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Cultural landscapes gives us a sense of space

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In 1488, 528 years ago, Portuguese seafarer, Bartholomeu Dias turned back after he failed to reach the East in search of a trading route. On his return journey, on May 16, he sailed passed a certain flat piece of land. He named it after an Irish monk, St Brendan, whose festival day it was: *Ponte de Sao Brendao*.

International Museum Day ~ May 18

Every year the International Council of Museums (ICOM) chooses a theme for International Museum Day (IMD), concentrating on an issue that affects the international museum community. This year it has chosen the theme ***Museums and cultural landscapes***. The Siena Charter, which presents the Italian perspective on the responsibilities of museums towards heritage and surrounding landscapes, was adopted as the guide for the theme in 2016. Landscapes are part of the cultural and natural heritage to be preserved, interpreted and looked after, in aspects which are tangible and intangible. The four main aspects of the charter are a) the understanding of the term *landscape*; b) the social and territorial functions of museums; c) the opportunities to form new partnerships and networks and d) how museums can help planners and politicians promote sustainable development and preserve landscapes while improving tourism, without endangering cultural and natural heritage. (SOURCE: *A Year of Special Days 2016*, Sharenet)



South African Museums Association's (SAMA) adopts International Museum Day

The theme for 2016, *Museums and Cultural landscapes*, offers museums the opportunity to celebrate the natural and built environment. It embraces South Africa's pre- and post-colonial past and the cultures that have emerged in different parts of the country. The South African Museums Association regions are encouraged to explore the theme of *Museums and Cultural Landscapes*. Members are also invited to enter into discourse with ICOM-SA and ICOMOS-SA between the April 18 (International Monuments Day) and May 18 (International Museum Day) with a view to developing a *Statement on Museums and Cultural Landscapes – A South African Perspective*. For more information please contact Dr Helene Vollgraaff, h.vollgraaff@iburst.co.za.



What are cultural landscapes?

A cultural landscape is a geographic area that includes cultural and natural resources associated with a historic event, activity, person, or group of people. It can be seen as the cultural layer that was built up through ages over the natural environment since the beginning of man. Cultural landscapes can range from thousands of acres of rural land to homesteads with small front yards. They can be man-made expressions of visual and spatial relationships that include grand estates, farmlands, public gardens and parks, college campuses, cemeteries, scenic highways, and industrial sites. Cultural landscapes are works of art, texts and narratives of cultures, and expressions of regional identity. They also exist in relationship to their ecological contexts. (Dr Robert De Jong, 2008)

Southern Tip Day, May 16

In 2007 the Agulhas National Park identified May 16 as a special commemoration day to celebrate Bartholomeu Dias, St Brendan and all the people who lost their lives in shipwrecks along the Cape Agulhas coast. The Southern Tip Meal and Talk has been part of the programme since the inauguration of the celebration and is presented on the Friday evening nearest to the 16th. The theme of the talk is either about shipwrecks, the southernmost tip or related subjects. This year the theme is *Evolution of beacons* by Louis Willemse, who also shared his thoughts on the development of navigation at the first Southern Tip meal in 2007.



The evolution of beacons: from olive branch to Canopus – Louis Willemse

The Old English word *bēacn* meant sign. The origin is West Germanic and is related to *beckon*. *Beckon* in turn means to signal “come here!” Cape Agulhas Lighthouse, our own famous beacon, has evolved over its 167 years from oil, to gas to electricity, equipped with a fog horn and later a radio beacon. Today the lighthouse is unmanned and an invisible GPS keeps track of all the shipping rounding the Southernmost Tip of Africa. Since earliest times people have used beacons or signposts. Prominent hills and geographic features; the sun, stars and human guides. Recently the spacecraft, **New Horizons**, arrived at Pluto after a journey of some 4,8 billion kilometres taking 10 years. Did **New Horizons** use navigation beacons? Come and listen to this interesting topic at the Southern Tip Talk and Meal on May 13 2016 and share with us beacons you have come across or used in your lifetime.

Shipwreck heritage

The heritage of the Strandveld is closely linked to the shipwrecks along the Cape Agulhas coastline. In 1840 when the building of the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse was discussed at a meeting in the Cape, this treacherous coastline was referred to as *Oseane Golgotha* (ocean of crucifixion). Many place names come from shipwrecks, for example Zoetendals Vallei, Arniston, St Mungo Bay to name but a few. Many traditional trades such as thatching and building come from shipwreck survivors who decided to remain in the area. They also introduced specific architectural styles, like the fishermen's cottages. Shipwreck timber became a much-needed building material as trees were very scarce in the Strandveld. Various pieces of furniture from ships can be found in many houses. Some descendants of shipwreck survivors still live in the Strandveld. (Jeannette Grobbelaar, 2007). Visit the Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum to experience this heritage in full.



Table and Chairs from the *Queen of the Thames* and silverware from the *Lisboa* Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum

Ceiling beams Soutbosch



Kassiesbaai, Waenhuiskrans

Cape Agulhas Lighthouse nominated as an International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) awards International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark status to selected works which comply with very strict criteria. At present the only such landmarks in Southern Africa are the Victoria Falls Bridge over the Zambezi River and the Woodhead Dam on Table Mountain. The local counterpart of ASCE, the South African Institution of Civil Engineering (SAICE) was invited to nominate another work for consideration by the ASCE Heritage Committee. The SAICE History and Heritage Panel considered several projects and it was felt that the Lighthouse at Cape Agulhas was the most deserving of the accolade in accordance with the ASCE criteria. SAICE is delighted that after a comprehensive investigation, ASCE decided to accept the proposal. A special ceremony is planned by SAICE is planned at the Lighthouse on May 14.



Visit the Lighthouse Museum to find out about the architectural features of the building



Quoin Point a beacon of history

Quoin Point, the second most southern point of the African continent, and one of the more densely packed shipwreck sites on the South African coast, is closely associated with the old Moravian mission village of Elim, established in 1824. Over the years the residents of the village frequently provided assistance to people shipwrecked. Beautiful Quoin Point Nature Reserve, nearby, is uninhabited but for its lighthouse and a few fishing cottages owned by Elim families. The wreck of the *Joanna* was the first recorded of an English merchant ship on the South African coastline. She was on her way from England to the East when she went down just east of Quoin Point on June 8 1682. Her remains were rediscovered exactly 300 years later, and more than 23 000 coins, a few hundred kilograms of silver and forty-four iron cannon were salvaged.

The Quoin of Quoin Point

The word *quoin* is French for the wooden wedge used to adjust the elevation of a 18th century muzzle-loading cannon. A rock formation at Quoin Point resembles this device and this could be the origin of the name. Another possibility for naming Quoin Point is the profile of the Buffelsjags Mountain from the sea which also looks like a wedge.



SOURCE: Wikipedia



This structure was in use at Cape Agulhas Lighthouse from 1968 to 1988 and relocated to Quoin Point after the original lighthouse at Cape Agulhas was reinstated.

Joanna

The *Joanna* was an English East Indiaman of 550 tons which wrecked on the outer reef at Die Dam. She was bound for India with a valuable cargo of specie for the English factories in Bengal. Suspecting that her cargo was valuable, Governor Simon Van der Stel despatched Ensign Oloff Bergh and a party to seek salvage. After burying four bodies on the shore, Bergh paddled out to the wreck on a raft made of casks and planks. He was able to explore the half-submerged wreck with the aid of a trained pearl diver, a slave from the East called Pay Mina. He returned to the Castle with casks of wine and beer and 600 Spanish coins; but *Joanna's* hoard eluded him. (SOURCE: BURROWS, E.H. 1994. *Overberg Odyssey: people, roads and early days*. Swellendam Trust)

Piri Reis – from pirate to renowned cartographer – Ilse Zietsman

In the Naval Museum (www.denizmuzeleri.tsk.tr/en/idmk/in) Istanbul, Turkey about one third of the map drawn by Piri Reis that survived is exhibited as a cultural and geographical asset. Ahmed Muhiddin Piri (1465/1470 – 1553/4), later known as Piri Reis (Captain Reis), started his illustrious career sailing with his uncle who was a well-known corsair (pirate) at the time. He also served as an admiral in the Turkish fleet. A world map drawn by Piri Reis in 1513 is the oldest known map showing the New World and one of the oldest maps of America that exists. The map depicts North America, parts of Central and South America, and the Atlantic Ocean. Apart from the Canary Islands and the islands of Cape Verde and the Azores, illustrations of sailing ships, an ostrich, elephant and llama, a man in Arab dress on a throne and a man with a crown as well, as a sea monster, have been added. The name of Piri Reis became known to the world when his map drawn on gazelle skin was discovered in 1929 in the library of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. Before closer examination, it was thought – albeit briefly – that this could be the long lost map of Christopher Columbus. Some notes in the margin and a corner of the map state that Piri Reis compiled the map using some of Columbus's maps, among others. Piri Reis also compiled a book of maps and charts called *Kitab-ı Bahriye* (Book of Navigation). It is thought that he might have been born in Gelibolu, a small fishing village near Gallipoli, where a small museum in an old lookout tower bears testimony to his work. Piri Reis was beheaded in 1553 when he refused to support the reigning Ottoman governor.



International Day for Biological Diversity, May 22

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 natural processes, such as weathering and adaptation of the landscape and its inhabitants, that have taken place over many years and which have caused changes. The rate at which these natural processes take 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 1.8 million discovered and named species 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 follow. 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). **The plight of the disappearing bee is much talked about. Find out how you can ensure the continuation of this vital species.** Read more at <http://www.cbd.int/> and www.gbif.org. (SOURCE: *A Year of Special Days 2016*, Sharenet)



Plant Biodiversity of Soetansberg



Birding the Agulhas Plain January to April – Dr Wim De Klerk

Birding in 2016 started slow. The first six years of the Agulhas Birding Project have been amazing and produced much more than could ever be anticipated. January was lucrative and produced an excellent view of Forest Buzzard, Bosjakkalsvoël, *Buteo trizonatus*, many juvenile African Marsh-Harrier, Afrikaanse vleivalk, *Circus ranivorus*, Denham's Bustard, Veldpou, *Neotis denhami*, African Snipe, Afrikaanse Snip, *Gallinago nigripennis*, Southern Tchagra, Grysborstjagra, *Tchagra tchagra*, Whiskered Tern, Witbaardsterretjie, *Chidonias hybrida* and a special surprise - Southern Black Korhaan, Swartvlerkkorhaan, *Afrotis afra*. The Korhaan was rarely seen towards De Mond in the last few years, but never as far west as this specimen. The hunt for Baillon's Crake, Kleinriethaan, *Porzana pusilla* soon produced results, confirming the presence of this rare species. In March Alpine Swift, Witpenswindswael, *Tachymarptis melba* and Lesser Kestrel, Kleinrooivalk, *Falco naumanni* were as part of the project, although reported before. Then, on a stormy day, on a small pan near Voëlvlei, bundled close together, were 800 Lesser Flamingo, Kleinflamink, *Phoenicopterus minor*, only to find another 350 one km further at Voëlvlei! Never has a group of more than 200 been seen together in the Agulhas Plain! A Saturday morning outing in April to De Mond, caused great excitement. Among the 80 species recorded were Pacific Golden Plover, Asiatiese goue strandkiewiet, *Pluvialis fulva*, Bar-tailed Godwit, Bandstertgriet, *Limosa lapponica*, Terek Sandpiper, Terekrutter, *Xenus cinereus* and the scarce Banded Martin, Gebande oewerswael, *Riparia cincta*. The strangest experience though was the discovery of a flock of about 800 Wattled Starling, Lelspreu, *Creatophora cinerea* near Soutbosch, swirling above a thicket in a figure eight shape. Within seconds they went quiet and simply disappeared into the thicket.

