

THE OWL CLUB



Founded 1894

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Committee 2021/2022

President: Richard Morris
Senior Vice-President: Mike Bruton
Junior Vice-President: Geoffrey Ashmead
Secretary: Hugh Amoore
Treasurer: Richard Morris
Imm. Past President: Geoff Everingham
Additional Members: Ron Duff,
John Green, Norman Hooper,
Mike James, David Little,
Paul Murray & Ian Woods

Honorary Auditor: Verwey Wiese

Dinner bookings

Email: secretary@owls.capetown
Telephone: 021 671 3121
Cellphone: 082 440 8204

Treasurer

Email: treasurer@owls.capetown
Telephone: 021 531 0435
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Bank details

The Owl Club
Standard Bank of South Africa
A/c No. 071 818 006

This month's edition:

Editor: Ron Duff
Contributors: Hugh Amoore,
David Little & Pasul Murray
Caricatures: Tony Grogan
Photographs: Mike Bruton
& Ron Duff

"If you had to identify, in one word, the reason why the human race has not achieved, and never will achieve, its full potential, that word would be 'meetings'.

Dave Barry

NOTICE

Tuesday 15th March 2022 : Notice of meeting #1336

Dear Fellow Owls

THE 127th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AND 1336th MEETING) OF THE OWL CLUB, PRECEDED BY DINNER, WILL BE HELD ON **TUESDAY 15th MARCH 2022, 6:30 PM FOR 7:00 PM START**, IN THE GRILL ROOM, KELVIN GROVE CLUB.

Members are reminded that, as is customary for the AGM, **this is strictly a 'members only' meeting** and that guests are, unfortunately, not to be invited.

Chairman: **President Owl Richard Morris**

The format for the evening will comprise:

19:00 : Call to order and then Grace, followed by dinner, and then a short break whilst the tables are cleared.

20:00 : The *Loyal Toast*.

20:05 : Commencement of the **1336th meeting** of **The Owl Club**, including an induction, any announcements and the quarterly Club Sweep.

20:10 : The *Toast To Departed Owls* (**Immediate Past President Owl Geoff Everingham**).

20:30 : **WPB : Owl Glenn Babb**

Humour and Cruelty with special reference to Lewis Carroll, Peter Sellers and Herman Charles Bosman

Can humour and stimulus to laughter be separated from callousness and cruelty? Different languages perceive humour (to the French *drôlerie*, Italian *commedia*, German and Afrikaans *humor*) very differently, whilst the English language abounds like no other in writings of wit. The protagonists of humour, in their personalities, surprise the onlooker by their failure to be funny, from Charlie Chaplin to Rowan Atkinson and Mr Bean. By dissecting humour, like a frog, you kill it.

20:50 : Short bar & comfort break.

21:00 : Commencement of the **127th Annual General Meeting** of **The Owl Club**. (The Agenda, Minutes of the previous AGM, relevant documents and the Annual Financial Statements have been forwarded to all members under separate cover).

In order to allow for maximum AGM discussion time, there will (unfortunately) be no Musical Interlude during the course of the evening.

Dinner price: **R290 per head (for all Owls and guests).**

(**Note: Full Covid-19 protocols will still be observed, including the wearing of face masks, hand sanitising, social distancing and restricted seating arrangements.**)

Dress: **Black tie (or similarly elegant attire).**

RESERVATIONS & PAYMENTS:

Any Owl who does not have internet access is welcome to telephone the Secretary Bird at **082 440 8204** or **021 671 3121** to book a perch.

All other Owls are encouraged to use the **Pay'n'Perch** procedure by paying their dining fee into the Club's bank account by EFT and instructing the bank (using the option provided) to send a remittance confirmation email to secretary@owls.capetown whereupon their perches will be booked.

No further emails will be needed from you unless you have special dietary needs or if you are using a dining credit.

In all cases, bookings will close at 6:00 pm on Saturday 12th March 2022. All bookings will be acknowledged.

The February 2022 meeting

A total of 74 Owls and 17 guests met for the 1335th meeting of the Owl Club, held at Kelvin Grove Club, Newlands on Tuesday 15th February 2022.

Early attendees were welcomed by a highly interesting display of historical Owl Club memorabilia as unearthed by Archivist **Owl Paul Murray** and with the exhibition thereof ably directed by Senior Vice President **Owl Mike Bruton**. As Owls arrived, the discussion around items displayed evidenced the high degree of general interest in (and appreciation of) the hard work that had gone into staging the exhibition.

The more formal part of the evening commenced at 19:00 sharp, with **President Owl Richard Morris** welcoming all present to partake of the dinner. **Owl Ron Duff** was called upon to deliver the Grace (a secular grace which actually drew a most unexpected smatter of applause from the floor).

The starter was a mushroom soup followed by the main course of grilled sirloin steak served with new potatoes, seasonal vegetables and green peppercorn sauce. Dessert was an apple crumble served with whipped cream, followed by a welcome filter coffee.

Bottles of fine Hawksmoor red and white wines complemented the repast.

At the end of the meal the President called upon all to rise whilst he proposed *The Loyal Toast* and called for a 5-minute break in order for the tables to be cleared.

The 1335th meeting of **The Owl Club** was called-to-order at 20:10.

Post prandial Owls were welcomed and the President recognised those who had celebrated birthdays since the December meeting, as well as those with birthdays in February, viz: **Owl John Hund** (90 in January) and **Owls Denis le Jeune** (89), **Christopher Gregorowski** (82), **Gavin Michelmore** (78), **Hugh Amoore** (72) and **David Muller** (72), all February babies.

Owls were asked to rise in remembrance of **Owls Keith Jewell** and **Tony Rendel** who, since the last meeting, had both flown on to higher perches.

With guests remaining seated, Owls were asked to charge their glasses and join in *The Toast To Our Guests*,

following which the guest speaker, **Tony Leon**, was invited to enlighten his audience with the delivery of his much anticipated speech entitled *"Future tense. Reflections on my troubled land"*.

As a past Member of Parliament and (for a time) leader of the *Democratic Alliance* (the official opposition party), Tony Leon held his audience's attention with his views (but these are covered in more detail later in this publication).

After the applause which followed

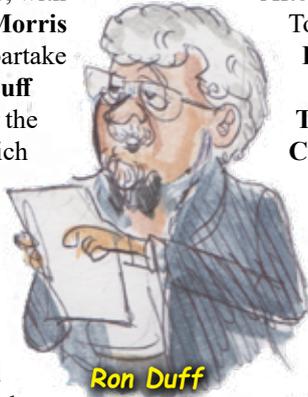
Tony Leon's presentation, **Owl David Little** was then invited to introduce *'The Romantic Trio'*: **Tertia Visser-Downie** (pianist), **Cheryl de Havilland** (cellist) and **David** himself (on the clarinet) who entertained all with a selection of romantic era and late classical era musical gems. This is also covered in more detail in this *Notice*.

Following the Owls appreciative recognition of their performance, the President called for a welcome bar interval which was highlighted by the celebratory birthday Port sponsored by **Owl John Hund**.

The meeting was then called to order for **Owl Paul Murray** to fill the *Wastepaper Basket* with highly interesting facts, legends and anecdotes which he entitled: *"Owl Club memorabilia. What the collection tells us about our history"*.

On this, the occasion of the centenary of the acquisition of *'Chalkis'* (the blinking owl), and supported by the display of Owl Club memorabilia, this was a very well received introduction to the fascinating history of the Club (and there is more to follow).

All were asked to (again) charge their glasses, to rise and to drink *A Toast To The Owl Club*, and the meeting ended at 22:45. **President Owl Richard Morris** wished all present a safe flight home.



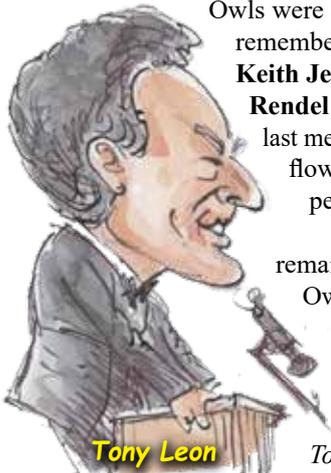
Ron Duff



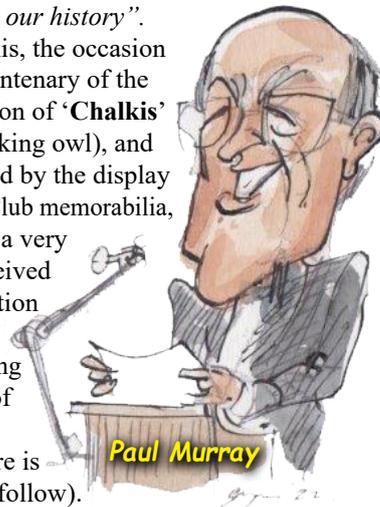
Tertia Visser-Downie

David Little

Cheryl de Havilland



Tony Leon



Paul Murray

A secular grace

To our Creator

*As we gather here this evening,
at the beginning of a new Owl Club
year, to join with our fellow Owls in
fine food, fine wine and fellowship,
may the best of our past be the worst
of our future.*

*And may we remember those who
love us and forgive those who don't.*

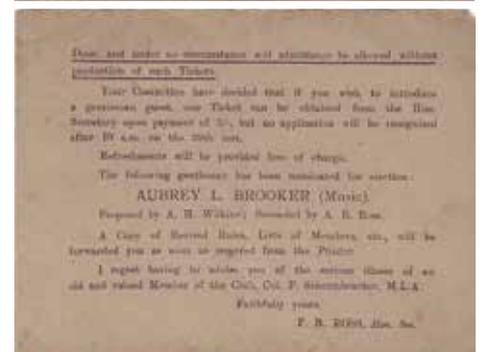
*As we set off into the uncharted
waters ahead, let us be reminded that
some ships are wooden ships ... and
these ships may sink, but the best
ships are friendships ... and to these
ships we'll drink.*

*And forgive us for those nights
we'll never remember, spent with
friends we'll never forget.*

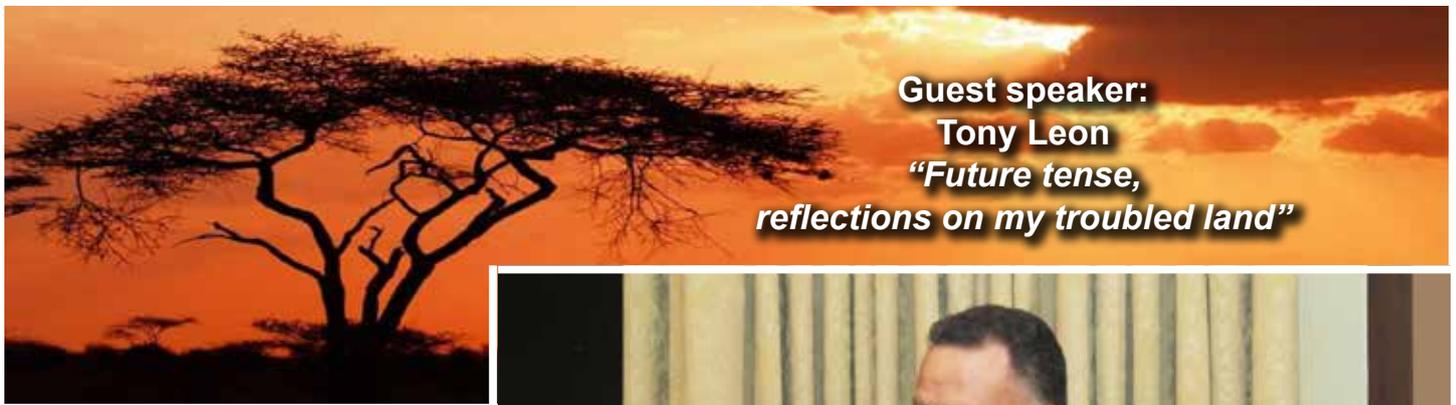
*Please bestow upon us what we
need but never what we deserve.*

*And to all Owls perched here
together, tonight, here's to
staying positive ...*

*but testing
negative.*



An interesting item of Owl Club memorabilia - the Notice for the 30th March 1904 meeting featuring a Special Ladies Night.



Guest speaker:
Tony Leon
*“Future tense,
 reflections on my troubled land”*

Thank you, Mr President and gathered Owls, for the opportunity to address such esteemed company. **Yuval Noah Harari**, the best-selling author of *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*, has rightly said, “I know how dangerous it is to make personal experience your main basis for authority”, but I am willing to take that risk. What I have to say is my own singular take on certain themes and events, as well as personalities, who have shaped the core happenings that have led South Africa to the place in which it finds itself today.

My experience includes serving for the longest period as the leader of the official opposition in the democratic South Africa and service as the country’s ambassador to Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. More recently I have acted as chairman of a local communications company and advisor to international consultancies.

Many books have been written about what went right after the new dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994, and even more on what went wrong. My view is, I believe, more refreshing than depressing. Neither utopia nor dystopia were inevitable or even likely destinations for our country. The two roads open to South Africa, twenty-five years ago, were navigated by men and women of zeal. Some were zealous in a good sense – selfless, committed and singular in purpose – while others were greedy, corrupt and entirely selfish. Some were committed to decent ends, a few were prisoners of dogma, and yet others proclaimed the high principle and collective purpose to conceal their own predations. Another category muddled along in the middle, hoping for the best without preparing for the worst outcomes. There are as many variants of political correctness as there are categories of victims, and South Africa is a world leader in both.

Since its modern inception at Union in 1910 South Africa has lurched through many crises: the *Spanish ‘Flu*, the *Great Depression*, *World War Two*, and changes in political leadership. On the positive side we have had the ‘negotiated miracle’ of 1994, the beneficent presidency of **Nelson Mandela**, and the inauguration of a modern democratic constitution despite the illiberal



Tony Leon in full flight

canvas on which it was sketched. For a while a spirit of reconciliation, economic sobriety and political inclusivity held sway at the end of the tumultuous old century, and then continued for a brief moment into the opening years of the new millennium.

But the roots planted in 1994 have been ripped out by men and women of zeal, and toxic weeds have proliferated in the garden planted amid much hope and hype three decades back. I would like to highlight nine ‘signposts’ that give us a clue about the road ahead. Six of them are negative but the last three are positive and there is a strong possibility that they will be the more powerful indicators of the future.

1. In a time of plague: During the Covid-19 pandemic it was sobering to be reminded that the entire world was held hostage, or locked down, due to a microscopic parasite 10 000 times smaller than a grain of salt. South Africa was hit by the virus at the precise point at which decades of policy mistakes and inertia, and reckless and (more recently) passive leadership, had rendered its financial immune system and fractured social and political landscapes weak and vulnerable. The new disease simply aggravated every political pathology that predated it.

2. Follow the money: In February 2019 the national treasury recorded that, to keep the ship of state afloat and to pay its army of employees and welfare recipients, the country was obliged to borrow R335.3 billion per year, about R1 billion every day. By September 2020 we were borrowing R776.9 billion annually, more than double in just over a year. The interest charge on the 2019 debt was an annualized R202.2 billion and it looks set to rocket beyond R300 million. **Duncan Artus** of *Allan Gray*

one of South Africa’s largest private fund management companies, suggested that the country is in a ‘*death spiral*’, drowning in debt. Furthermore, in the first quarter of 2020, before the coronavirus misery had fully impacted on employment, ten million South Africans were effectively out of a job while eighteen million were kept going only through social grants.

3. Land of lousy options: According to **Claire Bisseker** of the *Financial Mail*, the range of choices facing the country and its political overlords offers no good options. The easy roads had all been missed in the benign years when moderate growth fueled options. Now, in the cratered landscape of covidonomics, the hard choices ducked earlier stare us full in the face. All three international credit-rating agencies that had downgraded the sovereign debt to junk status agreed that the country’s galloping debt trajectory wouldn’t be stabilized because this outcome depends on sufficient economic growth which, in turn, needs sufficient economic and structural reforms to execute a sharp turnaround. This would necessitate going to the IMF, not for the sweetheart low-interest loan it had already received in 2020, but for a ‘*structural adjustment*’ programme that would impose very hard reforms, such as stripping the public sector and enforced privatizations. The danger is that wealthy South Africans will decide that their best option is to follow their money overseas and emigrate along with their skills and tax revenues.

4. The clunking hammer of the state: Before the onset of the coronavirus those who’d worshipped at the altar of state control had been somewhat constrained in being able to give it full expression.

The onset of the virus, and the imposition of a state of disaster, unleashed the untamed men and women of ideological zeal. The government, confronting a health and not a security emergency, took the opportunity to 'reset the economy' on lines congenial with its outdated socialist and statist playbook. The question now is: will the covid temporary emergency economic regime become the semi-permanent future condition? This seems likely.

5. The hyenas feed: One problem the covid hammer never nailed-down was the dark undertow of corruption. When the government responded to this threat by decreeing, in August 2020, that 'ethical and moral leadership' was needed in the 'collective fight against corruption' it was responding to public outrage that sixty per cent of emergency procurements of the state were revealed by SARS to have been spent on businesses that are politically connected or in which 'politically exposed persons' were involved. But the road to perdition had been paved long before with policies and practices that had been conceived decades back: BEE, state control, cadre deployment, hollowing out independent institutions, and collapsing the wall between party and state. 'Transformation' might have been the cause, but the feeding frenzy of the hyenas was the result. A course correction is possible, but the government can't have it both ways - you can't purge corruption and continue with the legalized system that enables it.

6. Fight or flight? For the middle class, the push factors for emigration include some alarming thoughts on the likely path forward - increasing hunger and even food riots, property confiscations and collapsing services, rising taxes, electricity blackouts and growing crime. Sandwiched between the would-be leavers on the one hand, and the stayers on the other, is a group, mostly young and idealistic, who have the universal skills to operate in other, perhaps more congenial, places but who, through conviction and choice, envisage a South African future. I can, however, cite many examples in which their commitment is wavering. Ill fares the land that so thoughtlessly dispenses with and exports its knowledge base, especially those deeply committed to its excellence and desirous to contribute to its future.

7. Judgment day: The 'liberation dividend' is useful political shorthand for explaining the durability of governing parties whose long years in government are not explicable by achievements in office but due more to voter gratitude for their role in country liberation. There are many examples that, at some point, the liberation ticket expires. Usually weary voters, the fed-up citizens enraged by corruption, authoritarian leadership, poor economics and unmet



promises, or some combination of these ailments, decide to throw the rascals out.

Hope lies in the fact that politics is never static and in the very turbulence of the current economic meltdown and the social misery of so many voters. Predictions are always perilous, and in a fast-moving and uncertain environment even more so, but a popular awakening may be on the cards, even if its course and destination remain unknowable.

8. Warp speed changes everything:

In 1993 the then South African Minister of Telecommunications estimated that the likely take-up by consumers of cell-phones, (which were due to be introduced into the country the following year), would be about 500 000, with a 'best-case scenario' at about 900 000. Today, nearly three decades later, more than 23 million South Africans use a smartphone (which contains far more computing power than that used to send the first men to the moon in 1969) and there are an estimated 103 million mobile connections in South Africa.

The internet went public in 1991 and changed our lives. In the decades since we've seen the advent of virtual reality, sequencing the human genome, and machines that can reason better than people. In 2004 Harvard drop-out **Mark Zuckerberg** introduced the world to *Facebook*. Today it has 2.7 billion active users, but it employs relatively few people. The largest car company in the world, *Uber*, owns no vehicles, and the biggest accommodation provider, *Airbnb*, owns no real estate. With the world moving at warp speed the South African government is still in manual mode and still believes in state control and excessive regulatory regimes, while unions have power over unemployed job seekers. Either it will have reality forced on it, by leapfrogging technologies and the like, or it will lose control of the very events it seeks to command.

9. 'A thousand points of light': In a now vanished age **George HW Bush**, on accepting his party's nomination for the Presidency, made a graceful and powerful speech that identified the binding power of civil society and spoke of the genesis of "an endless enduring dream" founded in the work of the rich mosaic of community organizations, volunteer associations, philanthropies, social clubs and charities. He described them as "like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky". Decades later I recalled Bush's majestic

words early in the harsh 2020 lockdown in Cape Town. Once a week for several months my wife **Michal** and I would sit at our kitchen table and make peanut-butter sandwiches, which were distributed to the poor and hungry through one of our local supermarkets. There was nothing heroic in our individual contributions but there was something extraordinary in the public outpouring of support. Every day the trolleys at our drop-off point were packed full to overflowing and, as the need expanded, so did the pile of sandwiches.

My stepson **Etai** once told me that the problem with a lot of my analyses was that I was too 'state-centric'. "If you only look at South Africa through the lens of the current government, it's a horror story. But look beyond that, into the wider society and you'll see a lot of truly good, sometimes great, things happening". He's right as there are hundreds of examples, often of people who had little themselves, of many individual South Africans and a vast array of civil society groups doing generous things at such a mean time. It is the living embodiment of the national ethos of *ubuntu*, or common and interactive humanity. For every area of state dysfunction there appeared numerous civil-society groups to mind and repair the gap, reaching across race, social stratum and religion.

The President of Czechoslovakia, **Václav Havel**, had the gift of a playwright (which he once was) when he penned a universal formula of hope. His vision of democratic politics underpinned by a strong civil society, and "rooted in common decency, morality, and respect for the rule of law and human rights", was a transcendent idea because it rose above "racial, cultural and religious differences". It was not unrealistic, he reasoned, because it was "the moral minimum existing at the heart of most faiths and cultures". **Havel**, who died in 2011, lived to see his country split in two because of cultural and ethnic irreconcilabilities, which proves just how hard the signpost he offered is to sight. But this does not exempt us from trying, even and especially here on the southern tip of Africa.

The odds of achieving the sort of non-racial thriving society, anchored by the rule of law and bolstered by rising levels of prosperity for all its citizens at peace with each other and with the wider world, are long. But that doesn't mean we must just surrender. It's an improbable, not an impossible, dream. It requires an optimism of both faith and will, too often in the shortest of supply. Out of all our freedoms, personal, psychological and constitutional, exercising our choice is the foundation of all the others. And no government, good, bad or indifferent, can remove it from you.

Musical Notes: Tertia Visser-Downie, Cheryl de Havilland & Owl David Little
Romantic Trio



The Romantic Trio (l/r): David Little (clarinet), Tertia Visser-Downie (piano) & Cheryl de Havilland (cello)

This most highly accomplished and talented trio, comprising **Tertia Visser-Downie** (pianist), **Cheryl de Havilland** (cellist) and **Owl David Little** (clarinetist), treated **The Owl Club** to an evening of delightful musical gems.

The *Romantic Trio* title was somewhat misleading, as only one of the two works presented was from the recognised Romantic era. The other work was from the late Classical era, by a composer who was so revolutionary for his time that his work foretold the developments in music composition

for the much later Romantic era.

Both works were composed (as trios) for piano, clarinet and violincello.

Beethoven's Gassenhauer Trio Opus 11 was written in 1797, in three movements, of which the last is a set of variations on a cheerful and popular melody. This work had been previously heard by **The Owl Club**, but in a version where the violin took the clarinet seat (a far inferior version in the opinion of the *Chorister Robin!*).

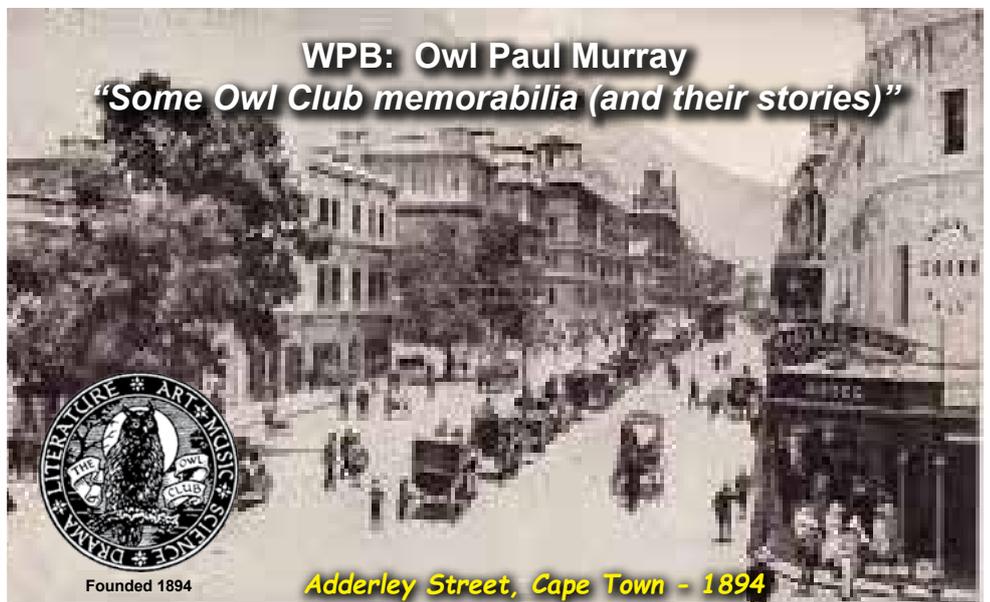
The second work, produced some 60 years later during the early Romantic era,

was from the French composer **Louise Farrenc** (nee **Jean-Louise Dumont**). Born in 1804, she married (very young) to flautist and music publisher **Aristide Farrenc**. Her first compositions (written in her early 20's) were published by her husband's firm (and in parallel editions by *Peters* in Leipzig). Her work, played on the evening in entertainment of **The Owl Club**, was **Farrenc's Trio Opus 44** and was in four movements. This piece is very rarely played these days, but unjustly so, as it is an appealing and accomplished piece of music.



Owl Paul Murray

WPB: Owl Paul Murray
"Some Owl Club memorabilia (and their stories)"



Adderley Street, Cape Town - 1894

On the occasion of the centenary of the acquisition of the blinking owl, 'Chalkis', **The Owl Club** thought that it would be appropriate to bring the archive to life by giving a talk and mounting an exhibition on its valuable archival collection. It is my pleasure, as the Club's *Archivist*, to present this brief overview of some of the most interesting items in our archives.

The ebony gavel, with its description on a silver plaque, was donated by **Major Tamplin, QC, MLA** on 19th September

1900. It was reported by **W.E Ranby** in his book, *The Owl Club. 1894-1950* (1950) that it was "the scene of much revelry ... when that enthusiastic and be-monocled Owl, Major Tamplin ... presided over a great welcome to 'BP', the gallant defender of Mafeking, who was made an honorary member of the Club and, being called upon to do his duty as such, immediately responded with a contribution to the programme". Elsewhere **Ranby** describes **Tamplin** as "memorable for his towering height, his

sternly fixed monocle and the Bohemian abandon of his disposition ... who played a conspicuous part in the Club – to which he presented the ebony gavel with which the Chairman raps the table."

On 18th March 1903 the Statuary Owl was donated to the club by **Harold E. Stidolph**, an organist at St John's Church, Wynberg, where there is a tablet in his memory. **Stidolph** was **The Owl Club Secretary Bird** for four years from 1899

to 1903. On 16th August 1905 **Arthur Radcliffe** presented an owl to the Club, apparently because “*the older specimens are somewhat the worse for wear*”.

Unfortunately, we do not have any of the older specimens and we were unable to locate the owl donated by **Mr Radcliffe**.

Possibly one of the Club’s most significant possessions is the President’s teak chair. The provenance of the chair will be explained further down. Whilst the chair itself was presented in 1910, on 28th March 1906 ‘**Frank**’ **Ross** gave a wooden panel of an owl to the Club that would eventually form part of the chair. Today, one can see, on the chair, the panel with the words ‘*The Owl Club*’ carved on it, as well as an owl in full flight and the year in which the club was inaugurated (1894). ‘**Frank**’ **Ross** (an artist, full name **Francis Bairit Ross**), was son of **Dr W. H. Ross**, a local medical doctor. **Frank** succeeded **Harold Stidolph** as the Club *Secretary Bird* and stayed in that position until he left for overseas in 1914, after which **Alfred Holzer** took over as the *Secretary Bird*. **Frank** later returned to South Africa and became the President of **The Owl Club** in 1917. It is said of him that he was “*a well known and well loved figure in Cape Town artistic circles, he did some beautiful etchings of Old Cape Houses and some admirable pen and ink work.*” One of his etchings can be seen in the 1922 edition of ‘*The Waste Paper Basket of the Owl Club*’.

On 8th June 1906 **Dr W. H. Dixon** presented the club with a carved owl, and another carved owl was donated to the club on 5th March 1914 by **Sir William Thorne**, a prominent citizen of the city and a former Mayor of Cape Town. **Thorne** was born in Pembrokeshire, Wales, and, after serving his apprenticeship with West End drapers and working for *Harvey Nichols* in London, he emigrated to the Cape in 1860. He was one of the founders of *Stuttards*, one of the city’s leading department stores.

Now we come to the President’s teak chair. It was designed by **James Morris**, who was the club’s Vice-President in 1918, 1919 and 1923. **Morris** played a significant role in establishing the tradition of the *Wastepaper Basket*. This came after the proposal, made on 17th May 1919 at the *Berkeley Café* (at a Club supper), for an ‘*Owl Club Annual*’. The proposal was not fructified but at least the idea for such a publication was planted – a publication to record the speeches and talks of members.



Chalkis

However, a mere two years later, there appeared the 1921 edition of ‘*The Waste Paper Basket of The Owl Club*’, followed by subsequent editions, some under the editorship of **Professor T.P. Kent** and historian, **Eric A. Walker**, so much so that **A.D. Donovan** wrote the following:

*So as a Brother Owl I raise
My hat in (almost) silent praise
(Your Owl is no great talker):
To the twin Editors who’ve hit
Such topping heights of sense and wit,
Professors Kent and Walker.
(Ranby, 1952, p. 89).*

The following describes the naming of the ‘*Wastepaper Basket*’ by **Morris**, “*When the monthly contribution had been read it should be actually consigned to a waste-paper basket under the chairman’s table as the proper receptacle for a totally unworthy contribution*” (Ranby, 1952, p. 88). Unfortunately, the costs of publishing the full year’s WPBs in the 1920s and 30s became prohibitive and so these publications lasted only for a few years, with the last appearing in 1934; neither was there one every year from the first that appeared in 1921. In some of these publications one can read about the early history of the club, as in the 1922 edition in an article entitled ‘*The Owl Club, 1922*’ by **Alfred Holtzer**. This article is particularly significant as it sketches aspects of the club’s history 100 years ago, to the year. **Holtzer** opens his WPB thus, “*I have been asked by the editors to furnish a summary of the activities of the Club since the publication of the first issue of ‘The Waste Paper Basket’ in November 1921. This will bring the history of the Club up to date.*”

In the 1921 edition there is a record of some of the names of visitors to the Club in the early years, including **Sir Edward Lutyens**, the renowned English architect, **Mark Twain**, the American author, **Joseph C. Chamberlain**, the British statesman, and **Captain R. Scott** and members of the *Antarctic Expedition*. There is also a significant WPB entitled ‘*The Life Story of the Owl Club*’ by **H. Tucker** in which he describes **Twain’s** visit thus, “*But in June, 1896, the Owls had the crowning honour of welcoming no less a guest than Mark Twain; and although, owing to ill-health, he had only promised half-an-hour of his company, he not only made a speech [unfortunately not recorded], but remained until the small hours – a Magistrate who was present obliging by granting extension of licensing privileges until the end of the evening.*”

There is in the 1921 edition another interesting WPB entitled ‘*The Atmosphere of the Owl Club*’ by **A.D. Donovan**, which sketches the mood of the Club at that time.

Another was by **Bishop Nash** entitled

‘*The Mosquito in the Homes of Oranjezicht*’, whilst yet another was a discourse by **Professor Nauta** on ‘*The Origin of Pyjamas*’ (with copious French quotations!). One of **Donovan’s** remarks is worth quoting, “*Always through the good and bad years, the literary, the artistic, the dramatic, the musical life of the Mother City has found shelter and good cheer and good hope under the roof of The Owl Club*”. Surely, if that is not poignant for the current situation we find ourselves in, especially the last couple of years, then nothing is!

The President’s chair was made, under the personal supervision of **James Morris**, by **Paul M. Turquand** (unfortunately, I was unable to find any further information about **Turquand**). The two carved owls on either side of the backrest of the chair were donated by **Sir Edward Harding** (who later became the British High Commissioner to South Africa) and were carved by **Ivan Mitford-Barberton** who was born in Somerset East and studied under, amongst others, **Henry Moore** (the renowned British sculptor). He is well-known for his statue of **Jan Smuts** at the top of *Adderley Street*. **Smuts** first visited the club with **General Botha** in 1910 and again in 1929 for the 300th meeting held at the *University of Cape Town*. **Jan Smuts** was due to visit again when **Harding** invited him to the Jubilee Banquet in 1944 but he had unfortunately left the invitation card in a suit that he had not worn for weeks and his place was taken by **The Honorable J.H. Hofmeyr**, then *Minister of Finance*. The chair was unveiled by **J.M.P. Muirhead**, Vice-President of **The Owl Club**, at the 146th meeting of the Club, held in the studio of renowned artist **Eric Roworth**, on 19th April 1911. Attached to the chair are silver plates bearing the names of past presidents.



The second visitor’s book, which is the one that our guest speaker signed this evening, was donated by **Lieutenant Colonel C. Graham Botha**, a soldier in the *Anglo-Boer War* and *World War I*, who is known as the ‘*Father of Archives*’ in South Africa. He was also responsible for the designing of coats-of-arms (as one of the country’s foremost heraldry specialists).

It was **H. S. Jager** who donated ‘*Chalkis*’

(the blinking owl) to the Club. **Jager** was a long-serving member of the Club, well-known for his book, 'Guide to Peers' Cave, Tunnel Cave and Rock Shelters at Skildergat, Fish Hoek'. It is around **Chalkis**, our 'Blinking Owl' which blinks when we toast our guests, that this talk originated (when former Owl Club President, **John van der Linde**, suggested it to commemorate **Chalkis'** centenary). In classical mythology, *Chalkis* is the cenobite lover of *Alastor* and is forever connected to him via a golden chain attached to his waist. *Chalkis* has an owl-like mask embedded with spikes, and wings and a tail which she uses to hover (<https://cenobite.fandom.com/wiki/Chalkis>).

As for the origin of the name, there are many theories for this, one being the shimmering bronze-like colour which is the word *χαλκός* in classical Greek.

On page 151 of *Ranby* (1952) he records the following: "On entering the room ... the first thing to take the visitor's notice will be the 'Blinking Owl', a bird of notable proportions with magnificent eyes which gleam throughout the evening with a persistent and admirably regulated periodicity." It is the blinking owl that welcomes and lures the guests to become members when the lights are switched off and the hall rings to the tone of Owls whooping. Previously, there was a lot more whooping as in *The Owl Song*, with words by **Edward Vincent** and music by **Dr J.N. Meiring Beck**:

*Tuwhit! Tuwhit! Tuwhoo!
Hurrah! Hurray! Hurroo!
We're loyal owls right through,
our friendships we renew.
And welcome new one's too –
Good friends are all too few
Then in this cheering brew
Here's health, our guests, to you
Here's health and wealth to you
And all who need it too!
Tuwhit tuwhit tuwhoo
Hurrah hurray hurroo.*



On 24th February 1931 an alabaster owl was presented to the club by **James Morris**. At the next meeting (17th March 1931) the ceremonial mace was donated by the **Reverend Dr E. Hermitage Day**. It was carved by **H. V. Meyerowitz** who was born in Leningrad in 1900 and came to South Africa in 1925, and was a member of the Club from 1930 until his death in 1945. During his life he studied in England, Germany, Russia, and Switzerland and contributed to many disciplines, including teaching art at UCT and opening a school of art in West Africa. On hearing that his mother (a concert pianist who had studied under **Arthur Rubenstein**) had died in the *Siege of St Petersburg*, **Meyerowitz** was unable to continue living. He was in London when he got the news and sadly took his life.

The donor of the mace, the **Reverend Dr Hermitage Day**, is recorded as being a member unequalled for having sincere regard for the Club's welfare. It was he who devised the induction ceremony when a new Owl is elected. He was also responsible for ensuring that the purpose of the Club (as stated by *Ranby*, page 34, and in Rule 2 in the Constitution) was carried out, i.e., to "provide opportunities for social intercourse between members of the various professions and those qualified in the liberal arts and

sciences". It was also **Hermitage Day** who conceptualized the words, as said by the *President* at the induction ceremony, placing the mace in his left hand and resting it on the inductee's shoulder, and thus welcoming her or him to the Club.

Hermitage Day joined the Club in 1928 and became the *President* in 1935. Reading through the various club histories, it is clear that he was a treasured Owl. He was a well-known author about *missiology* and Christian doctrine and also a church archivist who was responsible for 'Project Canterbury', a range of scholarly articles including one by the *Bishop of Cape Town*, **Robert Gray**. It can be said, without reservation, that **Dr Hermitage Day** was a classic scholar of the Church, possibly someone along the lines of **St Augustine**.

The silver-toned bell was forged by the *Steele-Payne Bell Ringers* in 1941 and donated by the then *Secretary Bird*, **Alfred Holzer**. Further treasured possessions are a cream porcelain owl donated in 1944 by **Ivan Mitford-Barberton** (a replica of the *Presentation Owl*) and the wooden ballot box donated in the same year by **A A T. 'Archie' Low**. According to *Ranby* (1952, p.45), **Archie** was a chorister and happy exponent of the classic ballad, and **The Owl Club President** in 1941. The lectern was donated by fellow Owls in honour of **Arnold Matthews**, the long-serving *Secretary Bird* of **The Owl Club** from 1959 to 1983, and the recently recovered piano stool was donated in memory of **Paul White**, an Owl from 1955 to 1967.

I end by saying that I conducted this research and, if I have any of it wrong, it would be great to get the right version, remembering that we should be kind to archivists lest they write you out of history. It has been a great honour trying to bring to life some of the Club's memorabilia and also remembering past Owls whose gracious contributions make it possible for us to enjoy **The Owl Club** today.

Members' news

.oOo.

AGM - 15th March 2022.

Owls are enjoined to attend the 127th **Annual General Meeting of The Owl Club**, where the business promises to be short, the dinner good and the entertainment (in the form of a WPB by **Owl Glenn Babb**) worth waiting for.

The number of volunteers and nominees means that we have a full, but unopposed, slate of nominees for election to your Committee at this AGM. However, the Committee needs Owls who will help; we seek an Owl with IT skills and an Owl who will be a successor (in the medium term) to **Owl Ron Duff** as the *Editor* of the monthly

Notices. In other words, Owls with the ability to deal with: (i) the Club's *Owldom* system (programmed in *MSAccess*) and the interfaces between this, *Dropbox*, and the Club's website (for which we already have a volunteer), and: (ii) a future editor/compiler of the *Notice*.

.oOo.

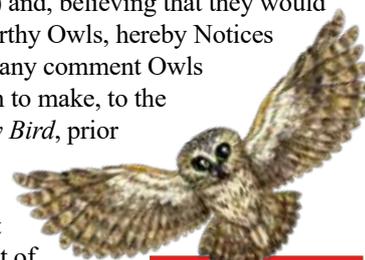
Sound quality at Kelvin.

Several Owls have complained (and with good cause) about the sound system at Kelvin (adequate in the Ball Room but not so in the Grill Room). The Committee has made good progress in addressing this and hopes to have a trial run of a brand new sound system at the April meeting.

.oOo.

Proposal of membership.

The Committee has received proposals of membership and CVs for **Roxane Mather** (Science), **Sean King** (Music), **Rudolf Brand** (Literature) and **David Bridgman** (Science) and, believing that they would make worthy Owls, hereby *Notices* them for any comment Owls may wish to make, to the *Secretary Bird*, prior to these proposals being put to a ballot of your Committee.



Seen & noted @ the February meeting



Tony Leon



The parliament of Owls, perched for meeting #1335



Paul Murray



Meg Goldstein



Jimmy Baigrie



Bruce Dietrich



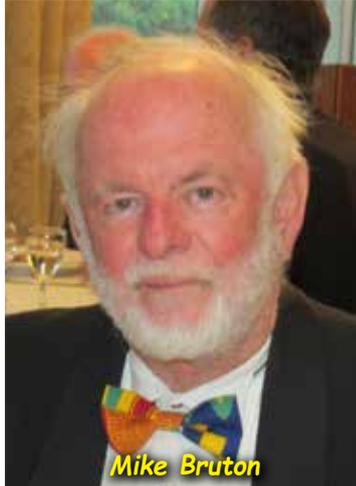
Mike du Toit



Owls attentively listening to Paul Murray's WPB



Richard Morris



Mike Bruton



Geoffrey Ashmead



Roxane Mather



The 'main table' at dinner