

# THE SADF AND CONSERVATION

## Admiralty House, Simonstown

Admiralty House is the oldest and unquestionably the most interesting building in Simonstown. It was originally the home of Antoni Visser, a former Dutch soldier whose willingness to serve as the Dutch East India Company's unofficial representative in Simon's Bay probably encouraged him to build the house. A double-storeyed house approximately on the site of the present Admiralty House is shown on a map dated circa 1740.

On 22 April 1814 the house was sold to the representative of the Admiralty and it later became the official residence of the Royal Navy's Commander-in-Chief at the Cape which it remained until February 1957. In March 1957 it became the official residence of the SA Naval Chief of Staff (the designation is now Chief of the Navy) which it was to remain until 31 January 1977 when the Chief of the Navy moved back to Pretoria.

From 1977 to 1978 it was the official residence of

the Naval Officer-in-Command, Simonstown. It was then converted into a Senior Officers' Wardroom and as such it still serves as the official residence of the Chief of the Navy when he is in Simonstown.

The building was badly damaged in a gale in 1857 and the triangular pediment was probably destroyed at this time. It was not rebuilt. The flat roof which had leaked badly was replaced with a low pitched roof in 1875 and the exterior of the building has changed little since then.

The garden which has been the venue for naval weddings, garden and cocktail parties is almost as fascinating as the building. It is worthy of a fuller description than can be given here.

Admiral's Residence was proclaimed a national monument in 1972 but became Admiralty House once more on 26 March 1979. It is still the delightful setting for important naval functions and a showpiece of which the Nation may be proud.

Lt Cdr E.M. Bisset



## Fort Wynyard, Green Point

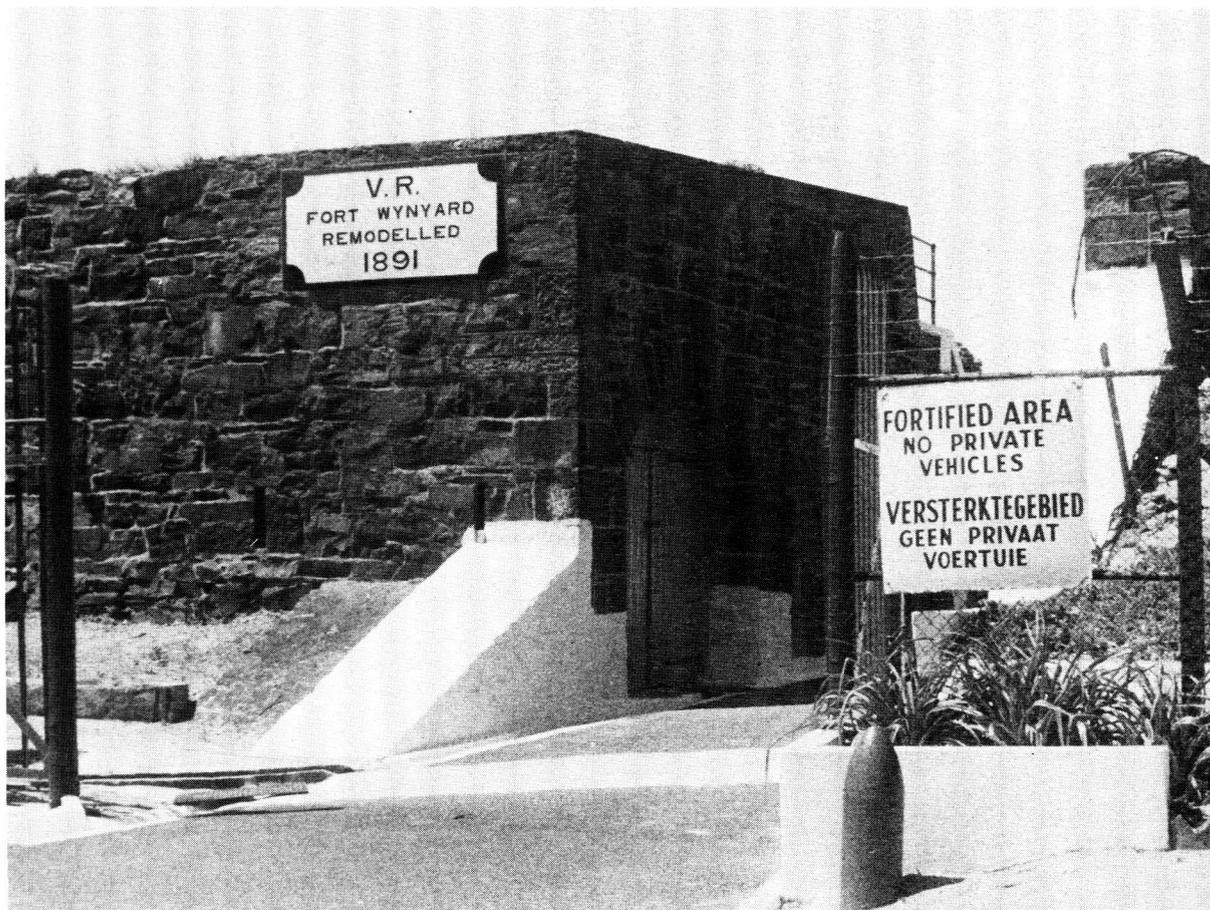
Fort Wynyard was built on the site of Kyk in de Pot Battery in February 1862 and was armed with 68-pounder guns by the following month. Kyk in de Pot Battery had been built on the orders of Col R.J. Gordon in 1795 to strengthen the Great Mouille Battery. The battery was remodelled in 1887 and the surviving buildings include an interesting mixture of old and relatively new structures. This is hardly surprising since the battery was a vital link in South Africa's coastal defences until 1955 when coast artillery became obsolete. Wynyard Battery, as it was then known, was Cape Town's examination battery in both world wars.

One of the emplacements for a 9.2-inch gun on a disappearing mounting has survived and is the only one in South Africa. The two 6-inch Breech Loading guns which were mounted in 1914 and their underground shell and cartridge stores are also of considerable interest. Other buildings include the Long Gallery, Battery Observation

Post, engine room, workshops and a seemingly endless labyrinth of tunnels, passages, underground storerooms and magazines. Most of the guns with which the battery was once armed have been moved back there. One of the most interesting guns is South Africa's first anti-aircraft gun, a 15-pounder Breech Loading Converted gun which was first mounted in the battery in 1917.

Although the temporary wooden buildings erected during the Second World War have not survived, the battery is unquestionably the most important surviving coast artillery battery in the country and will be a fitting home for the SA Defence Force's Museum of coast and anti-aircraft artillery and a SA Naval Museum to be built outside the fortified area. Fort Wynyard was proclaimed a national monument in 1976. Work on the conversion of the battery into a museum started in 1982.

Lt Cdr W.M. Bisset



## 'The View'

The Chief of the South African Defence Force, General Constand Viljoen, SSA, SD, SM, recently officially opened the Regimental Headquarters of the Transvaal Scottish in Johannesburg at the historic building known as The View.

Situated in one of the city's oldest suburbs, Parktown, the building is in the process of being declared a National Monument.

The move by the Transvaal Scottish into the building represented the end of a long search to find a permanent home for the Regiment, and many hours of voluntary service have been given by members in an effort to restore The View to its original glory.

The View, a magnificent although unusual example of late colonial architecture, was built in 1896 by the prominent mining magnate, Sir Thomas Major Cullinan. Although this building was intended to provide a stately family home

away from the dust and clamour of the old Ferreira's Camp, it was not then as it is today. It may well have been that the initial building was single storey, however major improvements were made to the building after the 1899–1902 war. The house boasts many historically important features, amongst which are the baroque murals in the entrance hall and staircase, and the fine wooden balcony and railing on the facade.

Much of the intricate work owes its origin to the Italian craftsmen who were employed in the construction of so valuable an example of the architecture and building of this period.

Unfortunately it has been impossible thus far to undertake the restoration of some of the features as a result of restrictions placed on the Regimental Council by the National Monuments Commission, the lack of suitably qualified tradesmen and the cost of employing such workmen, should they be found. However, every attempt has been made to capture the essential character of this grand old house.



Sir Thomas Major Cullinan was an extremely influential person in the development of the Witwatersrand – the heartland of South Africa.

He was a master builder, soldier of renown, financier and pioneer. Indeed, he started his career as a builder moving to the Rand with his family in 1886 and was eventually appointed Managing Director of the Rand Brick and Tile Company, before developing interests in diamond mining.

In his address to the 300 dignitaries who were present at the official opening of The View, General Viljoen said: 'Although circumstances have changed since Cullinan's day, the enthusiasm, pride, love of soldiering and social conscience that resulted in the formation of the Transvaal Scottish prevail today. The Witwatersrand and in particular Johannesburg is honoured to be associated with this regiment. The city has owed its very existence at least in part to the Transvaal Scottish: it was during 1914 and 1922 that the regiment was called upon to defend it against the strikes which it did with great courage and loss of life. Also, in the two world wars, the Zulu Rebellion of 1906 and the current war being waged on our borders, the Transvaal Scottish has represented Johannesburg and the Rand, its traditional recruiting area, with bravery and spirit.'

'A regimental home has a very important part to play in the life of any regiment, for it is here that the traditions and character of a regiment are nurtured, it is here that a regiment gathers, it is the place where a regimental colour is stored. The role of a regimental home assumes an almost mystical significance in reflecting the nature of the regiment,' said General Viljoen.

For many years the Transvaal Scottish shared the facilities provided by the Johannesburg Drill Hall with other citizen force units situated in Johannesburg and with the Witwatersrand Command Headquarters personnel. Unfortunately, with a rapidly expanding defence force it became impossible for the happy association of regiments at the Drill Hall to continue as a result of very restricted accommodation.

'Having occupied temporarily several headquarters since, finally the regiment has, through the kind offices of the Johannesburg City Council, found a place to put down its roots, so suitable in its association with the regiment, through its links with Johannesburg's illustrious past,' concluded General Viljoen.

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