



The Owl Club

NOTICE

Tuesday 15th September 2026: Notice of meeting #1386

Founded 1894
Visit our website at
www.owls.org.za

for current notice, back notices,
Constitution (as amended 2026),
In Memoriam 1894-2023,
list of members and more.

Committee 2026/2027

President: Nigel Gwynne-Evans
Senior Vice-President:

Anthea Serritslev

Junior Vice-President: Kevin Rorke

Secretary: Gabriel Clark-Brown

Scribe: Keith MacHutchon

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Mike James

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Derek Leisegang, Julian Wannell,

Peter Sutherland, Martin Hess and

Medeé Rall

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This month's edition:

Editor: Dirk Kemp

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Martin Hess & Julian Wannell

Drawings: Gemini (a la Giacomelli)

Tony Grogan & Michael Beckurts

Photography:

Alan Lindhorst and Mike Bruton

Dear Fellow Owls,

We look forward to the pleasure of your company at the 1386th meeting of The Owl Club, which is to be held on Tuesday, 15th September 2026 and will be preceded by dinner, in the Grill Room, Kelvin Grove Club, Cape Town 6:00 pm for 6:45 pm start.

Guest Speaker:

Antjie Krog on the topic of:

Sounds from "Blood's Inner Rhyme" and "Pillage".

Internationally acclaimed and translated Afrikaans poet, writer and UWC Professor Emeritus Antjie Krog will read from her latest volume of poetry, *Pillage*, and from her last book, *Blood's Inner Rhyme*.

Music:

VOX Cape Town, led by Dr John Woodland:

"The city's most innovative choral collective" brings its director John Woodland and twelve choristers to perform an eclectic mix of choral music for the delight of the Owls and their guests.

Waste Paper Basket (WPB):

Owl Roger Silberberg

The Birdman

Roger is exploring the pioneering work of his grand-uncle in the field of bio-acoustics. He will introduce the first recording of a bird, done in 1889 on an Edison wax cylinder phonograph. Recordings of some 180 different wild birds are now preserved in the archives of the BBC and the Science Museum, London.

Dinner fee: R380 Dress: Black tie
(or similarly elegant attire).

Reservations & Payments:

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.

Your confirmation or payment email is essential:

Please send details of: (1) your name and names of guest/s
(2) Proof of payment ("Pop")

(3) your or your guest's **special dietary needs** (4) if you are using a dining credit. Failing this, some payments only reflect after the meeting — hence the Owls who have paid, but not sent this "Pop email", may find themselves without a perch.

You are welcome to address questions to the Secretary Bird.

All bookings will be acknowledged.

Bookings will close at 6:00 pm on Sunday, 13 September 2026.



August 2026 Meeting

On Tuesday, 18th August 2026, 57 Owls and 9 guests gathered in The Grove Restaurant, Kelvin Grove, Newlands for the 1385th Meeting of the Owl Club. The proceedings started at 18:45, with Owl President Nigel Gwynne-Evans welcoming all and Owl Kate McCallum delivering the Grace. There followed a three-course dinner (see page 13 for the menu). At the end of the meal, the Owl President proposed the Loyal Toast "to South Africa".

President Nigel Gwynne-Evans welcomed all present and celebrated the "Birthday Owls" in the customary manner. He read the names of the 13 Owls whose birthdays are in August.: Craig Strang, Barbara Hughes, George Ellis, Peter Lever, Rod Clayton, Maciej Soltynski, Grant Tarr, Patrick Woudt, Anthea Serritslev, Roxane Mather, Mark Palmer Edgecumbe, and John Freeth.

There were no new Owls, but the meeting marked the return of Owl Rodney Trudgeon, who was officially re-inducted into the Club, (For more about Owl Rodney see page 6).

Owl President Nigel then proposed the traditional toast to "Our guests", before introducing the guest speaker for the evening. Dr John Woodland, a distinguished academic scientist, who also broadcasts on Fine Music Radio and leads VOX Cape Town, spoke on "The Connected Mind: Music, Synaesthesia and Creative Thinking". This was a fascinating exploration of the intersection between sensory perception and artistic innovation. Dr Woodland illuminated how synaesthesia influenced the creative output of composers as varied as Franz Liszt, Jean Sibelius, Hans Zimmer and Duke

Ellington. He encouraged the audience to adopt a synaesthetic approach (even if they were not synaesthetes), relating insights into how this can foster creativity across diverse disciplines.

The Chorister Robin, Owl Julian Wannell, then introduced The Lutesong Consort. This celebrated ensemble, key to South Africa's early music scene, provided an exquisite performance of 16th and 17th-century repertoire, which was received with great appreciation.

A 20-minute bar interval – the time-honoured opportunity for the social discourse and fellowship that the Owl Club cherishes – separated the two halves of the musical performance, which concluded with a warm expression of thanks to principal members Rosamund Roth and Lente Louw.

The Waste Paper Basket was "filled" by Owl Professor Mike James. Titled "Fierce Creatures: A Critical Care Experience," the talk was as riveting as it was harrowing. Owl Mike shared personal insights from his time in the critical care unit, detailing the treatment of patients following adverse encounters with wild animals, including a black mamba, an elephant, a gaboon viper, a baboon, and a lion. The talk provided a gripping perspective on the fragility of life and some high and low moments faced by those working in his field.

To close, the President proposed the final toast "to the Owl Club" and wished Owls and guests "a safe flight home" and invited all, in the recently revived Owl Club tradition, to join the Midnight Owls to enjoy further hospitality and conversation long into the night.



Drawings by Owl Tony Grogan of (L-to-R) Re-Inducted Owl, Rodney Trudgeon; Guest Speaker, Dr John Woodland; and IPP Owl Prof Mike James



John Woodland: The connected mind: music, synaesthesia & creative thinking

Dr John Woodland's talk to the Owl Club's August meeting unfolded as a rich tapestry of ideas, blending history, science, and artistry into a coherent narrative about the phenomenon of synaesthesia and its profound implications for human creativity. He began by challenging his audience to think beyond the conventional separation of the senses, illustrating how, for the synaesthete, sound and colour are inextricably linked.

Playing a recording by pianist Víkingur Ólafsson, Dr Woodland noted that while most listeners perceive music as sound alone, others – like Ólafsson himself – experience specific musical keys as vibrant, distinct colours. He explained that this is not metaphorical; synaesthesia is a genuine, involuntary mingling of the senses, with modern neuroscience now validating these experiences as real differences in perception.

Dr Woodland traced the historical footprints of this condition, illuminating how it has quietly shaped the creative processes of some of history's greatest figures. Franz Liszt once baffled his orchestra by asking them to play "a little bluer," a request that makes perfect sense when one understands the deeply visceral nature of his connection between sound and visual experience. Amy Beach, a child prodigy, associated keys with colours so strongly that transposing her work unsettled her, while

Jean Sibelius experienced sound and colour fused in a way that he felt compelled to keep private, fearing ridicule. These examples, Dr Woodland argued, demonstrate that synaesthetic associations are not merely curiosities but profound expressions of a unique creative mind.

To deepen the audience's understanding, Dr Woodland shared insights from his own choral ensemble, Vox. He described their experiments with multisensory performances – incorporating candles, incense, coffee, and even a windmill – designed to heighten attentiveness and deepen immersion. He noted that such integrations are not gimmicks but thoughtful reflections on research showing that visual impressions fundamentally influence how we judge sound, whether in a choir's performance or a conductor's baton. He extended this analysis to an array of twentieth- and twenty-first-century figures: Helene Grimaud's

experience of keys as textures; Leonard Bernstein's visual sensitivity to music; Hans Zimmer's need to see landscapes before composing scores to accompany movie scenes; and Duke Ellington, who treated his orchestra as an artist's palette, describing *timbre* as fabric and colour.

The talk bridged the gap between synaesthesia and broader scientific inquiry. Dr Woodland recalled a wine seminar where food colouring added to white wine caused tasters to describe it with the qualities of red, illustrating how expectation shapes perception. He suggested that even non-synaesthetes make consistent cross-sensory connections, and that the ultimate lesson is not to strive to become synaesthetic, but to cultivate "synaesthetic sensitivity." He pointed to the example of Alexander Borodin – a chemist and composer who moved fluently between molecules and melodies – as a model for this habit of mind. Borodin's achievement, Dr Woodland noted, lay in his ability to recognise patterns and relationships across disparate disciplines, an approach that enriches both science and art.

Dr Woodland concluded by reflecting on the wider implications of this mindset in an age increasingly divided into rigid categories. He lamented the tendency to separate reason from imagination, urging his audience to cultivate curiosity about the connections between seemingly unrelated things. He argued that in a world facing complex problems, the willingness to cross borders – to allow different ways of knowing to speak to one another – is one of the most valuable habits we can develop. It was a measured and imaginative celebration of how paying attention to relationships that others overlook can enrich not only our artistic practice but our perception of the world itself.

At the end of his talk, Dr Woodland walked over to the piano and played a piece to illustrate what he had been saying. Owl Lindhorst captured this and you can watch and listen to his [short video clip here](#).

Drawing by Owl Michael Beckuts; Photographs by Alan Lindhorst



Music Notes - The Lutesong Consort

Unusual and mesmerising music was presented by two prominent members of The Lutesong Consort, Lente Louw (mezzo soprano) and Rosamund Roth (viola da gamba).

Introducing their performance, Lente prepared the audience for an experience of mostly 16th/17th century music.

Rosamund demonstrated the versatility of her early instrument, masterfully playing and plucking the viol with its specific, unusual timbre.

The music – 11 pieces (one instrumental piece and songs in Italian,

French and English languages – covered the 16th and 17th centuries.

Lente's vocal range and interpretation brought the various pieces to life.



At times playful, at other times melancholic, we heard the gentle ballad; the playful teaser, the boisterous and the solemn, voice and instrument complementing each other perfectly.

The duo ended their delightful performance with a 20th century French chanson ('Dis, quand reviendras-tu'

– “Tell me when you are coming back”) – which perfectly reflected the attitude of the audience towards these gifted artists, who allowed us to savour an unusual and welcome taste of early music.



Drawing by Michael Beckurts;

Photographs by Owls Mike Bruton (above) and Alan Lindhorst (centre)

Announcement of the 8th Owl Club colloquium

Xenophobia is the subject of the Owl Club's 8th colloquium to be held on on Friday morning **6 November 2026** from 10h00 to 12h30 at the Kelvin Grove Club .

Peter Fabricius and Owl Solly Moeng will speak on the topic '**Xenophobia. How serious is the problem, what can be done about it?**'

If you wish to participate in this colloquium, please confirm by email to Owl Mike Bruton at mikefishesbruton@gmail.com. Further details will be sent to all confirmed attendees in October. Owls are welcome to bring guests.

Owls are encouraged to support this 8th Colloquium and to suggest topics for possible future Owl Club colloquia.

Owl Club Notices

The following applications for membership have been received and are under consideration by your Committee.

- Chris Nicklin (Science and Music) – to be inducted at the September meeting)
- Dr Bradley Bordiss (Music) and
- Gill Grose (Literature)

Any Owl who knows any of the applicants and who is in a position to advise the Committee (positively or otherwise) is invited to do so by communication to the Secretary Bird or any other member of the Committee.



A perch of birds (a la Owl Club)

(after Hector Giacomelli with assistance from Gemini)



IPP Owl Mike James began his talk by recalling his career as an anaesthetist in (what was then) Rhodesia, working in a government hospital that dealt with a wide range of emergencies, many of them caused by the wild creatures of the bush. He opened with the case of a young soldier bitten by a black mamba, one of the most venomous snakes in the world. The soldier arrived late in his condition, and some thought he was already dead. Owl Mike and his team detected a faint heartbeat but no breathing. They intubated him and began artificial respiration, then consulted a local expert in snakebite who advised the use of polyvalent antiserum. This serum was effective against most snakes except the boomslang. The soldier, who had been close to death, walked out of hospital four days later, a remarkable recovery that encouraged the team for future cases.

The next case involved a reckless young man who fancied himself an amateur herpetologist and kept a pregnant gaboon viper as a pet. When the snake refused food, he dangled a dead mouse before her, only to be bitten on the hand. His sister, fortunately a doctor, rushed him to hospital. He was abusive, declaring that gaboon viper bites were always fatal and demanding that his death be documented for science. Owl Mike and his colleagues resisted the temptation to comply and instead administered all the polyvalent antiserum available, treating complications of tissue damage, cardiac toxicity, respiratory distress, and clotting disorders. After ten to twelve days the patient improved, though his verbal complaints continued. The rarity of the case led Owl Mike to publish it and present it at a critical care conference in Johannesburg. There he met an American expert in respiratory physiology. Months later, that same expert phoned from Washington, where a teenager had been bitten by a gaboon viper stolen from the zoo. Owl Mike advised on treatment, and the boy recovered. The story made headlines, with newspapers noting that a Zimbabwe doctor had helped save an American teenager's life. Owl Mike wryly described this as his fifteen seconds of fame.

He then recounted an episode from his research, which required large animal models. Baboons were considered vermin in Zimbabwe, and ethical permission was easily obtained. The animals were delivered in cages with sliding bars to allow administration of anaesthetic. His technician, Foster White, a retired jockey, attempted to restrain a baboon but was trapped inside the cage when the mechanism slipped. The baboon was angry, and the situation was dangerous. Owl Mike administered ketamine, which gradually sedated the animal, allowing Foster to escape unharmed. Both man and baboon survived, and

Foster lived to tell the tale.

Another case involved American tourists on a walking safari. Their guide led them too close to elephants, and the alpha male charged. One athletic woman tripped and fell directly in the path of the elephant, which tossed her with its trunk, causing head injury and broken ribs. She was flown to the intensive care unit, placed on a ventilator, and sedated. When she later complained of numbness in her hands when turning her head,

Owl Mike suspected a cervical fracture. X rays confirmed a severe break in her neck. A neurosurgeon repaired the injury, but anaesthesia was complicated by the risk of paralysis. The anaesthetist used succinylcholine, which in immobilized patients can release dangerous potassium. Her heart stopped, but was revived, and she eventually recovered after surgery and rehabilitation, surviving more lives than a clowder of cats.

The most poignant case concerned a nine-year-old girl in a fenceless game park. A lion attacked her, leaving puncture wounds in her neck and damaging her spinal cord. Owl Mike realized she would never walk again. An ethics meeting debated whether to treat her, given the grim prognosis and the harsh realities of Zimbabwe for the severely disabled. Her parents wished for treatment, and she was ventilated, her wounds healed, and she regained movement in her arms, though not her legs. She was sent to rehabilitation. Years later, Owl Mike encountered her in a shopping centre in Harare, in a wheelchair but alive. Her mother expressed gratitude that she had been saved. Owl Mike felt they had made the right decision. Decades later, he learned that she had moved to Australia, married, had children, and become a leading advocate for the disabled, a remarkable story of courage and resilience.

Owl Mike's narrative wove together drama, humour, and pathos. He described the soldier saved from the black mamba, the arrogant amateur who survived a gaboon viper, the American teenager bitten by a stolen snake, the baboon research incident, the tourist trampled by an elephant, and the young girl attacked by a lion to illustrate the challenges of critical care in a land where human life intersected with wild creatures. His stories carried lessons in medical perseverance, ethical dilemmas, and the unpredictable encounters between people and nature. He closed with the uplifting account of the girl who overcame devastating injury to inspire others, a fitting conclusion to a talk that blended danger, tragedy, and hope.

Photograph by Alan Lindhorst



New Owl - Wayne Mudge



Wayne Mudge, a Cape Town-born agricultural entrepreneur, was inducted as an Owl at the July meeting. (His proposer was Nigel Gwynne-Evans and his second Ian Sutherland.) Born in 1968 and educated at Bishops, Wayne read for a B.Sc (Agric) at Stellenbosch University, majoring in Horticulture and Agricultural Economics and graduating with distinction.

After gaining international agricultural marketing experience, Wayne returned to South Africa and established the successful fruit export company, Cape Five Export SA in 1997. His background is deeply rooted in botany and fynbos conservation – a passion sparked in his youth when he rediscovered and named a rare Protea species, *Leucadendron globosum* – for which he received significant conservation awards.

He maintains diverse interests in foreign affairs, international politics, a deep interest in and love for classical music, especially composers from the Baroque period; and mountaineering – he has been a member of the Mountain Club for nearly 40 years.



Returning Owl Rodney Trudgeon celebrates 50 years in music broadcasting

The Owl Club is delighted to welcome back a familiar friend and one of South Africa's most cherished cultural figures, Rodney Trudgeon. As he marks an incredible five decades in broadcasting, we take this opportunity to celebrate a career that has enriched our national musical landscape.

Owl Rodney, currently the Programme Manager and host of the Classic Breakfast show on Fine Music Radio (FMR) in Cape Town, has long been a fixture in the classical music world.

His journey began not behind a microphone, but as a professional flautist with the Durban Symphony Orchestra. This musical foundation has undoubtedly informed his deep empathy and insight when interviewing world-renowned artists such as Yehudi Menuhin, Joshua Bell, and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa on his flagship programme, "*People of Note*".

Beyond the studio, Rodney's dedication is equally impressive. As an author, his book *Rodney Trudgeon's Concert Notes: A Selection of Favourite Orchestral Masterpieces* remains an essential guide for music lovers, demystifying nearly 250 complex works. He is also a regular presence on the concert stage, providing insightful pre-concert talks for the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra.

In 2026, Rodney continues to share his passion through his live event series, "Behind The Music". Members are encouraged to catch the final instalment of this celebratory series, *The Third Movement*, taking place at the Artscape Opera Bar this September. We are honoured to have such a distinguished voice within our Parliament of Owls and look forward to his continued contributions to the cultural life of Cape Town and The Owl Club.



New Owl - Debbie de Bastos

Deborah de Bastos, a Chartered Accountant, CA(SA) was proposed by Owl John Hund, following their meeting through the Friends of the S A Museum; and seconded by Sheila Camerer.

Debbie was born and grew up in Zimbabwe but emigrated to South Africa in 1982. She articulated at Deloitte, studied part-time at Rhodes University and completed her Post Graduate

Diploma in Accounting and passed the Board examination in 1989.

Deborah served as an audit manager for Deloitte and then worked in various roles at Woolworths Head Office before retiring in 2018.

Her broad-ranging interests include science, history, arts, and politics; and Debbie remains actively engaged with University of the 3rd Age (U3A), UCT Summer School and Lockdown University.





1385th Meeting of The Owl Club

Tuesday 18 August 2026 @ 6:45 pm

Owl President: Owl Nigel Gwynne-Evans

Order of events

Grace by Kate McCallum

Dinner

The Owl President: *A Toast to South Africa*

5 Minute Break for tables to be cleared

1385th meeting of The Owl Club

Announcements: The Owl President

Owls celebrating Birthdays in August

Returning Owl: Owl Rodney Trudgeon

The Owl President *Toast to our guests*

Guest speaker

Dr John Woodland: *The Connected Mind: Music, Synaesthesia and Creative Thinking*

Music Program:1 & 2

The Lutesong Consort

Lente Louw (*mezzo soprano*) and

Rosamund Roth (*viola da gamba*)

- A break of 20 minutes between programs -

Waste Paper Basket (WPB)

IPP Owl Professor Mike James

Fierce Creatures: a critical care experience

Owl President: *A Toast to the Owl Club, and a Good Flight Home:*

NEW: The Midnight Owls: You are all warmly welcome to join our post - meeting: wine and chat - till late experience.



Grace

by Kate McCallum

For the meal we are about to eat,

For those who made it possible,

And for those with whom we are about to share it,

May we be filled with gratitude.

- MENU -

Starter

Vegetable spring roll served with pickled ginger on sweet chili sauce

Main course

Roast Lamb, roast potatoes and vegetables

Pudding

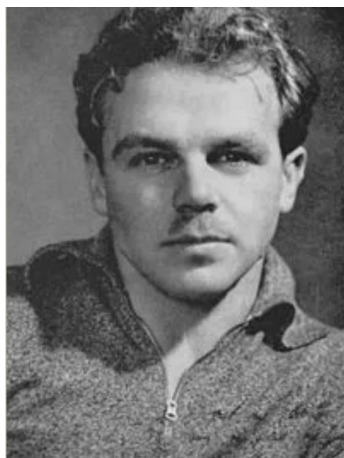
Vanilla crème Brûlée

Filter Coffee



The Grove - Photograph by Owl Alan Lindhorst

Food for thought



Uys Krige (1910 – 1987)

Do you know the sea, Sir, do you know the sea?
Or: The fish is expensive (Die vis is duur)

It looks like your front porch now, polished and calm like
few things down here
but it's more dangerous than flame or fire

Then you say, Sir, the fish is expensive...

What about the storms that never stop raging?
You sit in your kitchen, damp and clammy,
and hear the wind blowing more fiercely, more cruelly
and there's no more wood for your fire

Then you say, Sir, the fish is expensive...

Have you ever been swept off your boat like a feather
by a gray wave high as a prison wall
what good is it to struggle and shout "No No!"
Do you first swallow those waters, salty and sour?

Then you still say, Sir, the fish is expensive...

Do you see the crooked old woman there, Mrs. Mathee,
Who keeps peering far, far over the waves
She thinks the breeze will bring
Her sons back in time for tea
All three of them are sleeping behind the churchyard
wall

Then you still say, Sir, the fish is expensive...



1385th Meeting of The Owl Club Tuesday 18 August 2026 @ 6:45 pm

In Attendance: Owls, Guests and musicians

MAIN TABLE: Nigel Gwynne-Evans x, Gabriel Clark Brown,
Hugh Amore, John Woodland (Speaker), Kate McCallum,
Rodney Trudgeon, Ron Duff, Tony Murray.

TABLE 1: Anthea Serritslev x, Robin Marais, Christopher
Gregorowski, James Michael Hanley, Sebastian Van As,
Sheila Camerer,

TABLE 2: Medee Rall x, Clare Davies, Duncan Martin &
Carien Ras, Geoff Davies, Richard Rosenthal.

TABLE 3: Paul Murray x, Debbie deBastos, Geoffrey Ashmead,
John Freeth, John Hund, Robin Marais.

TABLE 4: Kevin Rorke x & Charles Grey, Helen Boonzaier,
Michael Cherry, Peter Gilchrist, Peter Lever.

TABLE 5: Mike James x, Daya Reddy, Micheal Beckurts,
Tessa Graaf, Wayne Mudge & Luciano Zaina.

TABLE 6: Martin Hess x, Albert Lastovica, Ian Glass &
Hettie Glass, Isabelle Franzen, Norman Smuts.

TABLE 7: Julian Wannell x, Glynis Humphrey, Graham Avery,
Jimmy Baigrie, Richard Morris x & Simone Barnard.

TABLE 8: Derek Leisegang x, Christopher D'A Ussher,
Geof Everingham, John Green, John Van der Linde, Mike Bruton.

TABLE 9: Ian Sutherland, Steve Broekmanns, Alan Lindhorst PP,
Musician 1 PP, Musician 2 PP

* x: Owl Club Committee Member

