



Onderstepoort residence – Student accommodation: then and now

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During the first 40 years of the existence of the Veterinary Faculty at Onderstepoort, **only ten** of the nearly 400 graduates were women. In a series of articles in the VetNews of 2020, Dr Rudolph Bigalke and Prof Gareth Bath celebrated these women pioneers.

Accommodation for female veterinary students

Joan Morice was the first female to qualify in 1927. Unlike the 41 men who were her contemporaries at Onderstepoort during her studies between 1924 and 1927, she could not stay in the hostels: neither in the first hostel built on the Onderstepoort Laboratory grounds in 1908 but only occupied by students from 1922 to 1924, nor in the new hostel inaugurated by Sir Arnold Theiler on 14 April 1924.

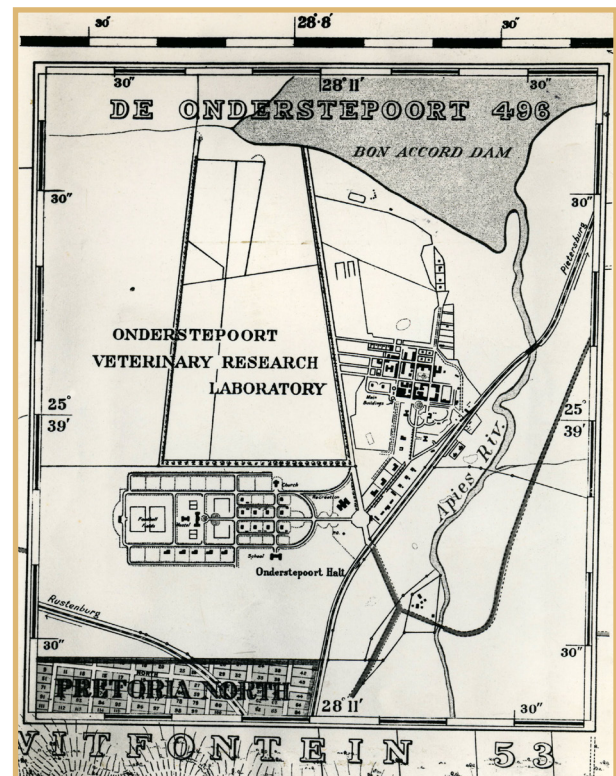
This new hostel that could accommodate 40 students is now known as Old Res. Over the past century, 19 more residential blocks were built to accommodate nearly 700 students – of which 75% are occupied by female students today.

Nineteen years later in 1946, Maud Bales became the second woman to qualify from Onderstepoort and she too had to find alternative accommodation. This was the case for all the other women who came to study at Onderstepoort until the 1970s.



Lorraine de Jager with her classmates in front of Old res, 1956 [UPSpace]

Margaret Rose BVSc 1953, the fifth female graduate lodged with the Onderstepoort station master's family. Malie Smuts BVSc 1955, the sixth female graduate had a room in the house of Prof SWJ van Rensburg and his family. Lorraine de Jager BVSc 1957, the seventh female graduate stayed with the two hostel matrons for the duration of her studies. Anne Lize Pienaar BVSc 1961, the tenth female graduate stayed in her parents' home in Pretoria North.



Looking at the map where the Onderstepoort Halt was located, the station master's house could have been where the current Onderstepoort Crèche & Nursery School is located (c/o Rosslyn & Soutpans Roads). Map c. 1930s showing the layout of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Research Laboratory, the hostel, the staff housing and the Onderstepoort halt or train station. Note that the road to Soutpan only went to Bon Accord Dam and the Rosslyn Road did not exist [ARC-OVR ARCHIVES]

Does anyone know when the first women were welcomed in the residences at Onderstepoort?

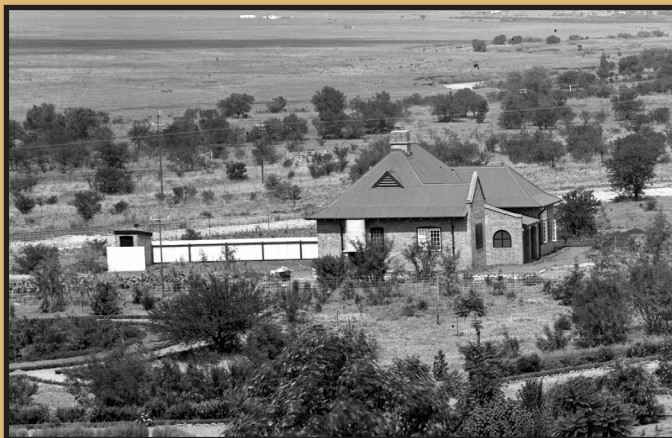


Government Veterinary Bacteriologist's House.

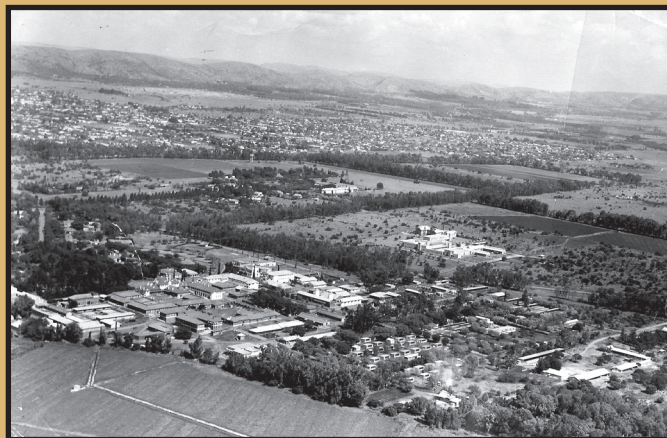
Sir Arnold Theiler's house on the Onderstepoort Laboratory grounds served as a hostel for female students in the 1970s



One of the houses for Onderstepoort Laboratory professional staff, built in 1908, where some of the female students lodged from the 1940s – 1970s.



A house that was built in 1908 for married staff on the Onderstepoort Laboratory campus, where some of the female students lodged from the 1940s – 1970s.



View of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Research Institute in the forefront with the town of Pretoria-North in the back, c. 1967. Students lodging in Pretoria-North had to cross the open field and railway line to get to the campus.



View from the Old Main Building Onderstepoort Laboratory looking towards the quarters for married staff and single quarters (corrugated huts) in the background on the right, c. 1910.

PHOTOS: ARC-OVR ARCHIVES

As the number of female students increased, they had to find accommodation with staff or lodged in the private dwellings of 'tannies' in Pretoria North.



Maryke Henton at the Onderstepoort rugby field

Dr Marijke Henton BVSc 1968 remembers....

Women students in the 1960's

I arrived at the faculty with no idea of where I was going to stay, but after the formalities had been completed, all of us new students were taken in hand by the house committee members in charge of the accommodation.

A few lucky second-year men were allocated rooms in the new residence, and some students lodged in Onderstepoort staff houses.

The bulk of the second-year students lodged in Pretoria North. Most landladies did not want to lodge women students, and we were taken to various houses until a landlady agreed to take us in.

My room in Jan van Riebeeck Street was fine, but there was no geyser for hot water. The meals were also of poor quality. The cost in 1965 was R30 per month, for the room and three meals per day. This was approximately the same as the fees charged by the university for staying at the OP Res.

I moved to another house at the northern end of Emily Hobhouse Avenue for the next three years, from where we could walk through the veld to Onderstepoort. The monthly cost for full bed and board rose to R36 per month in 1967.

Our tuition fees were R180 per year for 2nd to 4th year and went up to R240 for the final year when we had many practical classes. We also had to have R100 available for textbooks for the 4 years.

Life in the Onderstepoort houses today

In the past, female students lodged with Onderstepoort staff but today students live in these old staff houses which form part of the OP Village complex.

The student houses are on the right-hand side of the road towards Old Res nestled amongst the trees. They also look after the blood donor dogs and feral cat colony that live here as well.

One of the old OVI staff houses built c. 1924 where female students lodged from the 1940s to the 1970s, is now rented by the University of Pretoria for student accommodation.



Houses where female students (Maryke Henton) stayed in Pretoria North in the 1960s – today, visited in January 2024.

323 Jan van Riebeeck Street

417 Emily Hobhouse Avenue

The path from Pretoria North to the Faculty crossed this open field



Nearly 2km from the general housing area for the lady vet students to the Onderstepoort Campus.

We did not have much contact with the three other women students as all of us lived some distance apart in scattered lodgings and were bound by our class schedules during the day.

Most of us did not have cars and relied on lifts, bicycles and walking to get to Onderstepoort.

We could therefore not participate much in the social activities of the OP res.

My experiences were similar to the other women students when we compared notes.

Maryke Henton





Another of the old Onderstepoort staff houses built c. 1924 where female students lodged from the 1940s to the 1970s, is now rented by the University of Pretoria for student accommodation.



One of the blood donor dogs amongst the houses. Food for the blood donor dogs and feral cat colony at the Veterinary Faculty is sponsored by Ultra Pet.



An original door in one of the old Onderstepoort staff houses dating from c. 1924, with a veterinary student's signatory 'gum boots' on the wooden floor.



An original fireplace in one of the old Onderstepoort staff houses dating from c. 1924.



A bathroom in of the old Onderstepoort staff houses, modernised since c.1924

In the next edition of VetNews, stories about the house parents will be shared. Your sober contributions are very welcome.

INVITATION

to all alumni of OP Village / Huis Onderstepoort to send photographs and their stories about Old Res and the other student residences at Onderstepoort to OldRes100years@gmail.com for possible inclusion in a commemorative publication and/or articles in VetNews.

**PHOTOS:
H HEYNE**



**Reunion on Friday 5 April
for alumni ONLY!**

- Contact Marnus on
082 779 8435 for information.

**Centenary festival on 6 April -
all welcome.**

- see page 5 for more
information.

