



IF WALLS COULD TALK

Cape Town's Castle is 350 this year, but it won't be giving a speech at its birthday party. **Nick Dall** found a few people who can talk on its behalf



BE SURE TO CHECK OUT...

- Although it's commonly referred to as the Kat, the building that separates the Castle into two courtyards should be referred to as the Transect Wall; the Kat was merely the command centre occupying a section of the wall.
- The 'wooden cobbles' under the inner archway in the Transect Wall were put there to prevent puddles from forming in the rain. Known as *heipalen*, they go down 45cm and are sealed with tar 'grout'.
- The murals in the Secunde's House use a French technique known as *trompe l'oeil*, which makes two-dimensional objects appear 3D. The VOC didn't have money to burn on marble friezes, cornices and picture rails so they faked them instead.
- Engravings in the doors and door frames of the Garrison Cells (aka Provost Cells) give a fascinating insight into what went through the prisoners' minds. Some are funny, others tragic; some painstakingly crafted, others sloppy and misspelt.
- The bell above the main entrance was cast in 1697 by Claude Fremy in Amsterdam, and it still rings twice a day (10am and noon). A huge crack runs through it, which is why it makes such an awful sound!
- The six shields engraved on the main entrance represent the six chambers who invested their money to build the Castle.
- The little yellow bricks used at the main entrance and on the Kat Balcony (which should really be called a *puije*, not a balcony) were used as ballast by the VOC ships. Known as *IJsselsteentjes*, they were made on the banks of the River IJssel in the Netherlands.



THE MUSEUM EDUCATOR

LUNGILE GADEZWENI

From his offices next to Secunde's House, he runs tailor-made education programmes for school groups, visiting academics and other interested parties

'The first time I came to the Castle was in 1986, as a visitor. Remember that as an African during apartheid, when you looked at the Castle from the outside, when you looked at the soldiers and police, it was a scary place. But then I happened to come in and I joined a tour. The guides back then were soldiers, and I listened to history as told by them. That was the day, and off I went...

Then in 1994 a post was advertised and I got the job. I started here on 1 December, with the task of unpacking the Cape's cultural history and making sense of the influences from the East, the West and from here in Africa.

I arrived during transformation and the integration of the armed forces, a time when the Castle was teeming with soldiers from various organisations like MK and APLA. There was one major who was a real character. He would shout at me: "Why are you walking slowly? Why are you standing on the grass? Why are you taking your keys out with you?" But then someone explained that I wasn't part of the military, and we eventually got to know each other.

That was an interesting time. Most of the soldiers were traumatised. Just

imagine: you were in Angola and up there you were a commander. And now, at the Castle, you're given a post of sergeant. You could see it on their faces. They didn't know where they were; the authority they had was gone. It wasn't nice to watch.

As an African I don't feel at all excluded from the Castle. If you go to the William Fehr collection it doesn't only focus on the European style or view. Africa is included. I feel the same way about the building itself. It is all of our heritage.' ➔



THE NOVELIST

DAN SLEIGH

Author of *Eilande* ['Islands'], a sweeping novel that reinvents the lives of the first white settlers at the Cape. He is also a long-standing member of the VOC Foundation

'The Dutch East India Company [VOC] had 104 trading stations in the East. Their ships needed to stop somewhere. But why didn't they build the Castle at Mossel Bay? Or Durban? Because the winds and the currents knot perfectly around Table Bay. Saldanha Bay had no water. There's more water here because there's a mountain that causes rain. There's even a reason why the Castle is on this exact spot: a spring of (almost) fresh water, only metres from the seafront.

You had to get fuel for your ship – a ship needed 40 wagonloads of firewood for the next leg of the journey. You needed medical services, timber for repairs and the ship's carpenters, meat (fresh and salted), vegetables, the list goes on... The Castle was an administrative hub that



relied on 57 out-stations throughout the Cape to supply all of this.

People don't realise how close the Castle was to the sea. The main entrance used to be where the Military Museum is now, and the sea came all the way up to Strand Street. A jetty ran from Buren bastion out to where the railway lines are today. The ships themselves anchored where the Civic Centre is today – deep in the bay – but their boats tied up at the jetty to get provisions.

Over the years the beach widened naturally (the result of sand being blown into the sea due to deforestation) and the jetty had to be lengthened every so often. In the 19th century the British nearly demolished the Castle, on two occasions, to make way for roads and the railway line. In the 1930s and 40s, when they built the new harbour, there was a huge land reclamation project, which took the coastline even further from the Castle.

But not in the VOC days. Then the Castle was right above the beach and one winter there was a shipwreck there. Soldiers were sent to guard the beach and make sure nothing was stolen. (Very little attempt was ever made to shoot a line across to save the human cargo.) And out of the waves a little brown poodle came swimming. The soldiers cheered it on and it reached the beach and shook itself off.

The little dog stayed with the soldiers 20 years. When the officer went round the battlements at night to check that none of the guards were sleeping, the dog used to run 20 paces in front, and if he saw a soldier leaning against the wall he would pull at his pants and bark and wake the guy up. He did this every night for 20 years.'

ABOVE An aerial view of the Castle of Good Hope with its five bastions. The star fort design was developed in the 15th century in Italy to make maximum use of cannons

OPPOSITE TOP Engravings on the door of the Provost Cells. Part of one reads: 'No cheering comfort glads the wear'd eye as the incessant hours in dull rotation fly'

PREVIOUS PAGE The modern-day entrance to the Castle, through the wall under the bell tower

Nick Dall, Gallo/Getty Images (including opener), Gallo/Alamy/Eric Nathan, supplied



THE TOUR GUIDE

SONWABILE MAXEBENGULA

One of the Castle's permanent site guides, he's been showing tourists around for four years (above, pictured in the Military Museum)

'The Castle's Military Museum focuses on the clashes between Europeans and Africans. These clashes started long before Van Riebeeck was even born... in 1510 the Portuguese were given such a beating by the Khoikhoi that no Europeans came to the Cape for at least a century!

As a Xhosa I am fascinated by the Frontier Wars that were fought in the Eastern Cape between 1779 and 1878... that's a very long time. The first couple of Frontier Wars happened when the Dutch controlled the Cape, but the most vicious battles took place between the Xhosas and the British. Either way, all nine wars were administered, commanded and controlled from the Castle.

If you ask me the Xhosas would never have lost if it hadn't been for Nongqawuse. She was a prophetess who was told in a dream to tell her people to kill all of their cattle and burn all of their farms. In return, their ancestors' spirits would sweep the

white man into the sea. Nongqawuse was one of many Xhosas captured and imprisoned on Robben Island – Madiba was not the first!

Once the British had finally defeated the Xhosas, they had an interest in Natal and that's what triggered the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. The Zulu king at the time was Cetshwayo, a nephew of the great King Shaka. The British decided to try a new tactic of negotiation, and when Cetshwayo was captured he was brought to the Castle where he was imprisoned with three of his wives.

He wasn't treated nearly as badly as the Xhosas who were sent to Robben Island; there are photos of him on Catzenellenbogen Bastion with his wives, who were allowed to cook for him on the bastion. Apparently he liked to sit there and listen to the bagpipes being played in the parade below. When the British tried to give him shoes, he refused. He said he wanted to feel the land he was fighting for beneath his feet.'

OPPOSITE FROM TOP
The Kat Balcony, built in 1695, was changed to its current ornate Baroque form in 1786; Matt in the Keizersgracht canal – the lower bricks are imported Victorian-era ones made to withstand acidity in water, the upper bricks normal clay used to close the canals

THE SUBTERRANEAN EXPLORER

MATT WEISSE

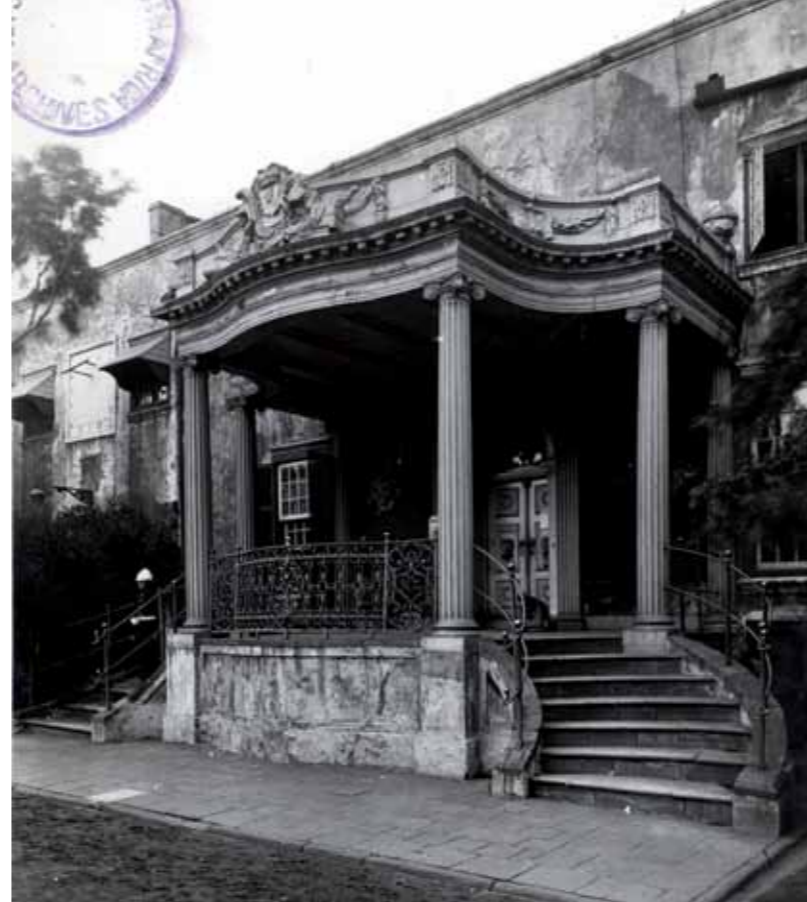
He's walked every inch of the city's underground tunnel network and is the owner and lead guide of Tunnel Tours

'In early Cape Town there were four main open canals: the Heerengracht, Keizersgracht (where Darling Street is now), Buitengracht (in Bo-Kaap) and the Buitenkant on this side. These canals got very polluted and by the 1830s they were so full of rubbish that the water couldn't flow any more: there were rats and hyenas and all sorts of pests, and the people got very sick from it. The city decided to close these open canals and turn them into tunnels.

Long before the tunnels, the main river used to go through the city, but the authorities didn't like having it there because it flooded in winter. So they diverted it round the back of the Castle. The washerwomen used to come to the Castle and the ships in the bay to collect washing and then walk back up the mountain along the river to do the washing...

When you look at old pictures of the Castle you will see these washerwomen standing on the castle walls, with bundles on their heads. It wasn't an easy job: sailors used to spend three to six months at sea, so you can imagine what their clothes smelt like! And they also had to wash the Castle's curtains and sheets and tablecloths. Now and then you still find curtain rings and buttons from sailor's jackets in the river...

The Castle has its own waterholes and wells, which are still fed by an underground river. They used to collect rainwater, too. The rain ran off the roofs and spouted from the gargoyles' mouths down into the courtyard. But if you look carefully at the stones in the courtyard you'll see that there are gaps between the slabs – the water trickles into a mini-canal which leads all the way to a reservoir at the back of the Castle.' tunneltours.co.za



Nick Daly / supplied

THE ARTIST

LIZELLE KRUGER

One of three military artists employed at the Castle, whose temporary turret studio is in the Captain's Tower, next to the Leerdam bastion

'The secret's out! Most people know me for my Karoo paintings, but this is my day job and it has been since I joined the army as an 18-year-old. I started off in uniform but after a while I decided to be a civilian. If you go up in the military you have to be in charge of people, and I didn't want that. I just wanted to focus on my job, which is art. I don't want to be involved in other people's problems.

You know all the paintings and sculptures and papier-mâché models in the Military Museum? They didn't just paint themselves... most of them were done by me and my two

colleagues. We started the museum from scratch and we just worked chronologically through all the periods in the Castle's history.

I love working in the Castle because it's a rural, old-fashioned environment within the city. Our work involves recreating history, and doing it in the Castle makes it easier. My favourite place is the little garden next to the main gate. It's just a pity they got rid of the herbs. They used to have rosemary and lavender, and hopefully they will plant them again. When I want to relax I go there and pick a lemon, or some roses, and I come back to my studio and I feel better. Sometimes I go for a run around the Castle, do a few push-ups under the old trees at the back.

I've only had one incident that was strange. I was working in my old office, sanding down two cupboards, late at night. The door sometimes slammed in the wind, but that night there was no wind blowing whatsoever. That door just went from completely open and slowly it closed. I thought, 'Oh well, I'm not scared of ghosts.' I opened it and said, 'Anyone who wants to come back can close it again. Please do.' And nothing happened. They don't like it when you talk to them.' lizellekruger.com. winhost.wa.co.za





THE HIGHLANDER

DAVE MITCHELL

Ex-Cape Town Highlander and chairman of the Military Museum Foundation

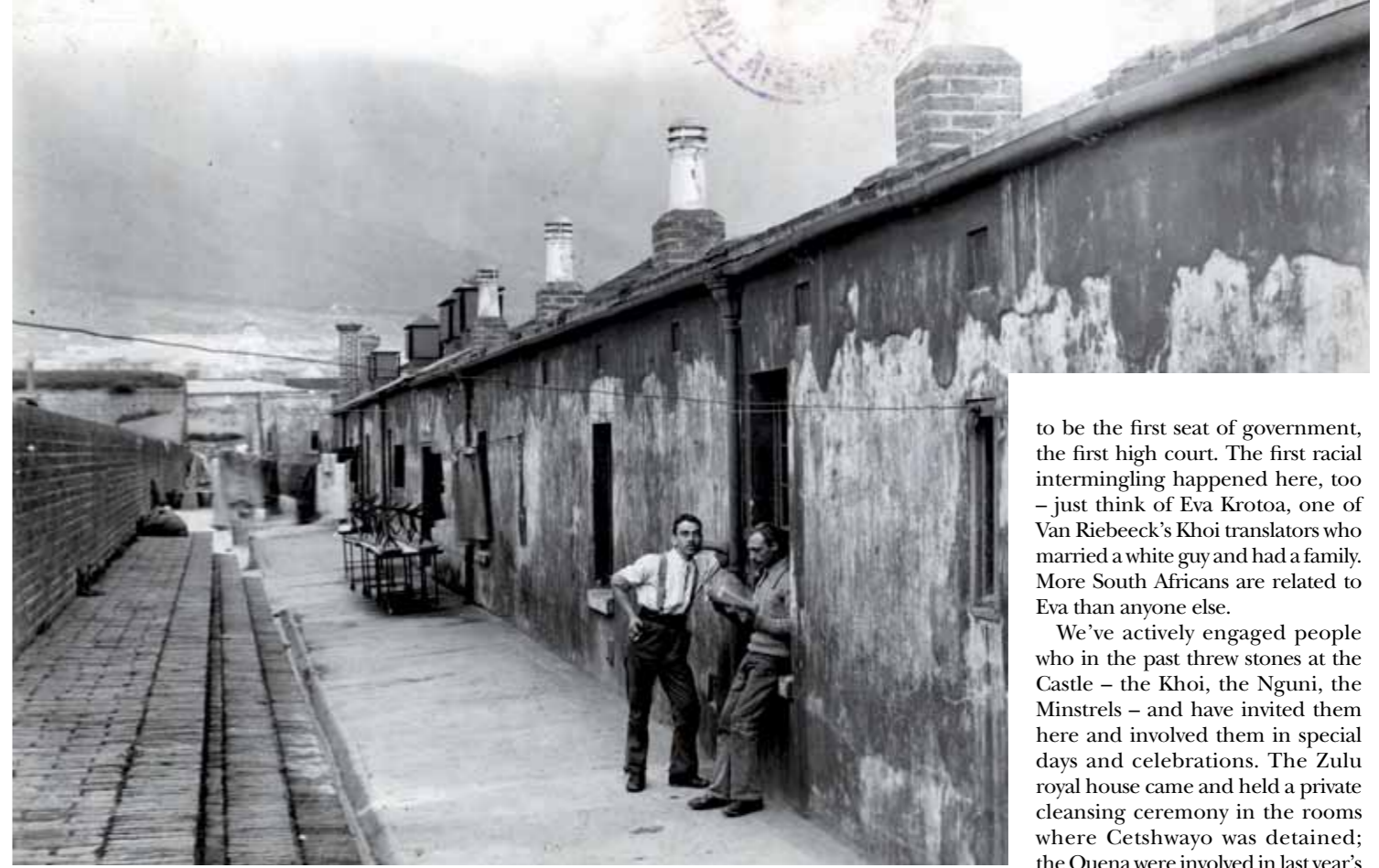
'The Cape Town Highlanders were founded in 1885. There were already other reserve forces in the city, but the Scottish fraternity was keen to have its own regiment. They are the only regiment in the world wearing the Gordon tartan – incidentally, the clan tartan of the last Dutch military commander at the Castle, Robert Gordon. They have seen action in every war that South Africa has been involved in since 1885, and boast more battle honours than any other regiment in the country... quite something for a part-time force.

The Highlanders started as a bunch of volunteers and they still are, although the demographics have changed. They still wear tartan and play bagpipes but these days there's a mix of races, and there are quite a few female Highlanders, too. The military is one area where race, class and politics are irrelevant – everyone is a soldier.

The Castle is a wonderful place for all Highlanders. Their headquarters is at the back of the Castle and their mess is in the front courtyard, just

above the main entrance. I didn't choose to become a Highlander but I did choose to remain one. I was allocated to the Highlanders after my national service. And I served for ten years. Why? Because I enjoyed it. I attended mess meetings and functions and parades at the Castle. When I got married my wedding reception was here. Many years later, when I turned 50 I had my birthday party in the officers' mess. Lots of Highlanders, and serving soldiers of the Castle's other regiments, have been married here.

I may have a British surname and a white skin, but some of my forebears were slaves at the Castle. South Africa is far more mixed than you realise, and that mixing all started here. The Castle is a link between the past and the future, between West and East, between the coast and the interior. It's something unique and special, and if you don't understand the past you may struggle to understand the future. The value of the Castle is not the walls but the impact it has on youngsters who come to visit.'



Nick Dall, Gallo Images/Alamy/Dennis Cox, supplied

to be the first seat of government, the first high court. The first racial intermingling happened here, too – just think of Eva Krotoa, one of Van Riebeeck's Khoi translators who married a white guy and had a family. More South Africans are related to Eva than anyone else.

We've actively engaged people who in the past threw stones at the Castle – the Khoi, the Nguni, the Minstrels – and have invited them here and involved them in special days and celebrations. The Zulu royal house came and held a private cleansing ceremony in the rooms where Cetshwayo was detained; the Quena were involved in last year's commemoration of the clearing of the site where the Castle stands.

We've also tried to change the image of the Castle through visual symbols. The old army lights outside were big, high-energy spotlights that threw a hard, harsh light around the Castle at night. We've installed state-of-the-art LED lights which have 1.2 million colour options. During Breast Cancer Month the Castle is pink, during Water Week it will be blue, on Emancipation of Slavery Day [1 December] it was red. It's no coincidence that those lights are energy-efficient, either. If the VOC was able to harvest rainwater and underground rivers, we can do the same. And we're also hoping to run the entire building off solar power.

On a recent trip to Amsterdam I was inspired by the glass roof that covers the central courtyard of the Scheepsvaart Museum. I thought, why don't we do something like this at the Castle? It wouldn't have to actually touch the building and you could still see Table Mountain. On rainy days it would keep visitors dry, we wouldn't have to put up marquees for events, it could contain solar panels and a rainwater collection system...

It may sound crazy, but then people said we'd never get the Zulus or the Khoi to come to the Castle, and just look what happened. As long as you come from a position of respect, anything is possible. ■

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
The ramparts between the Nassau and Oranje bastions in the early 20th century; Calvyn in his makeshift office (during renovations) – 'If your temporary office looks like this, then you know you work somewhere special'; the entry path to the Castle crosses the moat, passes English 18-pounder cannons and goes through the Lion Gates; Dave at the entry gate, with the yellow *IJsellsteentjies* visible behind him



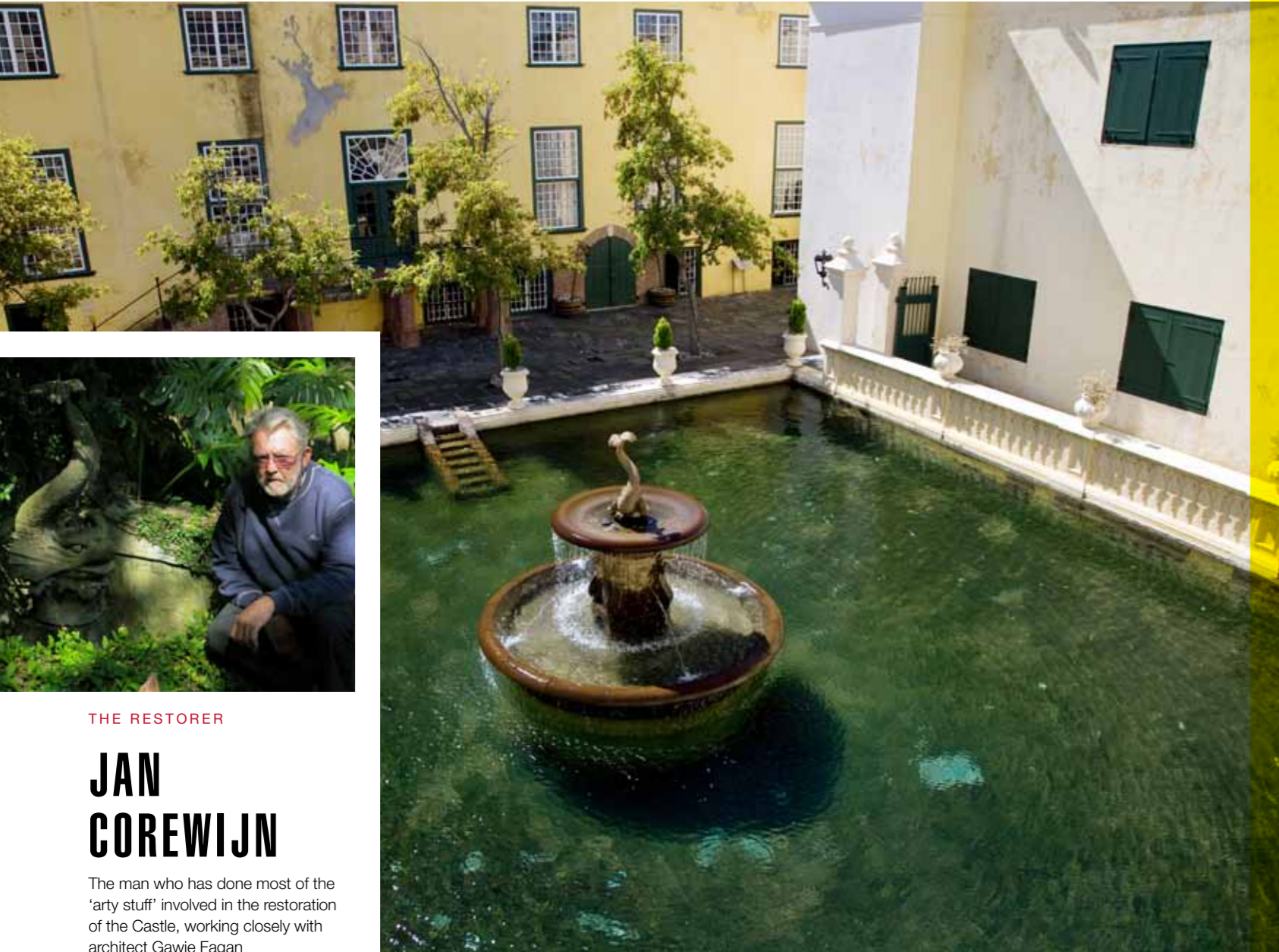
THE VISIONARY

CALVYN GILFELLAN

CEO of the Castle Control Board and the man tasked with keeping the Castle relevant

'I was appointed in 2013 with a very clear mandate: to reimage and reposition the Castle. Certain groups associated it with oppression, slavery and torture while others saw it as the beginning of everything good in South Africa. My task was – still is, in fact – to say that all of us in South Africa have some link to the Castle, be it good, bad or ugly.

We can say what we want but everybody is either directly or indirectly connected to the Castle. Whether you're English, Dutch, German, Khoi, San, Portuguese, Sotho, Zulu... because this used



THE RESTORER

JAN COREWIJN

The man who has done most of the 'arty stuff' involved in the restoration of the Castle, working closely with architect Gawie Fagan

'I first started working on the Castle in about 1985, and I've been there on and off ever since. I've restored all sorts of things, but one of the biggest jobs was recreating the Dutch murals. It can take a week to expose a section as long as your arm, but fortunately this is as much as you need as the patterns are repetitious. Now I'm in the strange position of restoring my own work 30 years later. Not many restorers can say that!

The murals may have been the most work, but the dolphin fountain was the most exciting. During British rule, the back courtyard was cleared and turned into a parade ground, but we knew from the plans that in VOC times there had been a bakery

and an ornamental pond there. A decision was made to rebuild the Bakhuis, and when digging started we discovered all the rubble from the original Bakhuis thrown into the pond.

You could see, from the base of the pond, that there had been a fountain there but the plans made no mention of what it looked like. So we turned to the history books, and we found two clues: one a tiny sketch, the other an excerpt from one of Lady Anne Barnard's letters, written on 4 May 1797: "From the window of my bed-chamber, which overlooks a colonnade built around a spacious pond of water supplied from the head and tail of a spouting

dolphin, I begin this letter to my dearest friend..."

Most dolphin fountains of that era had three heads and three tails, but Lady Anne was clear that this dolphin had only one head and one tail. So using all the clues available I recreated the fountain as accurately as I could. I made a rubber mould, reinforced it with glass fibre and cast it in what we call "cement fondue".

Now, 30 years later, I have cast it again – only this time in bronze. We have no idea what the original dolphin was made of. It could have been granite, marble, bronze or even cement. But I can tell you that the new brass one will last a lot longer than 30 years! corewijnrestoration.com

ABOVE

The dolphin and ornamental pond in the back courtyard – this is the old cement dolphin, but this year the splendid new brass statue will be installed; (inset) Jan in his garden in Hout Bay with a 'reject' casting of the dolphin he made in the 80s

OPPOSITE

Willem at the coffee shop, in front of the Cape Town Dukes' Mess; Moeshfika on the Kat Balcony

Nick Dall, Gallo Images/Alamy/Damien Davis, supplied

THE HISTORY BUFF

WILLEM STEENKAMP

Military historian, award-winning journalist, historical novelist and guide at the Chavonnes Battery at the V&A Waterfront

'The Castle was integral to making South Africa an immensely important part of world history. Without the replenishment station here, the East India trade route couldn't function properly. And the East India trade route affected things in the world for the next 200 years. The Castle was like a 17th century truck stop...'

The other thing that Capetonians don't always understand is that the old established Cape community – of all races – has a personal relationship with the Castle because their ancestors helped build it. Everybody was pulled in... the soldiers of the garrison, convicts, free burghers, sailors commandeered off ships, Quena contractors, slaves from West Africa. I would say that about 50



per cent of the people who walk past the Castle every day can look up at it and say, "Ja, it's a family business."

There were very few racial restrictions in the old Cape; the Dutch didn't believe in that. Let me tell you something – if they ever did some honest genetic tests on South Africans, they would find some bloody astounding things, and not just among the white people either. I know that slaves from Guinea married into both sides of my family.

There is so much to know about the Castle, but you need to get people interested in the first place. And people are always interested in ghosts. The Castle has loads of ghosts, but my favourite is the ghost of Governor

Pieter Gysbert Noodt. One of the most enduring mysteries of the Castle is "What happened to Noodt?"

Officially he was buried under the Groote Kerk, but nobody knows whether his body was actually in the coffin. They say that late at night, when the Castle was asleep, his body was actually snuck out the sally port at the back – in a makeshift coffin, without being washed or anything – and buried in the bushes behind the Castle.

Why? He was so hated that I think they were afraid there would be a riot at his funeral and the coffin would be upturned. The Company was very big on dignity and it would have been terribly undignified for the late Governor to be lying there stark and stiff in the dust.

Noodt had a talent for making people hate him within 30 seconds of meeting him... you know, you get people like that. Ten of his soldiers deserted and were handed back to him by the local people, who didn't like having "freelancers" wandering around. Noodt sentenced them to death, and he sat and watched as they got their necks stretched. But the last one stopped on the steps of the gallows and said: "Governor Noodt, we'll meet again at the Judgement Seat."

That afternoon they found Noodt dead in his chair – this is a matter of historical fact, not a rumour. And his ghost has been seen a couple of times around what is now the tea room but was then the Governor's office. It hasn't been seen in a while, though, not since the 1940s...' ■



GET GOING
DESTINATION: CAPE TOWN

The Castle of Good Hope is open daily 9AM to 4PM; a key ceremony takes place at 10AM and 12PM on weekdays, followed by the firing of a signal cannon. +27 (0)21 787 1260
British Airways flies to Cape Town from Jo'burg, Durban, Port Elizabeth and London. Visit ba.com.



2016: A YEAR OF COMMEMORATIONS

'The Castle of Good Hope gives the visitor a view into the past whilst creating an inclusive, healing platform for the future,' says Moeshfika Botha, the culture, heritage and education manager at the Castle – and the person tasked with running the 350th anniversary events. 'This commemoration is significant as it is the first time that the Castle will – on a large scale – acknowledge and honour those who were oppressed in this space.'

She mentions Krotoa, 'who was the first Khoikhoi woman to appear in the European records of the Cape settlement as an individual personality. She plays a significant role in Khoi history, and many events and workshops for women are now held at the Castle with Krotoa as the reference point.' In August this year, a play about her life will be presented, and her bones repatriated from the Groote Kerk back to the Castle.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

- This month, multicultural events focusing on language in South Africa (International Mother Tongue Day is 21 February).
- A 'tribal village', traditional kraal and livestock will set up temporary camp in the courtyard in March, paying homage to what was there before the Castle.
- In April, a play about various indigenous leaders held captive at the Castle – Adam Tas, Chief Sekhukhune, Adam Kok, King Langalibalele and others.
- Forgotten sporting heroes of the past, in particular rugby players, will be honoured with a photographic and memorabilia exhibition (all supplied by the players) in May.
- The official opening of the conference centre and workshop areas in September – 'a full circle moment', with a place of education and upliftment now based in the same building as the torture chamber and Donker Gat ['dark hole'], which were both used to punish slaves who were caught trying to read.
- A weekly summer music concert/picnic in the park in November.

Subject to change. For info, visit castleofgoodhope.co.za.