks, until, sadly enough, the car was destroyed in a garage fire.

Before this historic car passed from the scene, the Benz makers in Ger-

many were so delighted with President Kruger's interest that they named the road leading to their Mannheim factory "Pretoriastrasse."

Despite countless punctured tyres, roads no better than farmtracks, and many a horseless carriage being dragged out of flooded drifts and spruits by teams of oldfashioned oxen, interest in it quickened.

In 1901 the Royal Automobile Club was responsible for the first motor service station being opened; and since it was no use coming to the cycle dealers for mechanical repairs, the RAC persuaded Mr Malcolm Irving to open a workshop.

This business, later taken over by Mr Sidney Benjamin, is believed to have been South Africa's first service station.

Now that we have jaded appetites and all the signs and wonders of invention no longer excite us, it is an interesting exercise to turn back to those days of 1897 and the years that followed up to the outbreak of World War I.

With what jubilation each new invention was welcomed, with what mounting excitement each new miracle of technology was hailed!

It is instructive to read about this Age of Innocence in Stefan Zweig's "World of Yesterday."

"None could foretell what might happen in a single year. One discovery, one invention followed another and instantly was directed to the common good. On the day that the Zeppelin made its first flight I happened to be in Strassbourg on my way to Belgium when, amid the jubilant roaring of the crowd, it circled the cathedral as if to pay homage to the thousand-year-old building....

"In Vienna we shouted with joy when Bleriot flew over the Channel as if he had been our own hero. How useless, we said to ourselves, are frontiers when any plane can fly over them with ease, how provincial and artificial are customs duties, guards and border patrols, how incongruous in the spirit of these times, which visibly seeks unity and world brotherhood."

JOHN JOHNSTON KIRKNESS¹

by N.A. Coetzee

He was born on 1 April 1859 in the Orkney Islands to the north of Scotland and died at 82 on 13 June 1939 in Pretoria. In his student days he qualified in building construction, obtaining the Diploma in Building Construction at the Heriot Watt College in Edinburgh and completing his apprenticeship as a carpenter with a Glasgow firm. He came to South Africa in 1879, aged 22, landing at Port Elizabeth and working in Durban, Bethlehem and on the Barberton goldfields. He went back to Orkney and married Mary Ann Baikie in Kirkwall on 16 June, 1884. After returning to South Africa he settled in Pretoria in 1889.

There were two sons and a daughter. After they married, Kirkness built and moved into a residence at 225 Pomona Street, Muckleneuk, where he and his wife lived for the rest of their lives. His wife died on 20 April, 1936. He built the house himself to test the bricks that he was making in his own brickworks at Groenkloof. This fine old mansion, at present owned by the University of South Africa, ought to be declared an historical monument.

There was a period when the kiln in the enormous Groenkloof excavation, where the well-known "Kirkness" face-bricks, roof and floor tiles and pottery were made for so many years, held a million bricks and half a million other articles continually in the making. These were used throughout the country, in neighbouring territories and overseas. The Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town and the Salisbury Post Office in Harare were roofed with Kirkness roofing tiles, and flooring tiles and vases were used by Sir Herbert Baker in South Africa House in London. The site of the brickfield is now being developed as the sports fields for the Pretoria College of Education. We hope that a suitable memorial will be erected to this building pioneer of South Africa at the entrance and that the fields will be called the John Johnston Kirkness Sports Fields.

The head office of J.J. Kirkness was on Church square next to the Old National Bank and Old Mint. The façades of these buildings have been preserved and restored by the Postal Department and the hope exists that a memorial plaque to J.J. Kirkness will be put up there².

The following is a summary of those buildings and other structures erected by Kirkness, which have been declared National Monuments.

1. The completion of the fourth and last Raadsaal in Bloemfontein, 1893, tender price R25 000.
2. The Old Raadsaal, Pretoria, tender price R165 000, 1889. The doors and windows were made in the Orkneys by Samuel Baikie & Co. Sytse Wierda

¹ Translation of the article by Dr. N.A. Coetzee, "John Johnston Kirkness", in Afrikaans published in *Pretoriana* Nr. 86, December 1984, p. 40-46, with the portraits of Mr. John J. Kirkness and his wife Mary Ann Kirkness born Baikie.

² This happened on 23 September 1985 (C.d.J.).