



AgulhasNPark eBulletin

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The Southernmost Tip of Africa S34°49'59" E20°00'12"

In 1488 Bartholomeu Dias turned back after he failed to reach the East in search of a trading route. On his return journey he passed a certain flat piece of land on May 16th. He named it after an Irish monk, St Brendan, whose festival day it was: *Ponte de Sao Brendao*.

The Southernmost Tip and shipwrecks

The unpredictable weather and sea along the Cape Agulhas coast were a frightful experience to the early seafarers. It is also believed that the waves at the Southern point are, after those at Cape Horn, the highest in the world, and that the sea-bed is unsafe for ship anchors. Because of these stormy seas, there is a shipwreck every kilometer along the coast. These wrecks influenced the local culture and architecture. There was no natural timber in the area and farmers are reputed to have held prayer sessions for wrecks. The tip and its environs is a marine archaeological heritage site, of which the *Arniston* is but one. Approximately 23 shipwrecks have been recorded along the coastline between L'Agulhas and Die Dam. (SOURCE: Louis Willemse, 2007)



The *Arniston* seconds before disaster 1815 (Image supplied by J. Herbert)

Arniston

The *Arniston*, an East Indiaman of 1 498 tons, under the command of Captain George Simpson, sank on May 30th 1815 under heavy stormy conditions off Waenhuiskrans. It was on its way back from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to England. The sinking of this ship with a loss of 378 lives had a great influence on the history of the Southern Tip area. On board this British Indian Carrier, which served as a trooper, were apart from the wounded soldiers who were on their way back home from Ceylon, 14 women and 25 children. Lord and Lady Molesworth, who were accompanying the four children of Lt Colonel Andrew Gieles, who had been visiting their father in Ceylon, were also passengers. This tragedy happened exactly 200 years ago and a special commemoration is being organized by the Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum and the *Arniston* community. (SOURCE: Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum)

Southern Tip Day Talk and Meal, 15 May 2015

Ora Laubscher will talk about the *Arniston* and Louis Willemse will support with a brief talk on navigation in those days. The meal is served by the *Suiderlig Dienssentrum* in Struisbaai. Proceedings start at 19:00, cost is R90,00 per person and please bring own drinks. Book with Emmerentia at 028-4356078 during office hours or Truida Groenewald at 028-4356340.

"What happened on that tragic night?"

ARNISTON SHIPWRECK BICENTENARY

FRI 29 MAY 2015

LAUNCH
of Jimmy Herbert's book
"What happened on that tragic night?"

18H00 SHIPWRECK MUSEUM
CHEESE & WINE | R80

SAT 30 MAY 2015

HIKE TO THE WRECK
Starts at the Fisherman's Union Hall
Scotch Pipe and Blessing by Bishop with dignitaries

10H00
COMMEMORATIVE OPEN SEA SWIM
From Roman Beach to Main Beach

12H00
SEA RESCUE DEMONSTRATION BY M.S.R.I.

19H00
CAPTAIN SIMPSON'S DINNER & DANCE | R295 PP
ARNISTON SPA HOTEL | BOOKING ESSENTIAL

SUN 31 MAY

WREATH LAYING CEREMONY
Service at Arniston Spa Hotel
Gun salute
Last Reveille by Colophon Pipe Band

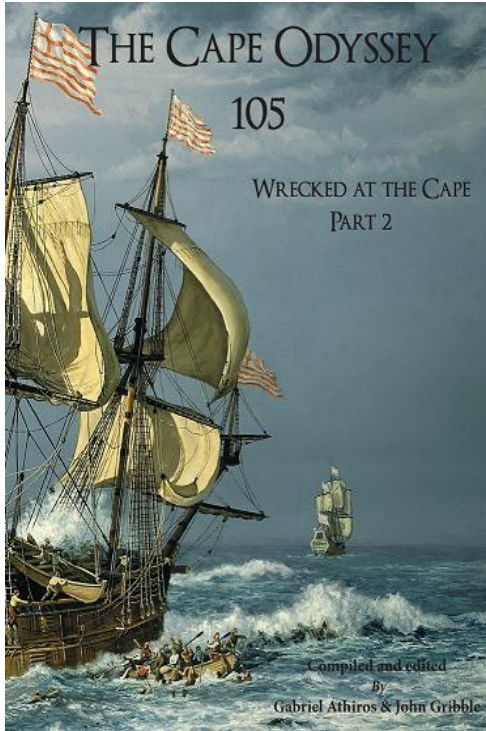
ARNISTON 200
1815-2015
ARNISTON SPA HOTEL

Tickets Sales: Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum | Tel: 028 4241240 | Email: swim@sanparks.co.za

Tel: 028 445 9000 | Email: info@arnistonhotel.com | www.arnistonhotel.com



Connecting to Society



Wrecked at the Cape

South Africa has an extremely rich and internationally significant underwater cultural heritage. Since 1488 the southern tip of Africa has occupied a pivotal position in global economic and maritime affairs, and tens of thousands of vessels from a host of countries have navigated this coast. Some of the worst sea conditions anywhere in the world, combined with human error, inadequate anchorages and the poor physical condition of many of the vessels and their crews by the time they reached South African waters, have left South Africa with a legacy of more than 2400 known shipwrecks. *Wrecked at the Cape Part 2* embraces interesting stories of shipwrecks from Chapman's Peak to Cape Infanta: The Ghost Ship of the Cape, *Schonenberg*, *Colebrooke*, Early Shipwrecks in False Bay, *Joanna*, *Nossa Senhora dos Milagros*, *Meermin*, *Brederode*, *Arniston*, *Birkenhead*, The Letter from Ensign Lucas, *Birkenhead* Survivors, The Legendary Horses of the *Birkenhead*, Salvaged Artefacts of the *Birkenhead*, The Peninsula's Ship Trap, *Kadie*, *RMS Teuton*, Wrecked at the Cape of Needles, The Agulhas Light, *Kakapo*, *Clan Munroe*, *Lusitania*, *MV Tabor*, U-Boat Action on the South African Coast 1942 – 1944, The Wolf Pack of the South Atlantic, *SAS Pietermaritzburg*, The Smitswinkel Graveyard and more!!

(SOURCE: *The Cape Odyssey 105, part 2*. Editors G & J Gribble. 2015. Tokai: Historical Media.)

Southern Tip Walk

On Saturday, May 16th 2015, you are invited to walk from the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse along the coast and imagine what Bartholomeu Dias and his crew would have seen and experienced when they sailed past the southernmost tip of Africa in 1488. There are two options: Short route of about three kilometres – Lighthouse, Historical Southern Tip, along coast to Southernmost Tip and back to the Lighthouse along the boardwalk; Long route of 15 kilometres – Lighthouse, Historical Southern Tip, along coast, past the Southernmost Tip, Mishu Maru shipwreck, the Rasperpunt Hiking trail and all the way back to the Lighthouse along the coast.

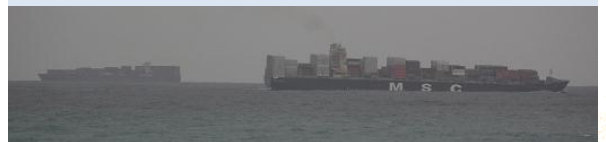


The *Arniston* and related subject matter on display in the Lighthouse Museum until May 31st, 2015



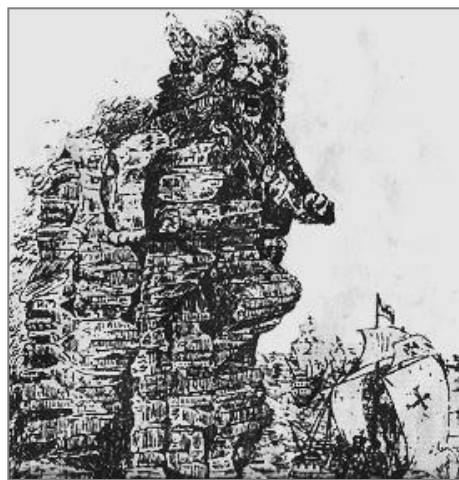
Tracking ships with the Automatic Identification System (AIS) – Sam Beeslaar

The original purpose of AIS was solely collision avoidance but many other applications have since developed and continue to be developed. AIS is currently used for: Collision avoidance, Fishing Fleet Monitoring and Control, Vessel traffic services, Maritime Security, Aids to navigation, Search and rescue, Accident investigation, Fleet and cargo tracking. This initiative was started by the Maritime Controlling Body in 2002. Ships are required to send an AIS message consisting of identification number, position, course, speed, etc. at regular intervals via VHF signals. Port authorities or other shore-based facilities intercept these signals and relay it via internet to a central hub. The Suiderstrand AIS (2255) receiving station has been in operation since May 2010 and has received over 27 million messages. On average 46 vessels pass by our shores every day. The ships can be viewed at www.suiderstrand.co.za and then click on "Skeepsnuus". This will show all the ships participating in this initiative world-wide.



Who is Adamastor?

According to sixteenth century poet, Luis de Camoes, Adamastor was a mythical character immortalised in his epic poem, *Os Lusíadas* (first printed in 1572). Adamastor embodied the extreme forces early Portuguese navigators had to overcome during their voyages around the Southern tip of Africa on route to the East. He was a fierce and grotesque being who guarded his domain by conjuring violent storms. He would take the form of a menacing storm cloud threatening seafarers of the perils of sailing past the Cape. Bartholomeu Dias was the commander of the first such expedition to round the Cape. Terrified of the unknown dangers, Dias's crew threatened mutiny, and Dias was forced to turn back before having sailed far up the eastern coast of Africa. Dias died during a subsequent voyage, in a shipwreck off the coast of Southern Africa, this time not succeeding in evading Adamastor's forces. Adamastor perfectly personifies the extreme conditions and the history of the Strandveld coastal area and its many shipwrecks so well. Visit our neighbour, Strandveld Vineyards and member of the Nuwejaars Special Management Area, to experience their connection with Adamastor and Bartholomeu Dias. (SOURCE: *Strandveld Vineyards Newsletter*, February 2015)



Lighthouse Museum



Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum



Elim Heritage Centre

International Museum Day, 18 May 2015

Every year, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) chooses a theme for International Museum Day concerning an issue that affects the international museum community. In 2015, the event will celebrate the theme: *Museums for a sustainable society*. One of the most important challenges shared by people all over the world is to adapt to new ways of living and developing within the limits of nature. This transition towards a sustainable society requires inventing new methods of thinking and acting. The theme *Museums for a sustainable society* recognises the role of museums for communicating, transmitting and raising public awareness about the need for a society that is less wasteful, more co-operative and uses resources in a way that respects the living systems. Bringing museums to the forefront of this model of a sustainable society, this year's theme for International Museum Day aims to foster awareness among the whole society about the current consequences of human action on our planet and the absolute necessity of changing the economic and social model. The ICOM established International Museum Day in 1977 to increase public awareness of the role of museums in the development of society. Momentum has been rising ever since. In recent years, International Museum Day has been experiencing its highest involvement with almost 35 000 museums that organise activities in more than 143 countries. **Visit your nearest museum and consider how your life today is connected to the past.**

"Because we don't think about future generations, they will never forget us" *Henrik Tikkanen*

International Biodiversity Day, 22 May 2015

The term biological diversity, or biodiversity, is given to the variety of plant and animal life, and micro-organisms, on Earth and the different ecosystems in which they live. The biodiversity we see today is the result of the natural process that has taken place over many years and which has caused changes, such as weathering and adaptation of the landscape and its inhabitants. The rate at which this natural process takes place is increased by human activities and it is this unnatural increase that can have harmful effects on our biophysical environment. There are more than 1.7 million species that have been discovered and named and scientists think that there are millions more we do not know about. Over time, many species of plants and animals have evolved to depend on one another. For example, some plants can only be pollinated by a certain kind of bird or insect. In relationships like these, if one species becomes extinct, the other species could too. The complex relationships between species are often disturbed when organisms are transported to new places or a new element is introduced (for example, chemicals from pesticides). Here are a couple of tips regarding biodiversity: never introduce an invasive plant species into an area it does not naturally exist; never release your exotic pets into the wild; plant only indigenous species; avoid using pesticides or chemicals in your garden. Use natural methods of pest control instead. The theme for 2015 is **Biodiversity for Sustainable Development**. (SOURCE: *Year of special days 2015*. Sharenet.)

Agulhas NP biodiversity

The terrestrial vegetation is the most significant component of the biota of the park and its protection is vital for the conservation of fynbos in South Africa. The diversity of habitat types, wetland ecosystems, Red Data plant species and local endemics is unmatched in the Cape Floristic Region. Species richness values equal those of tropical rain forests. The area has approximately 2,500 species of indigenous plants, including 112 species endemic to the area and over 110 Red Data species.



The region's fauna is less well known than the flora. Limited studies on invertebrates point to exceptionally high diversity of aquatic invertebrates and at least three Red Data Book listed butterflies. This is in contrast to the freshwater fish of which there are only three species of which one is Red Data listed. Of the 15 amphibian species thought to occur on the Agulhas Plain, three species are Red Data listed. To date, 24 reptile species have been recorded, and a further 22 species are likely to occur on the Agulhas plain.



The avifauna of the region is diverse with 230 bird species being recorded, of which 11 are Red Data species.



Of the 81 terrestrial mammals known from the Cape Floral Kingdom, 65 species have been recorded or are likely to occur on the Agulhas Plain. The majority of these are rodents (21 species) and small carnivores (14 species). This includes four mammal species classified as vulnerable, amongst others the Bontebok (*Damaliscus pygargus dorcas*), which is the least common antelope in southern Africa. (SOURCE: *Agulhas NP Management Plan 2013-2023*.)

Pictures by S. Brink, A. Odendaal, W. De Klerk, L Du Toit



Focus on Tankwa-Karoo National Park

Tankwa-Karoo National Park

In the 1970s a piece of state land was available to establish a conservation area. At the time it was seen as a piece of worthless, god-forsaken nothingness which was just good enough to shoot films and the then Parks Board was not interested. The original god-forsaken 27 000ha of government land was proclaimed as a national park in 1986 and grew to 146 373ha of today. Today Tankwa is a member of the Cape Cluster group. (SOURCE: *Landbouweekblad*, 18/07/2014).

A semi-desert Park

The Tankwa has been described as one of the most arid regions of the Karoo. The park has a rainfall gradient of 50mm in the South West to 700mm on the Roggeveld in an average year. The mean January temperature in the park is a sweltering 38.9 °C, but in July the average drops to a freezing 5.7 °C. Summer temperatures regularly soar into the 40's. Rain, on the other hand, is not as plentiful. Historically the park averages about 170mm a year, as measured at the Roodewerf Station. As a designated arid park, the South Western section of Tankwa also fulfils the definition of semi-desert.

Tankwa accommodation



To book accommodation and find out more about activities contact Tankwa Karoo at TankwaRes@sanparks.org.

Cultural Heritage of Tankwa Karoo

San paintings are found in the mountains around the Tankwa Karoo, but little physical evidence remains of their presence within the park. Ladders made from grass and branches were found in the mountains to reach beehives in the mountains for their honey and floods revealed caches of ostrich eggs used for carrying water. Nomadic farmers brought sheep into the Succulent Karoo some 2000 years ago and cattle some 500 years ago. The first Europeans were farmers moving through with their flocks in the 18th century from the Cape in search of suitable grazing. In the end large areas of the Tankwa was found unsuitable for settled pastoralism, even when boreholes provide perennial water and forage could be brought from other areas. Farms adjacent to the Tankwa and Renoster Rivers were used for flood irrigation. The dams, made by a scraper pulled by mules, created areas known as *lane* (avenues). Crops such as wheat and watermelons were grown here. Even areas that now seem dry and parched once had wheat grown there. Hunting was popular as the area occupied by the park was originally the southerly turning point of the migratory herds, but the last of these were shot out by the 1920's. Man's footprint is found throughout the park in the form of houses, ruins, kraals and graveyards.



SOURCE: MOLL, M., STEYN, R., MOLL, B., MOLL, J. 2012. *Around the Tankwa Karoo National Park: a guide to some of the buildings and people who lived in them*. SANParks Honorary Rangers: Boland Region.

The word 'Tankwa' (sometimes spelt 'Tanqua') is probably of Khoi origin meaning *Place of Thirst*.

Animal and plant life

Typically an arid environment, Tankwa Karoo can surprise you with its diversity of life.



Landscapes in Tankwa Karoo

