THE OWL CLUB

Founded 1894

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Committee 2023/2024

President: Geoffrey Ashmead
Senior Vice-President: Ron Duff
Junior Vice-President: Bill Coetzee
Secretary: Hugh Amoore
Treasurer: Richard Morris
Imm. Past President: Mike Bruton
Additional Members: Nigel Gwynne Evans, Peter Hyslop, Mike James, David Little, Paul Murray & Peter Sutherland

Honorary Auditor:

Verwey Wiese

Dinner bookings

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Bank details

The Owl Club
Standard Bank of South Africa
A/c no. 071 818 006
Bank branch code: 051 001

This month's edition:

Editor: Ron Duff
Contributors: Hugh Amoore, Mike James, David Little, Richard Morris, Jan Christiaan Smuts & Patrick Woudt
Caricatures & sketches: Tony Grogan, Peter Hyslop & Michael Beckurts
Photography: Bill Coetzee & Ron Duff

"Once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return."
Leonardo da Vinci

NOTICE

Tuesday 20th June 2023 : Notice of meeting #1350

PARTNERS & GUESTS WELCOME

GALA EVENING

Dear Fellow Owls

THE **1350th MEETING** OF THE OWL CLUB **(A SPECIAL GALA EVENING TO CELEBRATE 27 x 50th MEETINGS)**, PRECEDED BY DINNER, WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY 20th JUNE 2023, 6:00 PM FOR 6:45 PM START. **OWLS ARE WELCOME TO INVITE PARTNERS AND/OR FRIENDS TO ATTEND.** VENUE: THE BALLROOM, KELVIN GROVE CLUB, NEWLANDS.

Chairman: **President Owl Geoffrey Ashmead**

Guest speaker: **Norman Larsen**

'The history of the SAAF Museum, Ysterplaat'

The South African Air Force Museum, located at Air Force Base Ysterplaat, opened in 1987 and is situated behind a plinth mounted Aermacchi MB-326M Impala MK.1 531 jet fighter. Norman Larsen (of *Friends of SAAF Museum, Ysterplaat*) will be presenting on the history of the Museum and its interesting collection of fighters, bombers, reconnaissance aircraft, etc.

Music: **Matthew Reid Entertainment**

Playing With Fire: Balkan Band ensemble

Matthew Reid's *Playing With Fire Entertainment* returns to Owldom, this time performing music from the Balkans. The music is instantly infectious, and much of it probably unfamiliar to Owls, coming as it does from Lithuania, Russia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine.

WPB: **Owl Paul Murray**

'Bishop J W Colenso, anathema or savant?'

Dr Paul Murray (historian and The Owl Club *Archivist*) will look at the youth experiences of John William Colenso (1814 - 1883), and especially how his time as a student at St John's College, Cambridge, UK, was processed in his working career as the Bishop of Natal (1853 - 1883).

Dinner price: **R320.**

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

RESERVATIONS & PAYMENTS:

Please do invite your partners, family and friends to join you for the evening. Please let the Secretary Bird have names of your guests (and any dietary needs).

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 (and their guest's) 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.

Besides details of your invited guests (see above), no further emails will be needed from you unless you also have special dietary needs or if you are using a dining credit.

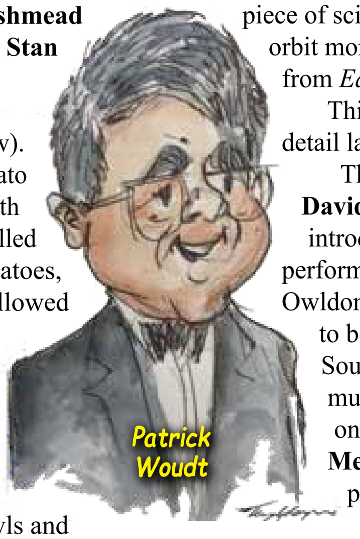
In all cases, bookings will close at 6:00 pm on Saturday 17th June 2023.

All bookings will be acknowledged.

The May 2023 meeting

A total of 61 Owls and 15 guests met for the 1349th meeting of **The Owl Club**, held in The Grill Room, Kelvin Grove Club, Newlands on Tuesday 16th May 2023.

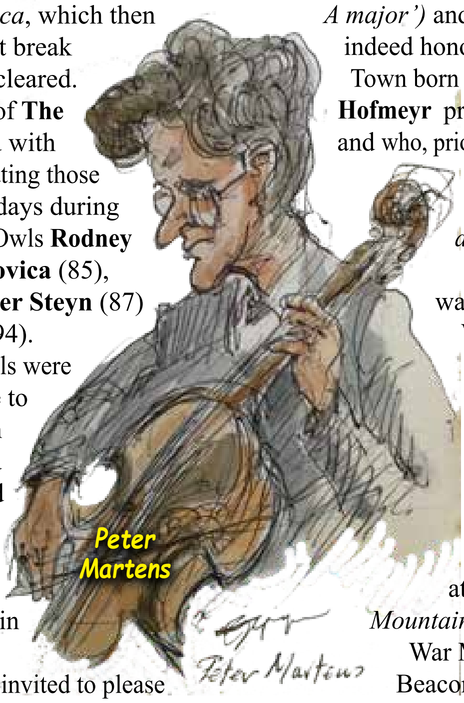
The proceedings commenced at 18:45, with President Owl **Geoffrey Ashmead** welcoming all and inviting Owl **Stan Sandler** to deliver the *Grace* (a combined non-secular/secular *Grace* partly delivered in Hebrew).



The dinner started with a tomato and bell-pepper soup drizzled with basil oil, the main course was grilled hake served with garlic new potatoes, Greek salad and tartar sauce, followed by the dessert of apple crumble served with whipped cream. The meal was accompanied by fine red and white wines from the *Hawksmoor* estate and filter coffee ended the repast.

The President then asked Owls and guests to charge their glasses and to rise for the *Toast To South Africa*, which then led into a short comfort break whilst the tables were cleared.

The 1349th meeting of **The Owl Club** commenced with the President congratulating those Owls celebrating birthdays during the month of May, viz: Owls **Rodney Cottrell** (72), **Al Lastovica** (85), **Gavan Ryan** (75), **Peter Steyn** (87) and **Dennis Worrall** (94).



On a sadder note, Owls were invited to rise in tribute to Owl **Brian Warner**, an Honorary Life Owl and past President, who had recently flown to a higher perch.

Then, whilst guests were requested to remain seated, the lights were dimmed and Owls were invited to please charge their glasses, to rise and to join in the *Toast To Our Guests*.

The guest speaker for the evening, **Prof. Patrick Woudt,** was then introduced and invited to deliver his fascinating presentation on *'The impact of the James Webb Space Telescope'* in which he clearly spelt-out the technical challenges of designing, building and launching a 6 200 kg piece of scientific apparatus into orbit more than 1.5 million km from *Earth*.

This is all covered in more detail later herein.

The *Chorister Robin,* Owl **David Little** was invited to introduce the musical performers for the evening and Owldom was indeed privileged to be able to listen to two of South Africa's finest musicians, **Peter Martens** on cello and **Elna van der Merwe** on piano. The duo performed works by both Ludwig van Beethoven *('Sonata for cello and piano Opus 69 in A major')* and **The Owl Club** was indeed honoured to have Cape Town born composer **Hendrik Hofmeyr** present on the evening and who, prior to the performance, introduced his 2013 work *('Sonata for cello and piano')*.

Owl **Richard Morris** was then invited to fill the Waste Paper Basket which he did with an immaculate delivery of Jan Christiaan Smuts' gem of an oration, *'The spirit of the mountain'* (his speech made 100 years ago at the dedication of *The Mountain Club of South Africa* War Memorial, at Maclear's Beacon on Table Mountain, on Sunday 25th February 1923).

Grace

For the non-secularists:

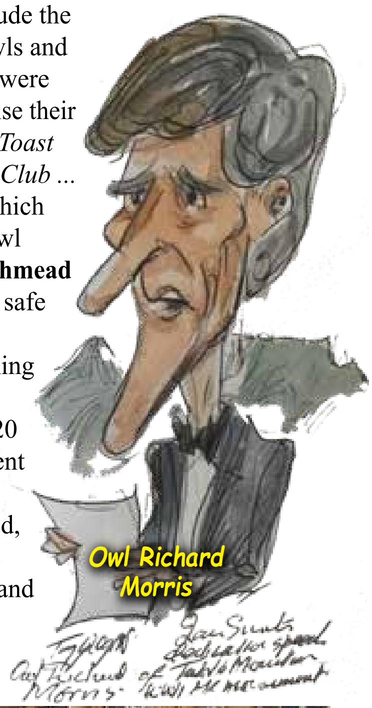
Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam boreh p'ri hagafen.
Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam hamotzi lehem min ha-aretz.
Our God, our king, our ruler of the universe, we thank thee for bringing forth fruits from the vines and bread from the earth

For the secularists:

May all mankind be happy.
May all mankind be healthy.
May all mankind be tranquil.
May all mankind interact in such a way that the endpoint of their interaction is good, not bad.
And in the midst of these anticipations to thank all persons who are concerned in the production of food so that we can enjoy our daily feeds.
Amen and thanks

To conclude the evening, Owls and their guests were invited to raise their glasses in a *Toast To The Owl Club ...* following which President Owl **Geoffrey Ashmead** wished all a safe flight home.

The evening drew to a close at 22:20 and all present agreed that it had, indeed, been a most memorable and entertaining occasion.



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The Parliament of Owls in session - 16th May 2023

Guest speaker: Professor Patrick Woudt
New insights from the James Webb Space Telescope

Patrick Woudt is Professor of Astronomy and Head of the Astronomy Department at the University of Cape Town (2015-2023). He is past President of the South African Institute of Physics (2017-2019) and chaired the South African national committees of the IAU (2014-2017) and IUPAP (2017-2019). He is currently vice-president of Commission B4 (Radio Astronomy) of the IAU and co-chair of the international SKA Science Working group on radio transients.

His research interests include high time domain stellar astrophysics, in particular the physics of accretion in compact binary systems (cataclysmic variables).

He pursues this research through a range of multi-wavelength approaches using optical and near-infrared telescopes in Sutherland and the MeerKAT radio telescope array in Carnarvon. He co-leads a large survey project on the MeerKAT telescope to study astrophysical transients and has established a small robotic telescope in Sutherland dedicated to follow the observing schedule of the MeerKAT telescope every night, providing a simultaneous optical view of the transient radio sky. He has co-authored over 150 peer-reviewed papers.

Dear Owls,

I am both honoured and delighted by the invitation to speak to you this evening. Cape Town has a long and most distinguished history in astronomy, so I am certain a good number of my colleagues have talked to you on the subject of astronomy over the years. I hope to add some interesting perspectives on the subject this evening.

The topic for this evening's talk is the James Webb Space Telescope - the latest in a long line of great observatories and the successor to the Hubble Space Telescope. We are fortunate to live in a golden age of astronomy. Technology-driven advances in telescope technologies over the past 50 years have pushed (and continue to push) the frontiers of the observable universe further and further into the distant cosmos (but also, as I hope to show, closer to home).

Great advances in modern astrophysics have come through the drive for increased resolution and greater sensitivity, and the clever minds who see the unique opportunities to address some of the big questions in modern astrophysics.

To provide context for the talk I will first consider the James Webb Space Telescope in relation to the Hubble Space Telescope. Next I will look at the wide range of great observatories on earth or in space, across a wide range of the electromagnetic spectrum


Professor Patrick Woudt

and consider the JWST as the flagship of modern astronomy, a culmination of the golden age of astronomy.

Finally I will pick one area of science where JWST will be unique and revolutionary, namely the characterisation of planets around other stars.

When the planning started for the successor to HST (three decades ago) it was clear that the next generation space telescope needed a larger collecting area and to operate at a different wavelength regime to make new advances in a range of fields in astronomy that have progressed rapidly over the last decades. The Hubble telescope didn't have the wavelength range to observe the most distant galaxies.


James Webb Space Telescope

The Webb telescope has a 6 times larger collecting area with a diameter of 6.5 meters.

A special design was needed to fit this telescope in a launch vehicle. From design to launch took the better part of three decades with some delays along the way due to the incredible complexity of the telescope. With hundreds of moving parts to put the telescope and its sunshield together after launch, and with an orbit 1.5 million km away from *Earth*, there was absolutely no room for error.

Astronomers all over the world watched the launch on Christmas Day 2021 with great anticipation. The launch was a great success of course and has given the telescope a lifetime of 10 years. It took a month for the telescope to arrive at its designed orbit 1.5 million km way from *Earth*, a gravitational sweet spot in the *Earth-Sun* system.

Over the first year of science operation the Webb telescope has delivered remarkable images of the cosmos such as the view of the


First image received from the James Webb Space Telescope

Pillars of Creation - a star forming region in the *Eagle* nebula full of dust, gas and newly formed stars *(see illustration on p.4)*

To put the James Webb Space Telescope in the context of all other modern telescopes – including our own SALT telescope in Sutherland and the MeerKAT radio telescope in Carnarvon – I want to come back to the notion that we live in a golden age of astronomy.

The most defining aspect of this golden age is that we have a wide range of very remarkable telescopes on Earth and in Space that cover the full range of the electromagnetic spectrum, from short-wavelength X-ray astronomy to long-wavelength radio astronomy and everything in between. This is generally referred to as multi-wavelength astronomy. The telescopes are largely matched in sensitivity to study the most distant galaxies in the cosmos.

Telescopes operating at different parts of the electromagnetic spectrum capture different energetic processes of stars and galaxies and by combining them we form a holistic understanding of the physical processes that govern the formation and evolution of stars and galaxies. To highlight that this is indeed a golden age of astronomy, five of the last 12 Nobel Prizes in Physics have been awarded to Astronomy.

One example of multi-wavelength astronomy is visible in the image of Hubble and Webb picture of the *Pillars of Creation* shown here. The Hubble telescope operates largely at optical wavelengths whereas the Webb telescope is designed to observe the universe at longer wavelengths in the near to mid-infrared (factors of a few to a few tens larger than the optical wavelength regime). The effect is obvious in the picture. At optical wavelengths, dust absorbs and scatters the light from stars very efficiently and the Hubble image is dominated by the dusty component of this star forming region. At the longer infrared wavelength the star light is less obscured and we see deeper into the star forming regions and view recently formed stars.


'Pillars of Creation' as observed via the Hubble Space Telescope


'Pillars of Creation' as observed via the John Webb Space Telescope

The James Webb Space Telescope is but one of the space telescopes at the disposal of the modern astronomer. Another remarkable space telescope currently in operation is the GAIA telescope which aims to measure the accurate position and motions of a billion stars in our Milky Way transforming our understanding of the dynamic history of the *Milky Way* galaxy.

With this tremendous range of facilities at our disposal we can ask some of the big questions that have intrigued astronomers over the ages: What is the nature of strong gravity around black holes? When did the first stars form in the early history of the Universe? Do all stars have planets around them, and are the conditions on those planets suitable to support life as we know it? The latter question is of course set in the broader context of understanding our own place in the Universe.

It is not so long ago that the first extra-solar planet - or exoplanet for short - was discovered. The discovery in 1995 of a planet orbiting a solar-type star earned Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz the *Nobel Prize in Physics* in 2019 for contributions to understanding the *Earth's* place in the cosmos.

The Kepler Space Telescope - now no longer in operation - was another space telescope whose primary mission was to seek strange new worlds orbiting other stars. Planets and planetary systems as seen from our perspective to regularly cross the disk of their parent star, blocking tiny fractions of star light on regular recurring periods.

This telescope alone has discovered over 3 000 planets around other stars, amongst the currently known 5 324 confirmed planets in our corner of the Milky Way, with over 300 planets within 60 light years from *Earth*. The nearest star to us, *Proxima Centauri,* is known to have a planet. It is likely that all stars have multiple planets. Preferentially we are seeing the ones that block the parent star due to an observational selection effect.

One of the most interesting systems at 40 light years distance is the *Trappist-1* system, with 7 planets in close orbit around a cool star, many of which are in the so-called habitable zone of that system. The habitable zone is defined as the region where water (if present) would be in liquid form.


The 'Trappist-1' system

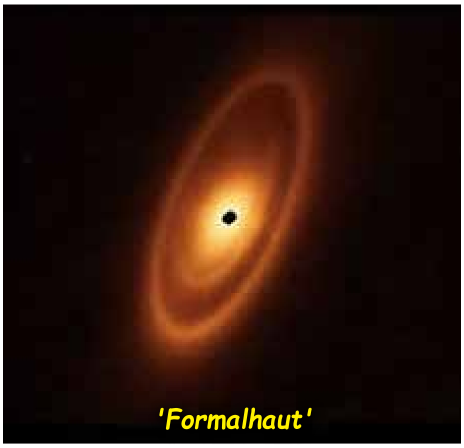
It is particularly with regard to exoplanets that I would like to talk about the exciting early science results from the James Webb Space Telescope. There are many exciting areas of science where JWST will make groundbreaking impacts, but none more so than for exoplanets, where no other facility has the sensitivity to take spectra of extra-solar planetary atmospheres.

With 1 000s of exoplanets from which to choose, JWST has already looked at a fair number and very interesting results are coming in, giving new insights into the nature of the atmospheres of exoplanets, hoping of course that some of those atmospheres of planets residing in the habitable zone could show evidence for suitability of life on other worlds.

The first example I will show is the planet orbiting the closest to the star in the 7-planet system *Trappist-1*. *Trappist-1* is an ultracool dwarf star 40 light years from *Earth.* Its surface temperature is a mere 2600 degrees Kelvin (compare this to 5700 Kelvin for the *Sun*). This innermost planet orbits its parent star every 1.5 days. A year on this planet is 1.5 *Earth* days.

The observations from JWST showed that this is a hot, rocky world with no evidence for an atmosphere. With a day-time temperature of 230^{o} Celsius it is cooler than *Mercury*, but clearly too hot to be regarded a pleasant world. These measurements were made as the planet moved behind the parent star for the duration of about 40 minutes.

The superior image quality also allows JWST to image the material around nearby stars. See the image of *Formalhaut*, 25 light years from *Earth.* This star has twice the mass of the *Sun* and is much hotter at its surface (around 10,000 degrees Kelvin). The scale shows a length of 80 astronomical units (double the distance of *Pluto*


'Formalhaut'

from the *Sun*) - inter alia - some might not know but **Brian Warner**, former Owl and a distinguished astronomer, was part of the executive of the *International Astronomical Union*, when *Pluto* had its planet status removed in 2009, instead becoming one of many dwarf planets in the solar system.

What initially appeared to be a planet (a clump in the outer ring) has now firmly been established as a great dust cloud and the general ring likened to the *Kuiper Belt* in our own solar system. Planets (unseen in this image) might have had a role in shaping this structure. The JWST image shows a lot of structure that astronomers can model with dynamical models involving multiple planets.

JWST is uniquely suited thanks to its superb sensitivity to take what is called 'transmission spectra' of exoplanet atmospheres. This occurs when a planet moves in front of their parent star and you observe the blocking of star light as seen through the planet's atmosphere.

Wasp-39b is a hot *Jupiter* - a planet like *Jupiter*, but extremely close to its parent star. The initial finding of lots of hot *Jupiters* challenged our understanding of the formation of planets based on our solar system as the only example.

The transmission of *Wasp 39b* shows sulphur dioxide as well as carbon dioxide, never before seen in the atmospheres of any planet. This planet is 8x closer to its parent star than *Mercury*, and makes it a great laboratory for understanding the effects of the star on its nearby planet.

These few examples are the proverbial tip of the iceberg when it comes to the current and future contributions of JWST to our understanding of individual exoplanets and planetary system formations.

JWST was built for more than just looking at exoplanets …

To illustrate the impact of the James Webb Space Telescope on the study of galaxies I have shown an image of *NGC 1365*, also known as the *Great Barred Spiral Galaxy.* It is located in the *Fornax* cluster in the southern skies. This galaxy was first seen through a telescope by John Herschel from his observatory in Wynberg in November 1837.

There is an image that shows the deepest optical image taken from *Earth*. The small image displays the central area that aligns with the image from the Webb Space Telescope. The new image from JWST shows spectacular details of the inner part of the galaxy with an abundance of star forming regions (showing up as purple regions in a colour image). The red glow in the centre of the galaxy represents the activity of the central supermassive black hole at the core of the galaxy.

There is an illustration available of the impact of the James Webb Space Telescope There is the iconic picture of the *Hubble Ultra Deep Field.* The director of the Hubble Space Telescope made the insightful decision that, whenever the telescope had a gap in its schedule, to return to the same unremarkable patch of the sky. Devoid of bright stars and nearby galaxies, the accumulation of 11.5 days of just recording light from one spot, showed the myriad of galaxies in the distant cosmos.

There is an image which demonstrates the superb sensitivity of the James Webb Space Telescope, where it reaches the same level of depth as HST in less than a day. One can look carefully at both images - and one has to look really hard - one will see red galaxies in the Webb image that were invisible in the Hubble image (because the telescope did not have the full wavelength coverage towards the infrared part of the electromagnetic spectrum). These red galaxies represent the most distant galaxies that the James Webb telescope can see.

'NGC-1365'

I would like to offer two final remarks:

Over the next few years, the *Square Kilometre Array* will join the arena of great observatories from our own backyard in the Northern Cape. Over the past decades we at UCT, and more broadly in South Africa, have been training many of the clever minds on the MeerKAT telescope who will be using the *SKA* jointly with the JWST and a plethora of other facilities – such as the future 40-m Extremely Large Telescope expecting to see first light in 2028. Both *SKA* and the *ELT* will seriously challenge JWST for the title of flagship of the golden age of astronomy.

It is interesting to note that the original design for the European Extremely Large Telescope was initially called OWL – the Overwhelmingly Large Telescope (a telescope of 100-m diameter). This was a step too far a few decades ago due to the complexity of its design, but perhaps (in the future) a very large OWL will be perched on a mountain top in a lonely desert looking at the strange new worlds of the cosmos.

Until that time I invite all Owls present to look up at the night sky and marvel at the strange new worlds astronomers are finding around stars near us, knowing that JWST is now characterising those worlds in the hope that some of these worlds support life. ***[PW***

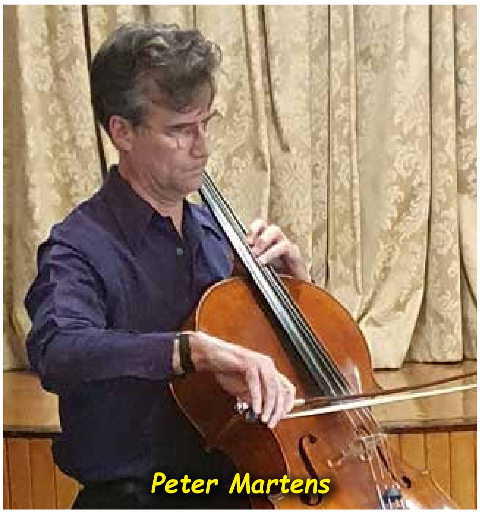
Musical notes: Peter Martens & Elna van der Merwe
Cello & piano duo

Peter Martens – cello:

Peter is currently principal cellist with the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra and Director of the Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival.

He holds a PhD from Stellenbosch University where he studied in his formative years with Dalena Roux before studying with Heidi Litschauer at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. After his return to South Africa, he also obtained a Master's Degree from the University of Cape Town.

Peter has participated in festivals in Russia, Holland, Salzburg, Ireland, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Portugal as well has having performed in France, the United Kingdom



Peter Martens

Elna van der Merwe

and the United States of America.

Elna van der Merwe – piano:

Elna studied at (and was a full-time accompanist and part-time piano lecturer at the Conservatory of) the University of Stellenbosch (where she won several awards and competitions). She now works as an ad-hoc pianist and sought-after collaborative artist for local and international artists.

She has performed as soloist with various national orchestras and accompanied the Libertas choir on their tours to Belgium and the USA.

Elna has been recognised by SAMRO for excellent service in accompaniment in the Overseas Scholarship Competitions. She has also recorded with different artists and, as adjudicator, has served on several music competition panels.

Peter Martens, Elna van der Merwe, Hendrik Hofmeyr & David Little

The first set:

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827) – *Sonata for cello and piano Op 69 in A major*

Allegro ma non tanto

Scherzo: Allegro molto

Adagio cantabile - Allegro vivace

Beethoven's five sonatas for cello and piano were the first significant works of their kind, no great composer since Bach having attempted to write for a stringed instrument with obligato keyboard. The Op 69 sonata was composed in 1807, during one of Beethoven's richest creative periods, coinciding with the creation of his extraordinary and earth-shaking 5th symphony, his 6th symphony and the two piano trios Opus 70.

The work began with one of Beethoven's profound and quiet themes, later developed into a spacious melody soaring above the piano accompaniment.

There is no slow movement. The second movement was a scherzo with a contrasting trio The scherzo makes prominent use of off-beat accents, in rhythmic sharpness and thematic brevity.

The finale started with a sublime, emotionally charged slow section, followed by one of Beethoven's most exhilarating and lively finales.

The second set:

Hendrik Hofmeyr (b 1957) – *Sonata for Cello and Piano (2013)*

Fluido – Appassionato

Ciaccona canonica - Grave

Quasi danza africana – Cantando

South African composer Hendrik Hofmeyr's three movement *'Sonata for Cello and Piano'* was a celebration of some of the cello's greatest characteristics, including its capacity for both tender and intense lyricism and for the evocation of the meditative and the darkly ominous.

The composer, himself, provided a brief introduction to his work.

Hendrik Hofmeyr – composer:

Hendrik was born in Cape Town and his first major composition success came in 1988 with the performance, at the State Theatre, of *'The Fall of the House of Usher'* which won the *South African Opera Competition* and was also awarded the *Nederburg Opera Prize.*

In 1999 he obtained his Doctorate at UCT and subsequently retired as Professor and Head of Composition in 2022. He received the UCT Creative Arts Award for his Second Symphony *'The Elements'* in 2018, and in 2021 a CD of his works entitled *'Partita Africana'* was chosen as *Discovery of the Month* by the French magazine *Classica*. **[DL**

WPB: Owl Richard Morris
The spirit of the mountain: Jan Christiaan Smuts (1923)

Whenever he was in Cape Town and could slip away from his Parliamentary duties, General Smuts found inspiration by climbing Table Mountain.

The following gem of an oration was made when he unveiled the Mountain Club of South Africa War Memorial at Maclear's Beacon on the summit of Table Mountain in February, 1923. It was compared (by a leading article in the 'Cape Times') to the great funeral speech of Pericles and the Gettysburg oration of Abraham Lincoln.

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This is a very unique occasion, and I am glad to see such a great assemblage to do honour to the memory of our sacred dead.

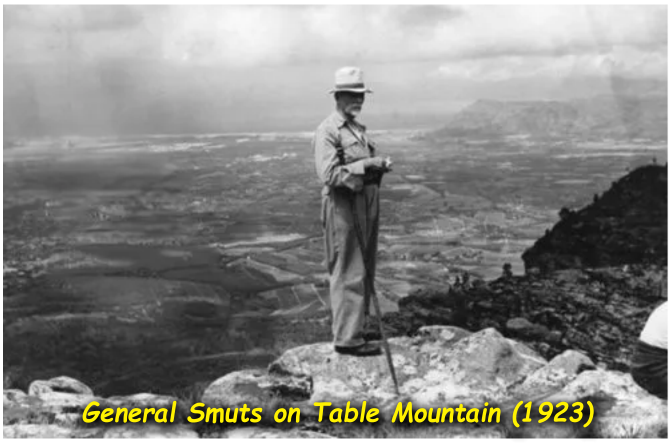
We have gathered here in our thousands, many of us comrades of those who fell. I would especially mention two comrades who were blinded in the war who have taken the trouble to make the ascent of Table Mountain to take part in this ceremony.

Owl Richard Morris

Those whose memory we honour today lie buried in the battlefields of the Great War, where they fell. But this is undoubtedly the place to commemorate them.

Nothing could be more fitting and appropriate than this memorial which *The Mountain Club of South Africa* has erected to the memory of their members who fell in the Great War. And this, the highest point on Table Mountain, is the place to put the memorial. The sons of the cities are remembered and recorded in the streets and squares of their cities and by memorials placed in their churches and cathedrals. But the mountaineers deserve a loftier pedestal and a more appropriate memorial. To them the true church where they worshipped was Table Mountain. Table Mountain was their cathedral where they heard a subtler music and saw wider visions and were inspired with a loftier spirit.

Here in life they



General Smuts on Table Mountain (1923)

breathed the great air; here in death their memory will fill the upper spaces. And it is fitting that in this cathedral of Table Mountain the lasting memorial of their great sacrifice should be placed. Not down there in the glowing and rich plains, but up here on the bleak and cold mountain tops. As Browning put it:

'Here, here's their place,
Where meteors shoot,
Clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go.'

Here for a thousand years their memory shall blend with these great rock masses and humanise them. The men and women of the coming centuries, who will in ever increasing numbers seek health and inspiration on this great mountain summit, will find here not only the spirit of nature, but also the spirit of man blending with it, the spirit of joy in nature deepened and intensified by the memory of the great sacrifice here recorded.

Geologists tell us that, in the abyss of time, Table Mountain was much more of a mountain than it is today. Then it was more than 18,000 feet high, of which barely one-fifth remains to-day. And in another million years no trace may be left of it. Here there is no abiding city, neither is there an abiding mountain. Human life itself may be but a passing phase of the history of this great globe. But as long as human memory lasts, as long as men and women will remember and be interested in the history of their storied past, so long the Great War (perhaps the greatest in human history) will be remembered, and the memory of the great sacrifices here recorded will endure as part of it.

Standing here today as we do, on the summit of Table Mountain, may I add a few words in reference to the spirit of the place?

The attraction of the mountains for us points to something very significant and deep in our natures. May I illustrate the matter by a little story which is not quite true, but neither is it entirely mythical, as it finds some support in the testimony of science.

Once upon a time, in the far-off beginnings of things, the ancestors of the present human race lived far down in deep blue pools of the ocean, amid the slimy ooze from which they had themselves sprung. There they lived and developed a long time, and in the sounds of the sea, in the rhythm of the waters, and of the rising and falling tides, they learnt that sense of music which is so mysterious a faculty in us, and which is in a much smaller degree shared by so many marine animals.

The music in a seashell pressed to our ear carries us back to the very beginnings of life on this planet. It is a far-off echo of our most ancient experience as living things. As our ancestors thrived and developed, they gradually found the pressure of the waters too much for them. They felt stifled and longed for more freedom to breathe. And so they rose slowly onto the beaches, and finally emerged into the air on the seashore. What a blessed relief was there, what an unconscious sense of lightness and exaltation! No longer submerged in the stifling depths, but with full lungs expanding in the invigorating air. The rising from the sea was the most glorious advance in the forward march of terrestrial life. But it was not enough.

The same process of development and advance continued on the seashore. In the course of time the heavy air of the sea levels became too much for the ever-forward movement of the forms of life. The pressure on the lungs was too great, and the forward movement seemed to be arrested in a sort of atmospheric morass, in which a great heaviness hung on the spirit of life. At this stage a new great advance was registered. The rise to higher levels took place. Some animals developed wings with which they could fly upward and for longer or shorter periods remain in the high places and breathe a keener air. And in this rise they shook off their ancient sluggishness and lethargy, and developed a spirit of joy which had hitherto been unknown to them. The skylark, rising in an ecstasy of song high up into the air, is an illustration of the new great advance.

Other forms of life developed other means of locomotion and of ascent from the heavy low levels. As the dull, dead-weight was removed from the lungs a new sense of lightness, of progress, of joy and gladness dawned on the ever higher rising forms of life. The great relief was not only of a physical character, but had the most far-reaching and spiritual values. And so it has come about that finally in man all moral and spiritual values are expressed in terms of altitude. The low expresses degradation, both physical and moral. If we wish to express great intellectual or moral or spiritual attainments, we use the language of the altitudes. We speak of men who have risen, of aims and ideals that are lofty, we place the seat of our highest religious ideals in high heaven, and we consign all that is morally base to nethermost hell. Thus, the metaphors embedded in the English language reflect but the realities of the progress of terrestrial life.

The Mountain is not merely something externally sublime. It has a great historic and spiritual meaning for us. It stands for us as the ladder of life. Nay, more, it is the great ladder of the soul, and in a curious way the source of religion. From it came the Law, from it came the Gospel in the Sermon on the Mount. We may truly say that the highest religion is the Religion of the Mountain.

What is that religion? When we reach the mountain summits, we leave behind us all the things that weigh heavily down below on our body and our spirit. We leave behind a feeling of weakness and depression. We feel a new freedom, a great exhilaration, an exaltation of the body no less than of the spirit. We feel a great joy. The Religion of the Mountain is in reality the religion of joy, of the release of the soul from the things that weigh it down and fill it with a sense of weariness, sorrow and defeat. The religion of joy realises the freedom of the soul, the soul's kinship to the great creative spirit and its dominance over all the things of sense. As the body has escaped from the overweight and depression of the sea, so the soul must be released from all sense of weariness, weakness and depression arising from the fret, worry and friction of our ongoing daily lives.

We must feel that we are above it all, that the soul is essentially free, and in freedom realises the joy of living. And when the feeling of lassitude and depression and the sense of defeat advances upon us, we must repel it, and maintain an equal and cheerful temper.

We must fill our daily lives with the spirit of joy and delight. We must carry this spirit

MCSA War Memorial at Maclear's Beacon, Table Mountain into our daily lives and tasks. We must perform our work not grudgingly and as a burden imposed on us, but in a spirit of cheerfulness, goodwill and delight in it. Not only on the mountain summits of life, not only on the heights of success and achievement, but down in the deep valleys of drudgery, of anxiety and defeat, we must cultivate this great spirit of joyous freedom and uplift of the soul.

We must practise the religion of the mountain down in the valleys also. This may sound a hard doctrine, and it may be that only after years of practice are we able to triumph in spirit over the things that weigh and drag us down. But it is the nature of the soul, as of all life, to rise, to overcome, and finally to attain complete freedom and happiness. And if we consistently practise the religion of the mountain we must succeed in the end.

To this great end Nature will co-operate with the soul.

The mountains uphold us and the stars beckon to us.

The mountains of our lovely land will make a constant appeal to us to live the higher life of joy and freedom.

Table Mountain, in particular, will preach this great gospel to the myriads of toilers in the valley below.

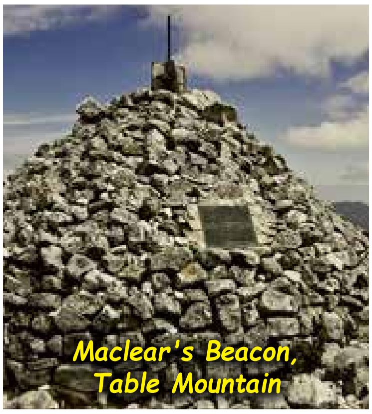
And those, whether members of the Mountain Club of South Africa or not, who make a habit of ascending Table Mountain's beautiful slopes in their free moments, will reap a rich reward not only in bodily health and strength but also in an inner freedom and purity in an habitual spirit of delight which will be the crowning glory of their lives.

May I express a hope that, in the many years to come, this Memorial will draw the myriads who live down below to breathe the purer air and become better men and women.

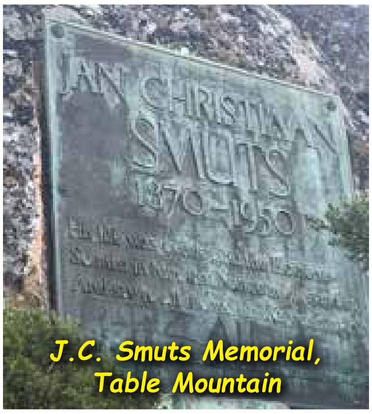
Their spirits will join with those already up here, and it will make us all purer and nobler in spirit and better citizens of the country. ***[RM/JCS***

.oOo.

This memorable speech was presented at the dedication of the War Memorial of The Mountain Club of South Africa at Maclear's Beacon, Table Mountain, on 25th February 1923, by General The Right Honourable Jan Christiaan Smuts, OM, CH, DTD, ED, KC, FRS, Prime Minister of South Africa between 1919-1924 and again between 1939-1948.



Maclear's Beacon, Table Mountain



J.C. Smuts Memorial, Table Mountain

J.C. Smuts, mountaineer

J.C. Smuts, statesman/warrior

No doubt the inspiration for Jan Christiaan Smuts' epic oration: 'The spirit of the mountain'

REMINDER
The First Owl Club COLLOQUIUM
Wednesday 14th June

All Owls should please note that the first **Colloquium** of **The Owl Club** will take place in the **Pavilion** at **Kelvin Grove Club** at **09:30** for **10:00** on **Wednesday, 14th June 2023**.

The event will last for approximately two hours and Owls are then free to enjoy lunch in the Terrace Restaurant (at their own expense).

A R50 fee, payable via EFT or cash at the door,will be charged for a tea and coffee service.

The theme of the first **Colloquium** will be ***'Is the post-Covid balance sheet positive or negative?'.***

A series of short talks will be given by several Owls on the impacts of the Covid pandemic, both positive and negative, on meetings, conferences, commerce, the medical profession, formal and informal education, music and the performing arts, and the environment, followed by focussed discussion and debate.

Guests are welcome.

Owls are encouraged to support this important initiative.

Remember the date.

The first Colloquium will be held, at Kelvin Grove Club, on Wednesday 14th June at 9:30 for 10:00 am.

ENQUIRIES/BOOKIMGS

Please urgently contact Owl Mike Bruton on either (c) 083 212 7609 or (e) mikefishesbruton@gmail.com.

The global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was first reported on 31st December 2019 by the World Health Organization following an outbreak of pneumonia cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has been confirmed as the causative virus of COVID-19. Three-and-a-half years' later, what has been learned and how has the COVID-19 pandemic changed our lives?

Follow in the famous footsteps of J.C. Smuts

Owl Excursion to the memorials at Maclear's Beacon: Time 2-to-3 hours
Wednesday 21st June 2023

At the winter solstice on **Wednesday 21st June 2023** Owl **Richard Morris** will lead a sortie of interested and suitably agile Owls and nesting partners across the top of Table Mountain. This will take-in **Maclear's Beacon** (originally built in 1844 as a triangulation station and restored in 1979 on the centenary of the death of Thomas Maclear), the **memorial to The Mountain Club of South Africa members** who died in World War I (as unveiled by General Smuts on 25th February 1923) and also the nearby **plaque commemorating the life of Smuts.**

Meet at the Lower Cable Station at 11:30 for 12:00. Discounted Cable Car return tickets for **Pensioners** are available at the very reasonable sum of **R110** (upon production of your RSA ID). Ensure you are appropriately equipped with warm gear and bring a snack and hot drink in a flask for a short pause at or about the summit.

If the weather looks to be unduly adverse, then the trip will be postponed. You will be advised of such postponement by 22:00 on the evening beforehand. If necessary, the postponement will be by one week to Wednesday 28th June 2023 at the same time.

RSVP to < *rmorris003@gmail.com* > by 14th June 2023 and include the names of participants and their mobile numbers.

An observation from Owl Paul Murray (Archivist)
So, what's changed in the past 100 years?

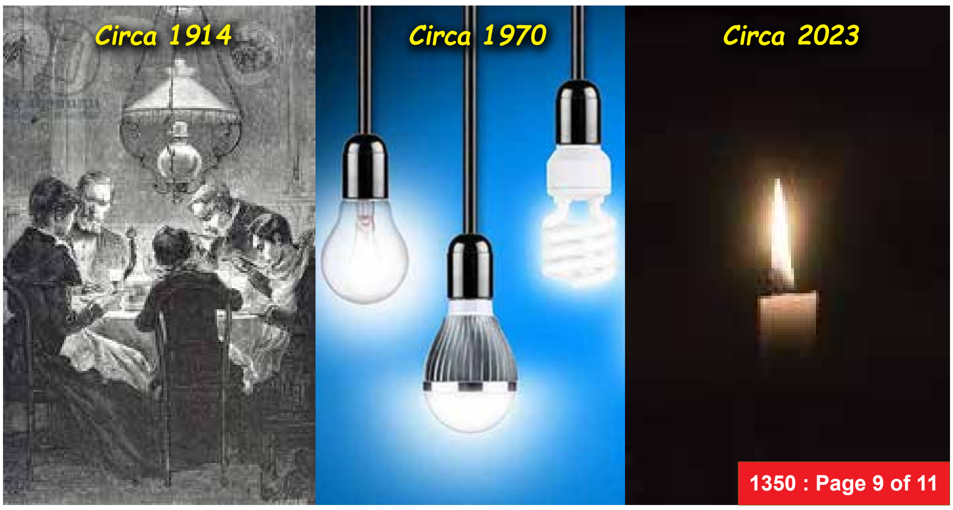
Precious records of **The Owl Club** stored in the National Archives, Roeland Street *(Archive A1532)* contain information that is as relevant today as it was then. Especially considering that it was 100 years ago (in 1923) that Eskom was founded.

In 1914, the Club met in the York Room on the Grand Parade. As the venue was very noisy, it was decided to relocate to new premises which were the first floor of an old building at 42 Burg Street (which has now been demolished) and the venue is described thus: *'The old-fashioned chamber, with its dark, heavy-beamed ceiling, its picture-decorated walls, and its perfect seclusion from street sounds, proved an almost ideal haunt for the night birds, and undoubtedly played its part in the steady revival which occurred in the fortunes of the Club'.*

The venue is further described with its flagged marble passage, a flight of stairs, the ancient teak door which admitted on to a *'long, low gallery whose cross-beams were black with age'* as well as oil lamps which were suspended from the beams (subsequently replaced by electric lights to the dismay of some members).

With the current plight of electrical power in our country, one wonders how much has really changed?

We must, however, be eternally grateful to Kelvin Grove Club for 'keeping The Owl Club enlightened'. *[PM*



Members' News

GALA DINNER

The June meeting will be the 1 350th Meeting of the Club and will be a GALA DINNER.

This means one thing in particular: that the Club opens itself to and welcomes, no encourages, Owls' wives/ husbands/partners to join the Parliament, to give the curious and the doubters an opportunity to share the fellowship of an Owl Club meeting. The programme for the June meeting is as the programme often is, eclectic and the music will be by the always popular Matthew Reid and his ensemble. We do hope that we will see a strong turnout of Owls accompanied by wives/husbands/ partners on the 3rd Tuesday of June, just a day before the longest night – a good time and a good way to celebrate mid-winter and prepare for the hibernial solstice on the afternoon of Wednesday 21st June, when the South Pole is furthest away from the sun!

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COLLOQUIA

The first Colloquium will be held on: Wednesday 14th June at 9:30 for 10:00.

The theme of the first **Colloquium** will be

'Is the post-Covid balance sheet positive or negative?'

Owls will receive a special notice giving details of this event. But please note: if you plan to attend you must please confirm with Owl **Mike Bruton** in good time, at:
< *mikefishesbruton@gmail.com* >

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FLOWN TO A HIGHER PERCH

Two long-standing Owls have flown to a higher perch.

Owl **Brian Warner** was an Owl for over 50 years (elected in 1972), a past President, an Hon Life Member of the Club and a frequent contributor to our assemblies.

He made important contributions to astronomy and his enthusiasm and curiosity led him to make many other contributions. One (and only one) example was his publication, with Owl **John Rourke** of the *Flora Herscheliana* published by the *Brenthurst Press*.

Owl **Dennis Worrall** was an Owl for 20 years having been nominated by Owls **Frikkie Botha** and **D B Sole**, both veterans of the diplomatic service. He died on 18th May, a day short of his 94th birthday. Owl Dennis was a political scientist who served as a Senator and then an MP and became one of the founding members of the *Democratic Party.*

He had previously served as South Africa Ambassador to Australia and after that to the Court of St James. He was a loyal Owl, and we were privileged to have him dine with the Club on three occasions last year – well into his 93rd year.

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ASPIRANT OWLS

The Committee is pleased to advise the Parliament that it has received nominations, accompanied by informative CVs, from the following four persons and, having duly considered same, believe that all four will make worthy Owls and has therefore unanimously agreed to notice them.

• **Michael Beckurts**: (Hyslop/Amoore: Arts).

• **Steve Broekmann**: (Ashmead/Amoore: Literature & Music).

• **John Roos**: (James/Lindhorst: Science)

• **Stefan le Jeune**: (D le Jeune/JP van Niekerk: Science).

Any Owl wishing to give any information that she or he may feel relevant to the candidacy of any of these candidates is invited to contact either the President or the Secretary on or before 25th June 2023.

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EXCURSIONS

Watch this space!

The Committee is pleased to report that it will be organising a series of excursions that it believes may be of interest to a small number – and perhaps a larger number that the Committee expects – to follow up talks delivered at the monthly meeings (in cases where an excursion is relevant).

The first two excursions will be:

(i) A walk to **Maclear's Beacon**, from the upper Cable Station on Table Mountain (to follow up the May WPB), See page no.9 in this Notice for further details, and:

(ii) A visit to **MasiSports** in Masiphumelele, (about which Vince van der Bijl spoke so eloquently' in April). Details to follow in a special note to all Owls. ***[HA***

.oOo.

Owl Peter Hyslop & Michael Beckurts: Seen & noted @ the May meeting

A selection from Owl Peter Hyslop's sketchbook

A selection from Michael Beckurts' sketchbook

Seen & noted @ the May meeting

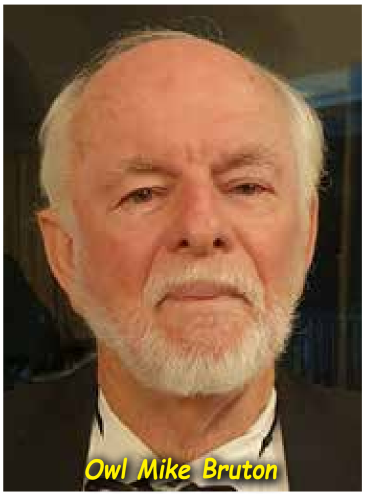

Peter Martens & Hendrik Hofmeyr


'Grogan's Gallery' - Kelvin Grove Club


Owl David Little

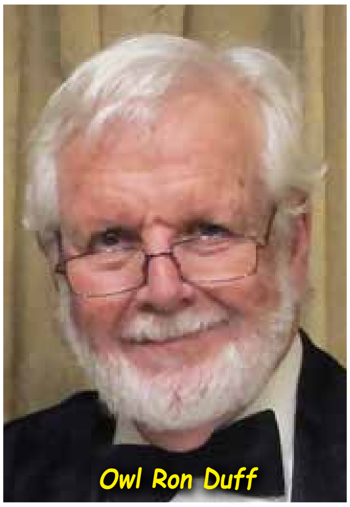

Owl Bruce Dietrich


Owl Mike James

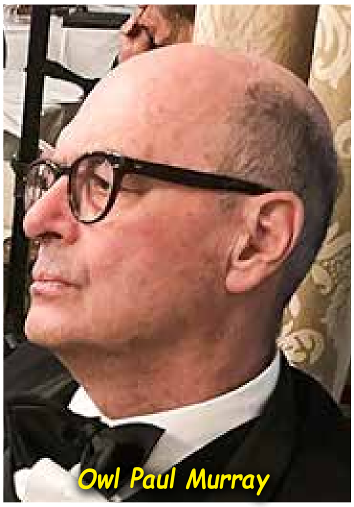

Owl Mike Bruton


Owl Bill Coetzee


Owl Geoffrey Ashmead


Owl Ron Duff


Owl Hugh Amoore


Owl Paul Murray


Owl Mike Broom


Owl Rodney Cottrell


Owl Peter Hyslop


Hendrik Hofmeyr