



Founded 1894

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Committee 2025/2026

President: Mike James

Senior Vice-President: David Little

Junior Vice-President: Nigel Gwynne-Evans

Secretary: Hugh Amoore

Treasurer: Richard Morris

Immediate Past President: Ron Duff

Additional Members: Paul Murray, Julian Wannell, Peter Sutherland, Peter Hyslop, Kevin Rorke, Anthea Serritslev, Martin Hess, Keith Mac Hutchon, Medeé Rall and Kate McCallum.

Honorary Auditor: Geoff Everingham

Dinner bookings:

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Telephone: 021 671 3121

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Treasurer: Richard Morris

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The Owl Club, Standard Bank of South Africa

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The Owl Club

NOTICE

Tuesday 17th February 2026: Notice of meeting #1379

Dear Fellow Owls

The 1379th meeting of The Owl Club will be held on Tuesday 17th February 2026, 6:00 pm for 6:45 pm start, in the Grill Room, Kelvin Grove Club.

Chairman: **President Owl Mike James**

Guest speaker: **Tony Gerrans**, on the topic of: ***"A Better Life For All? How Government & the Law are Failing South Africa's Animals and, Prospects For Change."***

Tony, based in Cape Town, has worked in government, business, and not-for-profits, focusing on agriculture and animal welfare. He advised on land restitution claims and now leads African operations for Humane World for Animals. With a Master's in Animal Law, he presents globally and serves on multiple animal protection boards.

Music: **Classical guitar recital by Sean Owen and Anekin Pockpass.**

Sean and Anekin are contemporaries studying classical guitar at the South African College of Music, part of the Humanities faculty of UCT. Displaying great talent and commitment to their craft, with students such as these, the future of classical guitar in South Africa is in good hands. They will be playing both duets and solo pieces for the Owls and their guests.

WPB: **Owl Clare Stannard** on the topic of: ***"The London Underground: A World First and Marvel of 19th Century Engineering."***

Dinner price: R350.00 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 (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.org.za 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 Sunday 15th February 2026.



December 2025 Meeting

On Tuesday, 9th of December, 78 Owls gathered in the Grill Room, Kelvin Grove, Newlands for the 1378th Meeting of the Owl Club. The proceedings started at 18:45, with Owl Nigel Gwynne-Evans (Junior VP/Acting President) welcoming all and Owl Christopher Gregorowski delivering the Grace. This was followed by a three-course dinner (see page 10 for the menu).

Owl Nigel Gwynne-Evans then congratulated the 19 Owls celebrating birthdays in December. Eight of those were not present: they were Owls Michael Johnson, Karl Jechoutec, Nick Ellenbogen, Bill Coetzee, Leigh McLean, Dirk Durnez, Miguel Tordesillas, and Norman Hooper. The eleven present at the meeting were Octogenarians JP van Niekerk, Ron Duff, Duncan Martin, Sheila Camerer, and Nick Starke. Those past the biblical three score and ten: Owls Andrew Girdwood, Martin Hess and Richard Morris. Archie Swanson turned 70 on 18th December). In addition, younger Owls Gabriel Clark Brown (60 on the 30th) and Ian Sutherland.

As is customary at the Christmas meeting, absent Owls were remembered – those flown to higher perches or nesting elsewhere tonight for whatever reason. Owl JP van Niekerk then proposed the toast to absent Owls.

New Owl Marius Diemont was then (with due ceremony) inducted, welcomed into the fellowship and invited to dwell in harmony with fellow Owls. Owl Nigel Gwynne-Evans then (requesting that guests remained seated) ordered that the lights be dimmed whilst he proposed the traditional Toast to Our Guests.

After the induction, Owl Nigel Gwynne-Evans handed over the chairmanship for the rest of the meeting to Owl David Muller, who introduced the Christmas entertainment programme. The assembled Owls were then treated to a varied programme of music recitals, amusing sketches, a challenging quiz, and much more. This was indeed a most entertaining evening.



On conclusion of the entertainment programme, Owl Nigel Gwynne-Evans then invited Owls to raise their glasses in a Toast to the Owl Club and then wished all a safe flight home.



The Christmas Entertainment Programme.

The first item was *Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus* (Francis Church), ably presented by Owl Ian Sutherland.



Following this, Owl Steve Brokman and his friends Roger Hunter, Norman Faull and Noel Sasman entertained the assembled Owls with their "Barbershop Quartet".



Owls then participated as table groups in a challenging object quiz devised by the indefatigable Owl Mike Bruton.



This was followed by a selection of compositions presented by Owls Julian Wannell (guitar) and Derek Leisegang (vocals), including *Prelude No. 1 in E Minor*, *Blackbird* and *Day in Verona*.

New Owl Solly Moeng then read his brilliantly crafted, and extremely witty piece, *Whispers, Owls and Power Suits* (see pages 5 and 6 for the full text).



After puzzling over the object quiz, there was a short bar break. Once Owl Mike Bruton had announced the results of the quiz, thespian Owl David Muller presented his masterly rendition of Herman Charles Bosman's *Drieke and the Moon*.





Above: Tony Grogan, *Drawing of Owl David Miller in performance.*

Owl Penelope Brown (dressed in appropriate costume) then presented the hilarious *Warning* (by Jenny Joseph).



Finally, an Owlsh adaption of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* (lyrics by Owl Christopher Gregorowski) was heartily sung by the full parliament of Owls accompanied by guest Marga Smith on piano.

Having been suitably entertained by Owl David Miller, the assembled Owls then joined in an "Owlsh Sing-Along", accompanied by Owls Nigel Gwynne-Evans (vocals), Derek Leisegang (vocals), Julian Wannell (guitar) and guest Marga Smith (piano).



Owl Solly Moeng: *Whisperers, Owls, and Power Suits*

Tonight, dear Owls, I take the floor,
A rookie still – though not quite raw.
Freshly plucked and somewhat green,
Solly's the name – my suit still clean!
Inducted only weeks ago, fair and square,
I've found my spot in this wise old lair.
Yet as I stand to address you now,
The moonlight outside is but a Cape Town
glow –
So please forgive each stumble or slip,
It's just my nerves – give this rookie a tip!
Now, by trade, I am a "whisperer" –
To ministers, moguls, and management
emperors.
My job: to guide, cajole, remind,
Measure each word, and soft rewind.
First, the good – let's count the ways:
A whisperer savours democracy's rays.
Trusted by leaders, wielding respect,
I help them articulate, pause, and reflect.
I'm offered coffee, sometimes wine,
And on lucky nights, a seat near the brine.
Their problems confided, secrets revealed,
And with practised care, reputations
healed!
Sometimes, my phrase becomes policy
law,
Or interview soundbite without a flaw.
On very rare days, I too wield "power":
Like saying "Mr/Ms/President XX, perhaps
not this how..."
But friends, let's nod to the flip side's
frown:
For every victory, there's a chance to
drown.

Advice often taken – with a generous grain
– And when things implode, guess who's to
blame?
If a headline goes rogue, or the message is
missed,
They'll ask, "Who whispered? What gist
was dissed?"
Speech drafts revised and spun on the run
–
And if it all crashes, my work is... done.
The inbox explodes, WhatsApps at dawn,
"Please fix my crisis, rewrite my con."
They'll want me to conjure a fairy tale,
With PowerPoint magic – no chance to fail!
Ah, now the ugly! The real "hoot":
Lobbyists lurking in bespoke suits.
There's always a cousin with something to
push,
Or a nephew who yearns for a diplomatic
cush.
Spin doctors swarm as scandals brew,
Whisperers, too, must dodge what's untr-
ue.
Navigating egos, agendas, and rum,
Sometimes I wish I'd just stayed mum!
Leaders in Limos, promises galore –
"Solly, my friend, just one whisper more!"
They hear what they like, they see what
they choose,
And sometimes the whisperer's duty is ...
amuse!
But here in these venerable Owl's Club
halls,
Perspective reigns and history calls.
Tonight, I hoot not for mighty applause,



But to show what it means to
“whisper” (with cause).

So, fellow Owls, let’s toast the night!

Raise glasses – not egos in gentle delight.

May we cherish the wisdom, dodge the BS,

And “manage” our reputations with wit and
finesse!

If my words brought even half a smile,

Or a hoot or clap – from the wise old owl –

It’s beginner’s luck, not guru’s fate:

Just your newest Owl, learning to navigate!

So, here’s to the whisperers, the jokers,
the guests,

To leaders prescribed – and advice that
arrests.

For in this club, where all good Owls dwell,

Even rookies, like me, have a tale to tell!



Seen & Noted at the December Meeting



Above: Owl JP van Niekerk presenting the toast to absent Owls.



Above left: Tony Grogan, *Drawing of New Owl Marius Diemont.*



Above right: Tony Grogan, *Drawing of Owl Nigel Gwynne-Evans.*



Members' News

Owl Club Membership

The Committee is pleased to announce the election as an Owl of Verwey Wiese (Proposer Owl Morris and seconded by Owl Tyrrell). Owls may recognise the name: Verwey has been Hon Auditor to the Club for the past decade!

Two distinguished Owls of long standing – both past presidents and both honorary life members have flown to higher perches: Owl Owen Kinahan had been ill for a long time and had valiantly kept the grim reaper at bay. Owl JP van Niekerk – who was in his 90th year and who proposed the toast to absent Owls at the Christmas meeting – died while undergoing surgery two days later. Tributes will be paid to them at the AGM in the customary Owl Club manner.

New Owl Marius Diemont was inducted at the December meeting. We look forward to the induction of new members Owl Silberberg and Wiese at upcoming meetings.

Owl Club Committee for 2026/2027 and the AGM on 17 March 2026

The Owls are invited to consider joining the Committee in 2026.

The Committee has not yet identified an Owl able and willing to take over the role of Secretary Bird in 2026: Volunteers please.

A notice has been issued about nominations and about motions for the AGM to be held on 17 March 2026: nominations and notices of motion must reach the Secretary by 21 February 2026.

Owl Club Subscription for 2026

A reminder to a small number of Owls: The annual subscription of R420 was due and payable on 1 January 2026.

Kelvin Arrangements

Kelvin has given the Club notice that the Grill Room may be out of commission at some stage this year: Kelvin has plans to refurbish the Grill Room and this may make it necessary for the Club to meet in the Ball Room while this work is done.



Seen & Noted at the December Meeting



Above: Owl Julian Wannell in performance.



Above: Owls puzzling over the objects presented as part of the quiz devised by Owl Mike Bruton.





**The Owl Club
Tuesday 9 December 2025
The 1378th Meeting**

Presiding: Owl Nigel Gwynne Evans

Dinner @ 6.45 pm

Grace: Owl Christopher Gregorowski



Food for thought:

The Toast to Absent Friends
It has for more years than most current Owls can remember the practice at our Christmas meeting to include a "A toast to absent friends" in the programme.

This is by tradition a way of honouring and remembering absent Owls - whether due to death, infirmity, travel, or other circumstances - of celebrating their memory and of recalling time spent with the absent Owl or Owls.

For some it is poignant; for others, a means of connecting.



**The Owl Club
Tuesday, 9th December 2025**

Starter

Butternut soup

Main Course

Roast Turkey

Served with sweet potato rocket and cranberry sauce

Dessert

Berry Pavlova

Mince pie

Filter Coffee