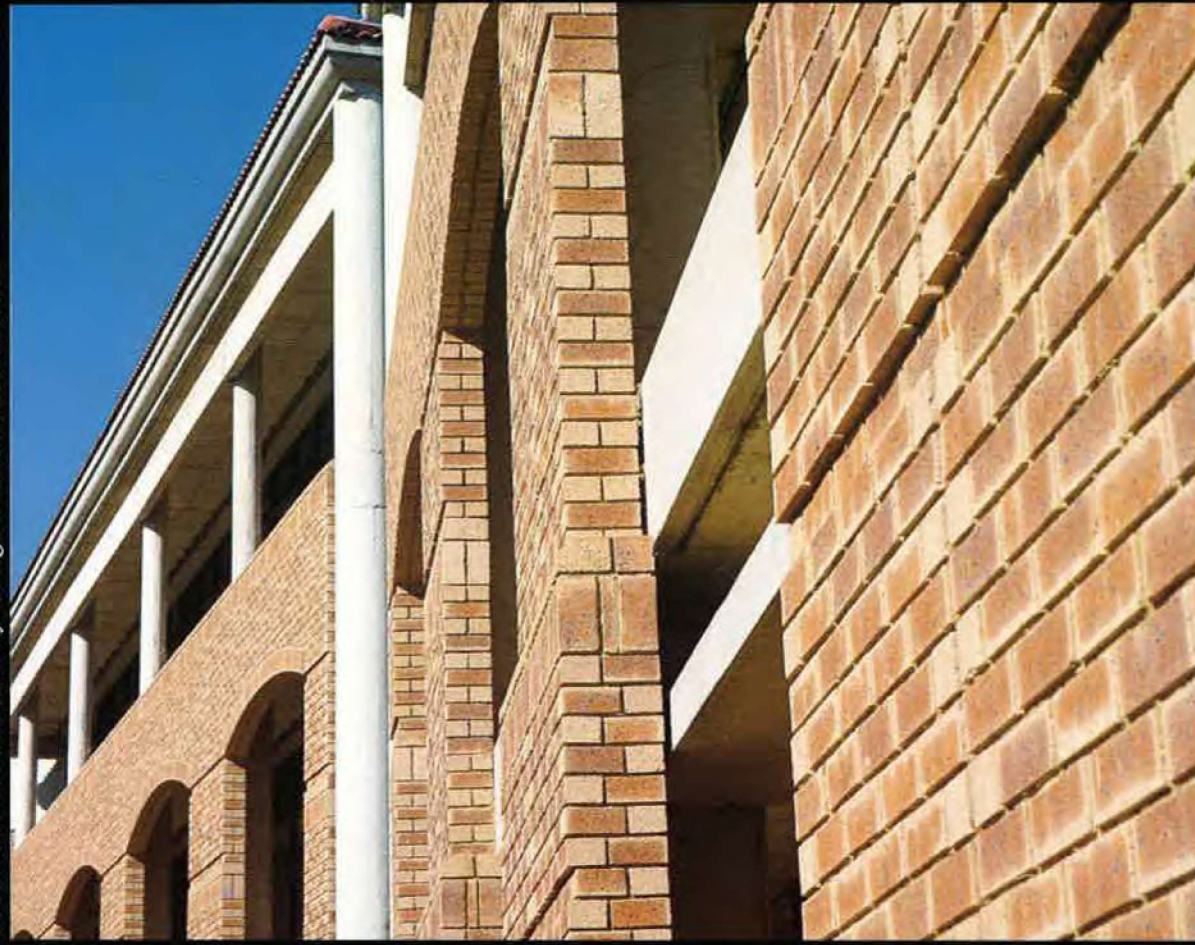


Corobrik Transvaal's Country Cottage Travertine from Rietvlei



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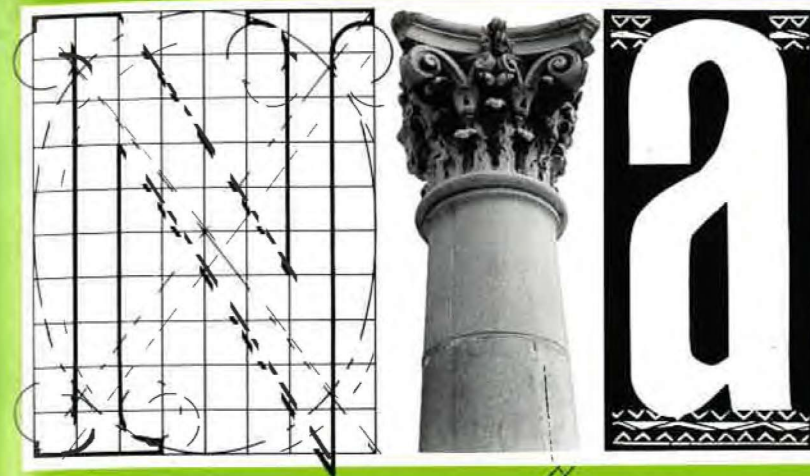


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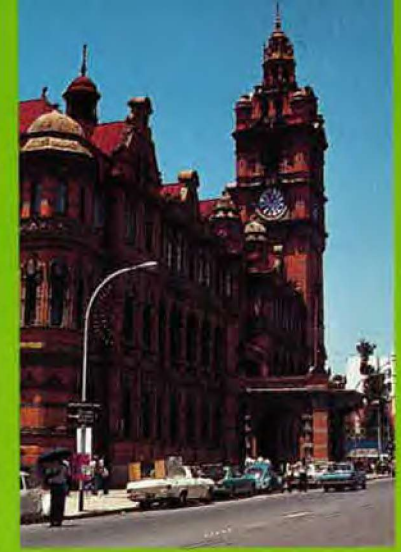
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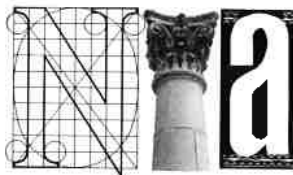
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## Pietermaritzburg Issue



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## Public Sector Historic Buildings: An Approach to their Conservation

Nigel Robson



Old Merchiston Boarding  
Establishment,  
Pietermaritzburg

THE PROBLEM of retaining old buildings to satisfy the needs of conservation and good business practice is often given scant thought, and the demolisher's hammer may destroy opportunities even before they are considered. Two recent projects in central Pietermaritzburg provide solutions which, in their particular circumstance, set a precedent.

The former Girls Collegiate School and Merchiston Boarding Establishment are adjacent turn-of-the-century institutional buildings owned by the Natal Provincial Administration. They are both double-storeyed, constructed of local pink facebrick, and have corrugated iron pitched roofs, timber verandas and sash windows.

In recent years these buildings have been subjected to a variety of temporary uses which included National Health Dental Service offices, NAPAC stores, and Riot Police quarters. Lack of maintenance and lack of funds for repairs eventually left them seemingly good only for demolition. In fact, certain items such as roof ventilators, windows and doors were removed from one building and sent to Midmar Historical Village for re-use.

Public concern at the demise of these two buildings prompted the Provincial Administration to look at ways of saving them by means of private sector involvement. The properties were advertised for development proposals by private organisations, which in return for carrying out approved repairs and alterations would have these costs set off against payment of market-

related rents.

A twenty-five year lease agreement is at present being negotiated with Tembaletu Trust, for the Girls Collegiate building to be used as a non-formal education centre. Merchiston Boarding Establishment has been similarly leased to Edugro Trust for, amongst other things, a therapy and assessment centre for handicapped children. Work on both buildings commenced during 1990.

Girls Collegiate building is the more unusual case in that, while it preserves its colonial-style origin, its new use crosses cultural boundaries. Both the exterior and interior are being faithfully repaired with relatively little alteration work. The project is funded by local and overseas donors. The contractor is Sunflower Concepts, the training division of Murray & Roberts (Natal). Use is made of trainee labour, which reduces costs to materials only. Whilst this method is comparatively slow, the high standard of supervision should result in a competent job, due for completion in 1992.

A different approach was taken in conserving the Merchiston Boarding Establishment. Edugro Trust needed to demonstrate viability and required sub-tenants to achieve this. The building had to be recycled with the interior gutted and the exterior repaired. The contractors are George Black & Son and Gordon Verhoef & Krause (Natal), and the work is virtually complete. The success of this venture is encouraging for the future of other old buildings in similar circumstances. Despite major internal alterations which

included inserting reinforced concrete floors, the Trust has saved two thirds of the current estimated cost of a new building.

The public sector has had its buildings repaired and maintained at no cost, and the tenants have historical accommodation at an affordable price. Of particular satisfaction is that Pietermaritzburg has kept two of its much-loved buildings in good order. The National Monuments Council has recognised merit in this enterprise, by listing the Merchiston Boarding Establishment on the National Register and by its decision to consider Girls Collegiate building for National Monument status once the work is complete.

Nigel Robson, an architect recently appointed to the NPA Directorate of Works, is responsible for national monuments and historic buildings under the control of the Directorate.

### Professional news

#### Changes in partnership

D McLagan and EV Plekker have entered into partnership under the style of McLagan and Plekker, practising at Ballito  
HW Cooper and RJ Cooper have entered into partnership under the style of Cooper Architects, practising at Umhlanga Rocks  
D Hughes, LD Bryan and MF Birss have entered into partnership under the style of Hughes Bryan Birss cc at 13 Princess Street, Pietermaritzburg

ND Hayes-Hill is now practising on his own account under the style of Neil Hayes-Hill Architect at 509 Saulani Musgrave Centre, 40 Miller Road, Durban

FGC Emmett and PM Emmett (Mrs) are practising under the style of Emmett: Emmett Architects at 551 Musgrave Road, Durban

W Claassen is now practising under the style of Wynand Claassen incorporating BAU Architects

#### Changes in address

DR Webster to PO Box 408, Westville  
RM Wildenboer to PO Box 2974, Durban  
FW Powers to 32 Ashcombe Park, 150 Prospect Hall Road, Durban North

MV Pennington to 119 Cato Road, Durban

WH Morris to 13 Palmiet Drive, Westville

KS Long to PO Box 2052, Pietermaritzburg

CA Marinier to 17 Voortrekker Street, Pietermaritzburg

FA Jackson to PO Box 81, Lidgerton

CJ Cross to 17 Berea Road, Howick

JP Todd to Private Bag 9041, Pietermaritzburg

M McKinlay to 11 Stranack Street, Pietermaritzburg

R Scheepers (Mrs) to c/o PO Box 4003, Durban

H Ramadhin to PO Box 65025, Reservoir Hills

SR Pratt to c/o Ashcombe Park, Prospect Hall, Durban North

TL Cockhead (Mrs) to 102 Monthaven, 605 Currie Road, Durban

#### Transfers in class

DG van Zyl - Retired to Ordinary

JF Richards - Ordinary to Retired

FW Powers - Ordinary to Retired

#### Changes in Membership

DS Hattingh - TIA to NIA - 246 Clark Road, Glenwood, Durban

GW Frencken - TIA to NIA - (Frencken Associate Architect), 88 Madeline Road, Morningside, Durban

K Stander (Mrs) - OFSJA to NIA - (Karin Stander Architect), PO Box 201210, Durban North

VH Poltreman - NIA to BIA

L Poulsen (Mrs) - NIA to TIA

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## editorial Pietermaritzburg



Self portrait -  
Trevor Tennant,  
Guest Editor

PIETERMARITZBURG has felt the impact of national and regional legislation from the time of its founding by the Voortrekkers. Noticeable is the gridiron layout based on the erven module, bordered to the northwest by the Dorp Spruit and to the south by the Umzinduzi River, with the central block set aside for public purposes.

To this grid pattern, many plots of which were subdivided during British rule, one sees the application of domestic Victorian architecture, characterised by its pink salmon brickwork and ornate tracery; and in the public buildings, a more neo-classical style visually complementing the domestic stock in materials used, yet still adhering to a similar ethic in the facade treatment.

The City's recent history as reflected in its architecture displays a shift towards the international, universal style of building, hand in hand with experimentation with new materials and aesthetic attitudes, many of which have attracted reaction from the local press in search of nominations for the ugliest buildings in the City.

A recent trend, initiated by public taste and recognition of the values and concerns of urban design, has been a move towards a more conservative approach, by means of the visual integration of new buildings within the existing matrix in a manner complementary to the older buildings.

As with most cities in South Africa, the influence of the Group Areas Act is most

acute. The City plan, encompassing the suburbs and townships, resembles a patchwork quilt neatly arranged in the hues, textures and gradings of its racially delineated fabric, all according to the pattern of this once all-powerful legislation.

This law has contributed much, if not entirely, to the distribution of land and its use, in as indelible a manner as the original Voortrekker gridiron layout.

With the now imminent repealing of the various Apartheid Acts, and rumours that Pietermaritzburg may well lose its capital status, the City has reached yet another milestone in its history.

There is no doubt that Pietermaritzburg has in the past mirrored the country's varied history, in war, in peace, in its attitudes and in its peoples, all reflected in the architecture of the day.

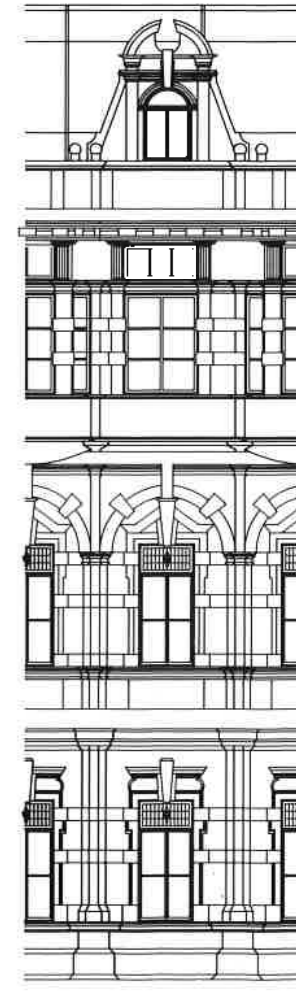
What is possible to note at this embryonic stage of transition in legislation is the fraying at the edges of the patchwork quilt, with tensions wearing the fabric thin at points. It is hoped that, once the pressure has been released, the City's architects will be involved in the reknitting of the cityscape and its environs into revised patterns according to the new rules.

This issue deals with the City Council's concerns for listing buildings, and the proposed municipal by-law mechanism to conserve what is perceived as unique; the NPA's architectural division discusses privatisation of restoration, of which more and more may be seen in the future if the relocation of major Government institutions to Durban continues; and contributing practices demonstrate a range of recently completed buildings, from alterations and additions to industrial and commercial projects.

Trevor Tennant graduated at the University of Natal in 1979 and became a partner in the firm Meyer Pienaar & Partners in 1983. Two years later he joined the Pietermaritzburg practice founded by his father, Oliver, in 1967, as a partner.

COVER: Pietermaritzburg  
City Hall, Church Street.  
Part upper floor plan,  
House MacKenzie,  
Karkloof.

BELOW: Detail of City  
Hall, Pietermaritzburg



Conserving the unique character of Pietermaritzburg

Machiël Erasmus



ABOVE: Corner Longmarket Street and Commercial Road, Pietermaritzburg. Legislative Assembly, Town Hall and Police Station circa 1890, around what was known as Town Gardens. BELOW: Photograph a century later.

The unique charm of Pietermaritzburg is common cause. What is perhaps not generally appreciated are the distinctive qualities and elements that make this special place. Pietermaritzburg has a large concentration of distinguished Victorian and Edwardian buildings, which include public buildings of regional and local significance, commercial buildings, and residential buildings (many presently accommodating commercial functions). These fine buildings are important attributes, but it would be incorrect to assume that the character of the City is derived only from their presence. Historic buildings are only one of many contributing factors. At the city scale these consist of numerous features and qualities (both natural and man-made) which together constitute the urban environment: the surrounding hills; the rivers and water courses; the grid street network (which includes narrow lanes); the rows of trees lining most streets; brick stormwater channels; and other elements, many of which are not in themselves particularly significant, but which collectively produce a whole which is far more than the sum of the parts.

Contribution of Cottage Architecture

The contribution of Pietermaritzburg's "cottage architecture" to the positive character of the City is not generally appreciated. These modest buildings, which constitute the bulk of the urban fabric, are fundamentally important and form part of the "site making elements". Changes in land use, coupled with "modernisation" trends (flavoured by fashion) have led to insensitive changes to much of the older fabric. The attitude of building owners, often antagonistic to conservation for various reasons ranging from dissatisfaction with such constraint (they want to be able to do with their properties what they please),

to the association of traditional buildings with a backwardness and poverty, is unfortunate; and often leads to inappropriate building maintenance (e.g. the covering of corrugated iron roofs with metal tiles). The result has been the proliferation of "placeless" development over extensive parts of the City, and the consequent demise of a unique urban fabric.

Need for Urban Conservation

In recent times it has become apparent that if Pietermaritzburg is to retain its irreplaceable attributes, an appropriate conservation programme has to be incorporated as part of the planning process. Meaningful conservation measures can not be limited to the protection of a few isolated buildings which have been proclaimed national monuments. For a conservation strategy to succeed it has to take into account the total urban environment.

Catalogue of Buildings

An important basis for conservation has been established by the publishing in 1986 of *The Buildings of Pietermaritzburg - Volume One*. This is an inventory of all buildings and sites in the central grid network of the city (essentially the extent of the original Voortrekker dorp). A feature is the evaluation of buildings by means of a series of criteria. The catalogue serves as an invaluable planning tool and is also a useful source of information to actors involved with the built environment.

Amendments to Town Planning Scheme

Several progressive amendments have been made to statutory legislation to promote urban conservation. These include town planning provisions to "list" buildings, transfer of development rights, the accommodation of alternative

uses, fiscal incentives for building owners, and control over demolition of buildings.

Demolition of Buildings

Legislation requires that no building or structure may be demolished without the approval of the City Council - implemented to prevent the indiscriminate loss of significant urban fabric.

Control over Nature of Development

An integral part of conservation is the control over new development. The importance of designing new buildings and alterations to existing buildings to harmonise with the context has been recognised.

The successful "stitching" of new development into historic urban fabric is of course a sensitive issue, and many factors have to be taken into account in order to arrive at a design solution which is both functional and environmentally sensitive. An important aspect of the creation of successful cityscapes is a thorough knowledge and understanding of the local urban environment. The City Council is presently engaged in the formation of "Guidelines" to inform and assist actors involved in the built environment.

Public Participation and Awareness

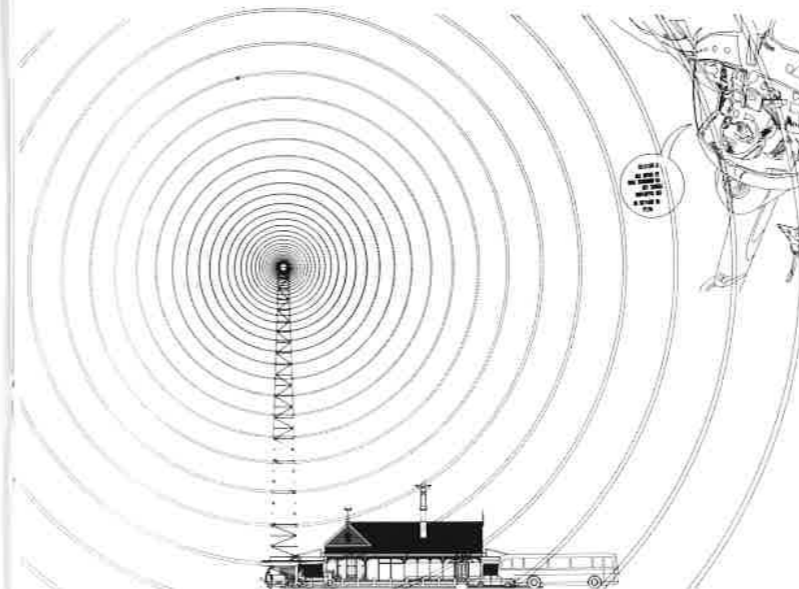
Apart from an increased conservation awareness generally, there has been a marked increase in public attitudes on matters affecting the built environment. Public awareness in urban conservation manifested itself in the establishment of groups such as the "Pietermaritzburg Society" (which includes several local architects). This organisation maintains constant vigilance on the City's buildings. Other groups include local "Street Associations" which stimulate public interest in the specific locality. These associations of local house owners serve also to protect noteworthy features of architectural or public interest in the immediate area, and to promote high standards of development.

Conclusion

The basic framework for urban conservation has thus been established. It is slowly dawning that conservation has come to stay. Lessons and traditions of the past can be understood and creatively applied to our challenging contemporary situation.

*Machiël Erasmus graduated in architecture at the University of Natal and subsequently completed a City Planning and Urban Design Degree at the University of Cape Town. He currently serves as urban designer and conservation architect within the Pietermaritzburg City Engineers Department.*

Offices for Commercial Communications



- 1. Reception
- 2. Stock room
- 3. Telephone operators
- 4. Staff room
- 5. Car telephone assembly
- 6. Radio repairs
- 7. Office
- 8. Administration
- 9. Store
- 10. Installation bays
- 11. Visitor parking
- 12. Staff parking

The building is situated at the lower end of Chapel Street, a transitional area on the fringes of the central business district. Homes built at the turn of the century in this area, which prior to granting of business rights formed a unified rich streetscape, have systematically been butchered and nibbled away. In an attempt to look businesslike, finials, tracery, columns and sliding sash windows were removed or, at best, hidden behind giant tin facades with the inevitable signage applied thereto.

The client purchased the building in a very poor state of repair and after considering the option of demolition, it was decided instead to enhance the existing elevation employing the language of its Victorian style.

The plan accommodates the administration, servicing, installation and equipment for the monitoring of mobile telephones, paging, beepers and other general radio communications serving the city and outlying areas.

Architects Tennant & Tennant cc  
Contractor Owner/Builder



New offices & shops for Old Mutual Properties, Longmarket Street

In developing this central site, an attempt has been made to allow for the extension of the Pietermaritzburg "Lane System" in terms of the "Pietermaritzburg 1990" plan.

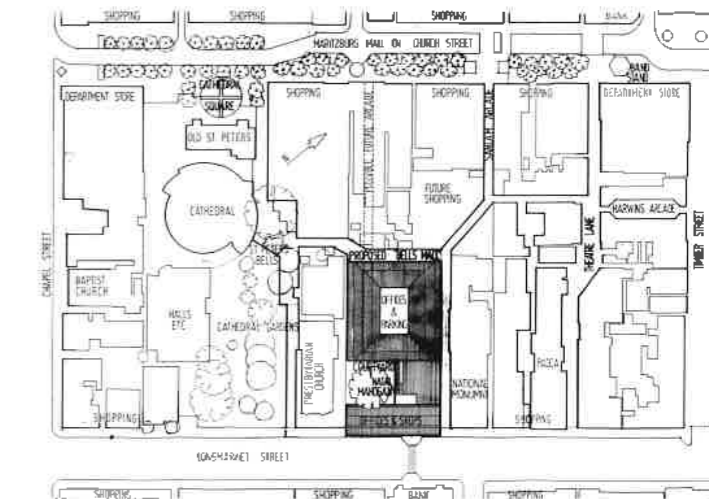
The building has been set back from the rear boundary to allow for the "Bells Mall" to link Harwins Arcade to the Cathedral grounds. To allow this to happen a parking area behind Sanlam Arcade will need to be developed by Sanlam. Other adjoining properties facing Church Street and recently purchased by the client will have to wait for leases to expire.

Despite the long time scale involved, the rear of the ground floor of the new development, currently to be used as parking, has been designed for further conversion to shops.

The bulk of the building has been set back some 26 metres from the front boundary in order to save a mature Natal Mahogany tree and the front block has been kept to two floors to maintain the scale of the adjoining national monument and Presbyterian Church.

The building is finished externally in a light red brick with an olive green Mansard roof with dormers.

Architects Small, Pettit & Associates  
Partner Gordon R Small  
Associate Nick Grice



## commercial development Pietermaritzburg

### Allerton Partnership Office Building (Jeffares & Green), Cascades

The project, commissioned by the Allerton Partnership, was for a small office development to be tailor-made for the needs of their tenant, consulting engineers Jeffares and Green Incorporated.

Jeffares and Green were given a major role in determining the accommodation and approval of the architect's design.

This relationship was exceptional at all times and their enthusiasm remained intact from the onset of the design to the completion of the project.

The building is designed as a load-bearing brick structure, and is situated on an attractive site with a gentle slope from west to east.

The fall in the ground has been exploited to its fullest, allowing the building to follow the slope, and in so doing the interior spaces are filled with interest, especially at the interchange which occurs in the foyer.

The massing and the exterior of the building respond to the rational and functional arrangement of the office space, and are left simple and unadorned.

Architects *Hughes Todd Bryan Inc.*  
Project architect *Llew Bryan* assisted by *Rafeq Hansa, Dave Reasbeck and Bridgette Drennan*  
Quantity Surveyors *Lang Binney Associates*  
Structural Engineers *Jeffares and Green*  
Mechanical and Electrical Engineers *Bidermann Finn Beekhuizen & Associates*  
Contractors *Stocks Natal (Pty) Limited*  
Interior design *Stefanie Woodhouse Interiors*  
Landscape design *Sue Tarr.*

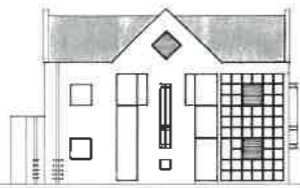
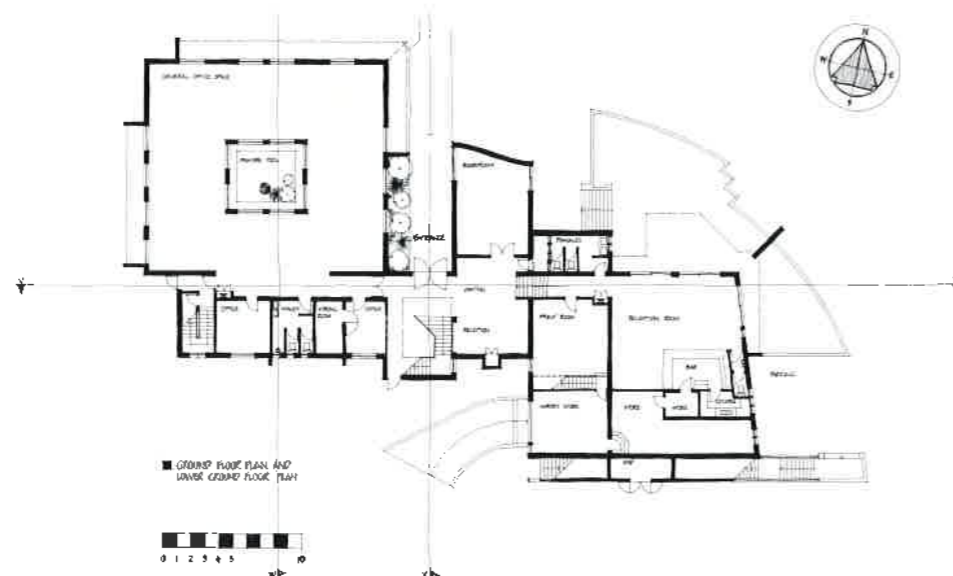
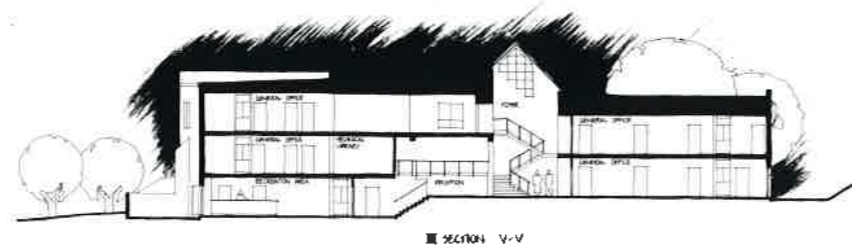
### Medical Facility, East Street

The building occupies a corner site within the downtown area which forms the eastern edge of the city.

The building, which houses the practice of a group of doctors, was designed to respond to the corner location whilst making maximum use of the site which was subjected to road widening along both street frontages.

The building takes the form of a two-storey brick structure, symmetrical about the corner which houses the stair, visible from the street. This transparency is further emphasized at night when the stair is lit.

Architect *Ismail Cassinjee*



1. Parking
2. Reception
3. Administration
4. General office
5. Procedures room
6. Dispensary
7. Refuse bins
8. Consulting rooms



## education Pietermaritzburg

### The Wykeham Collegiate School

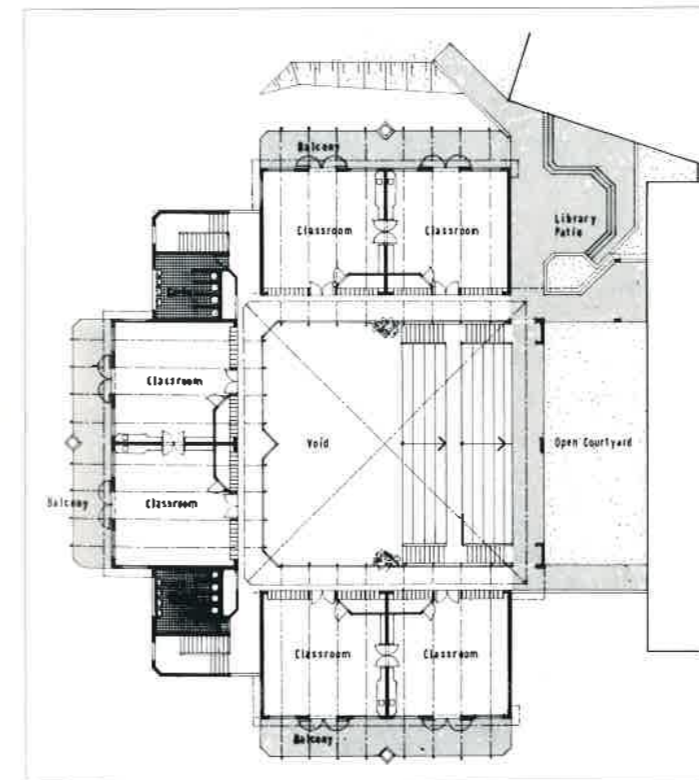
In October 1988 the Board of Governors of two of Pietermaritzburg's oldest and highly respected private girls' schools, Wykeham Girls School and Girls Collegiate School, decided to amalgamate to form one establishment now named The Wykeham Collegiate School.

Apart from the obvious pooling of resources and traditions gained over a combined period of over two hundred years of education, the major objective of the merger was to sell the property of one of the schools to raise funds for the construction and provision of new facilities and equipment on the other school site.

The architect's brief was to add new, or alter existing, buildings as required in preparation for the influx of 250 girls. The exercise had to be completed by the January start of 1990.

Frantic analysis and briefing sessions immediately commenced during which it was established that new buildings comprising a sixteen-classroom junior school, a media centre and an art centre would be required; at the same time major upgrading would be necessary to the remaining buildings of the school and in particular to the administration wing, boarding establishments, senior school, staff accommodation, kitchen, dining, chapel and sporting facilities!

*For the purpose of this article only the junior school will be reviewed.*  
Editor



### The Wykeham Collegiate Junior School

A new two-storey building consisting of 12 classrooms grouped around a central multi-purpose atrium space was evolved, using the natural slope of the site to give ground level access to both the upper and lower floors; and more classrooms were provided by incorporating the existing art wing.

Pairs of interlinking classrooms (same class year) were positioned together around the atrium with direct internal access to the central space.

The walls of the classrooms facing into the atrium are formed by lockers, shelving and pinboard exhibition space. Each classroom has direct access to the ground floor or private balconies externally.

All classroom balconies and the atrium space are carpeted throughout (without thresholds) to visually unify the spaces and provide easy movement from one space to the other.

Lower ground floor classrooms have rough-coated concrete waffle slab ceilings and the upper ground floor classrooms have open truss ceilings; this, coupled with individual views from the classrooms is intended to add variety to the years spent in the building by the pupils.

A light grey colour theme was introduced throughout with colour coding on the classroom doors only. The colour scheme was specifically muted so as not to be in conflict with the pupils' art work which is continuously on display throughout the classrooms and atrium space. The open trusses in the classrooms are extensively used for the display of mobile art works.

Since occupation, the atrium space has been used and enjoyed beyond anticipation for a variety of uses and has become a vital element in the school.

Architects *Carter-Brown & Baillon*  
Quantity Surveyor *Lang Binney Associates*  
Structural Engineer *Peter Vigar*  
Mechanical & Electrical Consultants *BFBA*  
Contractors *Stocks Natal (Pty) Ltd.*



## sporting Pietermaritzburg

### Pietermaritzburg Turf Club - Major building alterations and additions

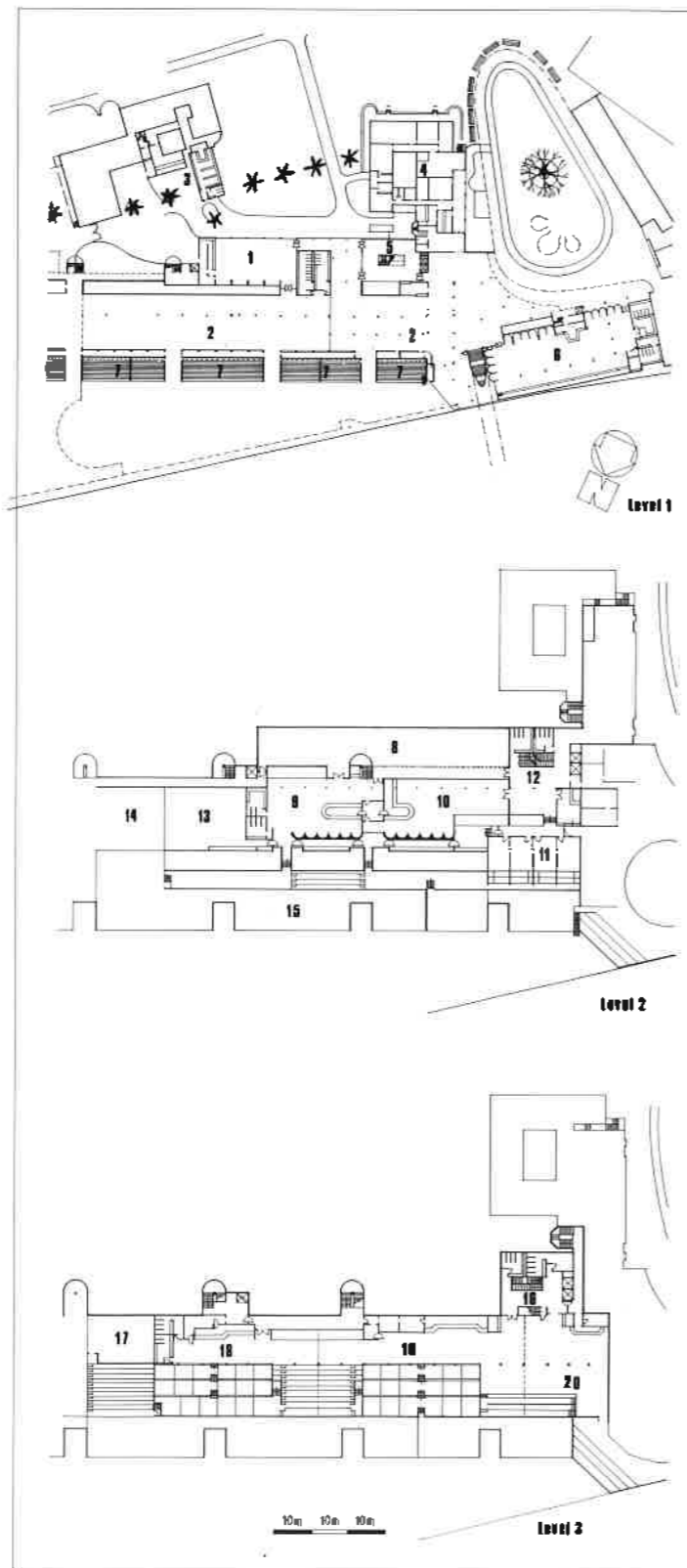
A major building operation has taken place over the last 2 years to provide accommodation for the public, owners and trainers, and the upgrading of various areas with restaurants and bars.



The new accommodation consists of the following:

- An entrance to the members and stewards area and other facilities via a central entrance lobby which has lifts, escalators and stairs.
- An air-conditioned glass enclosed terrace area, with an excellent view of the race course, which caters for meals served while the races are being run.
- Four executive suites available for hire and catering for private functions of between 20 and 80 people.
- Special tiered, covered, easily accessible parade-ring viewing provided for patrons in the terrace, the two ladies bars and the executive suites.
- A restaurant with an English pub decor, providing food, draft beer and other refreshments.
- A restaurant providing light lunches and bar service for patrons in the paddock enclosure.
- Four bars: *The Golden Spur*, a "men only" bar; *The Scarlet Lady*, named after an exceptional sprinting filly and used by owners and trainers; *Bobbie's*, named after Mr Bobbie Norton, a previous chairman; *Royce's Bar*, available to club members, owners and trainers, overlooking the track and giving an excellent view of the racing.

Architects *Brian Servant Partnership*  
Project Architect *Brian Servant*  
Project Co-ordinator *Mr C Parel*  
Photography *Lionel Ashley*



- |   |                                       |                                   |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Level 1</b>                            | <b>Level 2</b>                        | <b>Level 3</b>                    |
| 1. The Paddock Restaurant                 | 8. Garden terrace                     | 16. Foyer                         |
| 2. The Paddock Enclosure Concourse        | 9. Bobbie's Bar                       | 17. Bar                           |
| 3. The Golden Spur Raceday administration | 10. The Scarlet Lady Executive suites | 18. Terrace - Executive Racing    |
| 4. The Golden Spur Raceday administration | 11. Foyer                             | 19. Terrace - Owners and Trainers |
| 5. Entrance foyer                         | 12. Kitchen                           | 20. Terrace - Members' lounge     |
| 6. The Tavern                             | 13. Golden Tote deck                  |                                   |
| 7. Open stands                            | 14. Open stands                       |                                   |

## institutional Pietermaritzburg

### Northdale Assessment Centre

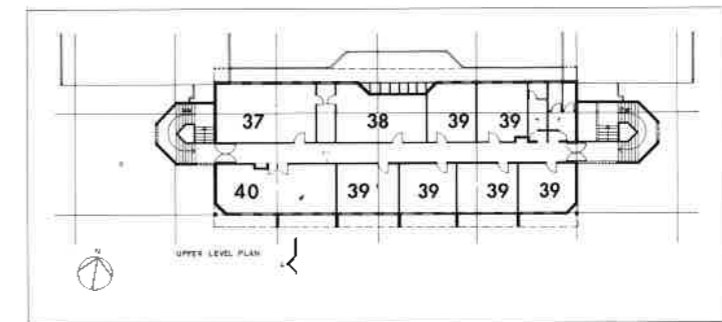
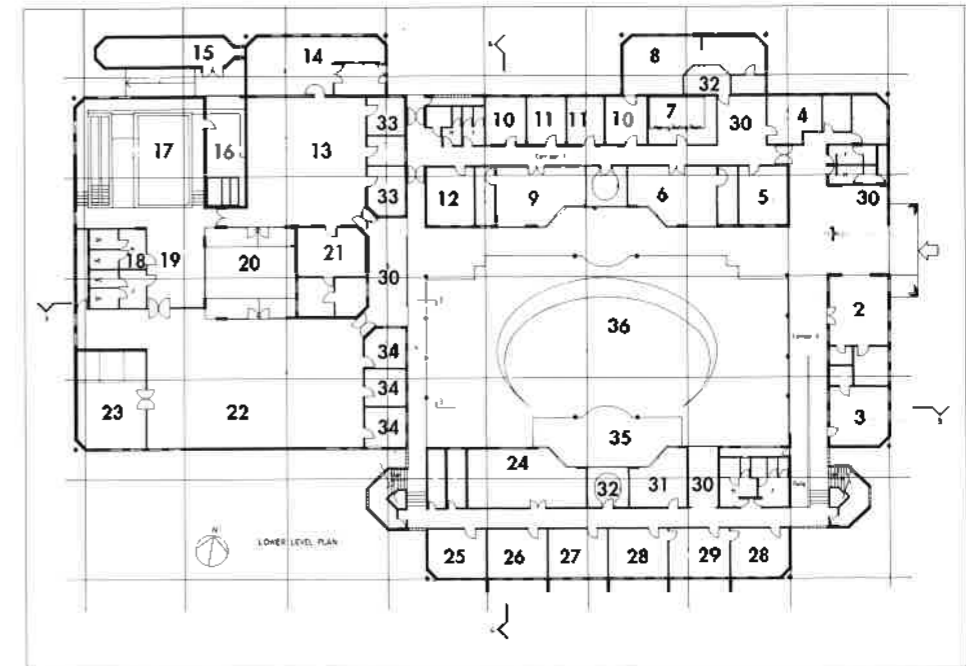
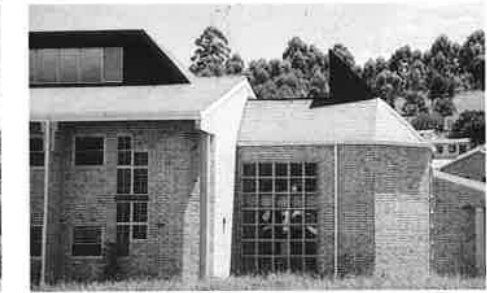
The site, located in a low lying area of Northdale, presented severe soil and drainage problems which complicated construction. In addition, a stream that cut across the lower end of the site had to be channelled and covered over in order to create additional space.

The building was originally designed to function as a "School Clinic" in which pupils with learning defects (psychological, physical, social, speech and hearing) would be assessed and treated before being returned to the normal school stream. However, at a very late stage, the clients decided to change the function of the building to that of an Assessment Centre for disabled people. Consequently, major changes to the design had to be made at the commencement of the contract.

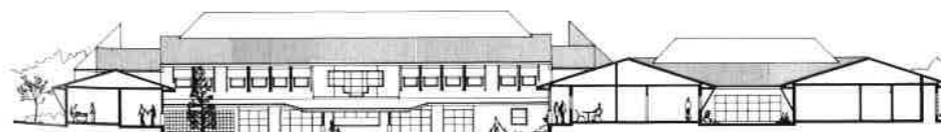
The completed centre now houses assessment facilities for Psychology, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech and Hearing Therapy as well as a small Primary Health Care Centre. Provision has been made for a future Work Adjustment Centre.

The main facilities are arranged around a large open court which will be used for the observation of patients and wheelchair training. The Hydrotherapy, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy accommodation is arranged around a second small open landscaped court. All parts of the building used by the public are located on the ground floor and are wheelchair accessible. The double-storey south wing has offices for itinerant School Psychologists and staff.

Architects *Kiran Laloo Architects*  
Structural Engineers *Kathrada & Associates*  
Quantity Surveyors *Barnard Botes & Brink*  
Electrical and Mechanical Consultants  
*CA Du Toit & Partners*  
Contractor *Cyclone Construction (Pty) Ltd.*



South elevation



Section 3



Section 4

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Foyer                                      | 18. Change rooms            |
| 2. Clerical staff                             | 19. Spa bathroom            |
| 3. Senior Psychologist                        | 20. Open court              |
| 4. Medical examination room                   | 21. Occupational therapy    |
| 5. Physiotherapist                            | 22. Physiotherapy Gymnasium |
| 6. Group activities                           | 23. Electrotherapy          |
| 7. Hearing testing room                       | 24. Playroom                |
| 8. Speech therapy flat                        | 25. Pharmacy store          |
| 9. Group activities                           | 26. Pharmacy                |
| 10. Speech therapy                            | 27. Medical Officer         |
| 11. Speech therapist                          | 28. Consulting room         |
| 12. Occupational therapist                    | 29. Treatment room          |
| 13. Occupational therapy Major treatment room | 30. Waiting room            |
| 14. Woodwork room                             | 31. Family Room             |
| 15. AC Plant yard                             | 32. Observation             |
| 16. AC and Hydrotherapy plant room            | 33. Occupational therapy    |
| 17. Hydrotherapy pool Room                    | 34. Physiotherapy office    |
|   | 35. Terrace                 |
|   | 36. Open court              |
|   | 37. Resource centre         |
|   | 38. Conference room         |
|   | 39. Office                  |
|   | 40. Staff room              |

**institutional Pietermaritzburg**

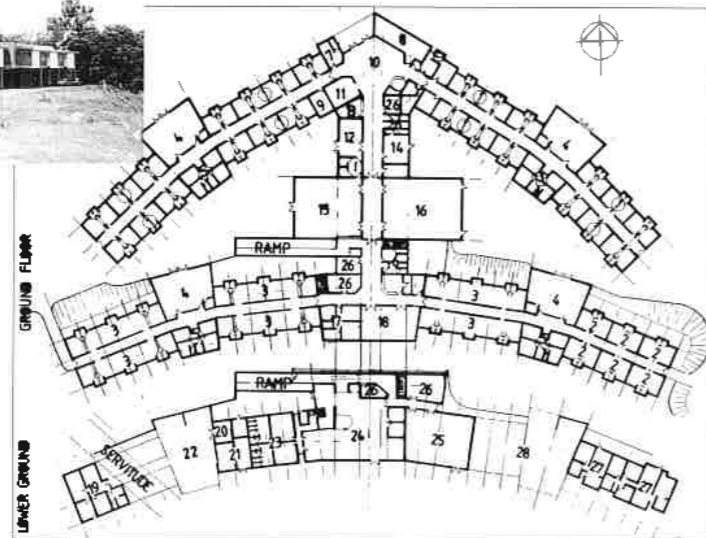
**Riverside Park - a home for the frail aged**

In 1984 the Pietermaritzburg and District Council for the Care of the Aged (PADCA) appointed the architect to design a home for frail aged persons, capacity 98 beds.



PADCA imposed few planning parameters: every pair of rooms was to share a toilet, the area of lounges was to be generous to allow for use as dining rooms, and the corridors had to be at least two metres wide.

Architect *Michael Dyer*  
Quantity Surveyors *Farrow Laing & Partners*  
Structural Design *Michael Dyer*  
Electrical and Mechanical Consultants *Biderman Finn Beekhuizen & Associates*



1. Residents (single rooms)
2. Residents (double rooms)
3. Residents (wards)
4. Lounge/day nurse
5. Baths
6. Toilets
7. Dispensary
8. Administration offices
9. Hairdresser
10. Entrance foyer
11. Reading room
12. Hobbies
13. Tuckshop
14. Staff room
15. Diningroom
16. Hall
17. Doctors' rooms
18. Chapel
19. Live-in staff
20. Transformer room
21. Workshop
22. Parking
23. Day staff change etc.
24. Kitchen
25. Laundry
26. Store
27. Staff flats
28. Open

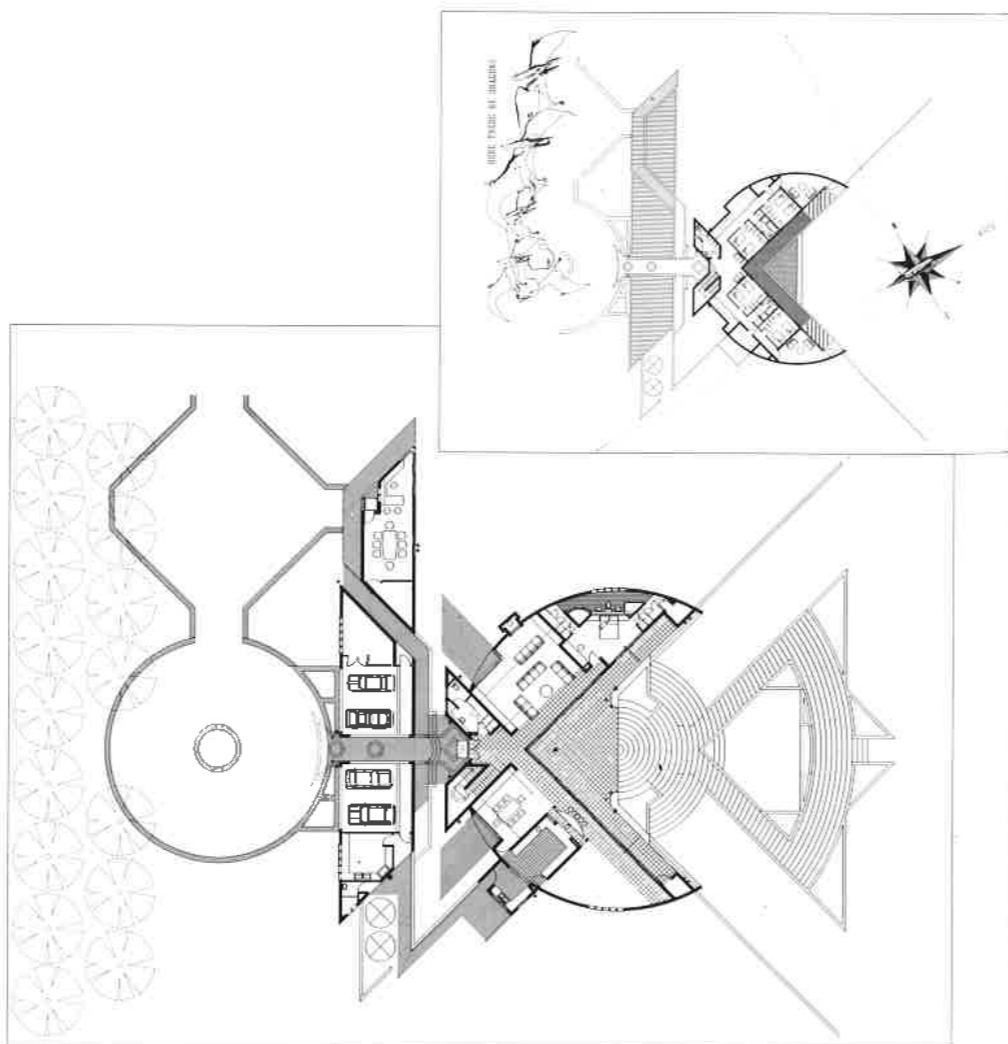
**domestic Pietermaritzburg**

**House Mackenzie, Karkloof**

The client, a major timber grower in the Karkloof area, required a homestead to accommodate a large family accustomed to the traditional space standards of the farm houses in the area.

The plan shape is a three-quarter circle with the circumference forming a barrier to the weather, reminiscent of the texture of the bark of a pine tree. The hollowed out circle invites the living spaces to the outside and vice versa, and overlook sparsely populated countryside stretching beyond Greytown, Seven Oaks, Fawn Leas, Cato Ridge and as far as the horizon.

Architects *Tennant & Tennant cc* assisted by *Nigel Smith*  
Contractor *Ray Byrne Builders*  
Engineers *Bradford Conning & Partners*



**obituary Barrie Biermann 1924-1991**

*The doyen of the South African architectural academic fraternity died in Durban over the Easter weekend. These tributes were submitted by Hans Hallen and Derek Wang:*

"TIS FORTY YEARS since Barrie Biermann came to the School of Architecture at the University of Natal and to a Durban that was still in the post-war development boom. He was recruited by Professor Paul Connell to build up the full time staff, when the school changed from the part-time school under the direction of Calvert MacDonald to its new form.

A favourite son and graduate of the University of Cape Town he came to the new post after a time working at the National Building Research Institute in its most optimistic days and before South Africa's exercise in social engineering dampened so much of the work of its institutions. He did research immediately after World War II when the NBRI was involved in setting standards for low cost housing. It was a theme with which he was familiar for it had been the subject of his thesis in his final year at University.

He travelled extensively in his post-graduate period as he completed his work on the origins of the Cape Dutch style. The result of his study was a new and enriched understanding of this architecture. To the irritation of some, we learnt that not all the Cape Dutch buildings were white walled but were painted in a spectrum of various warm ochre colours (reflecting as it did a more open and less doctrinaire time).

His understanding of the architecture of South Africa was encapsulated in his remarkable *Books in Suid-Afrika*. A succinctly written book, beautifully illustrated with his own drawings, it showed the main themes of the history of building in South Africa. It explained the early days, the British influence, and traversed work as diverse as Indian temples, 'kapstyl' houses, the classic Zulu kraals of the Mahlabatini region, and the corrugated iron churches of Rev Rose. More than anyone else he set the agenda for the study of building, particularly indigenous building, in South Africa.

His interests were not constrained by a narrow view for he saw architecture as a broad and complex intertwining of the arts. To him, urban and landscape design was architecture, sharing a place with sculpture and painting in giving expression to the many cultural drives of a society.

He brought to his teaching a rich understanding of the scale, character and form of buildings as well as their symbolic value, and demonstrated how appropriate setting and interaction between buildings could best shape urban architecture. The Durban he saw had opportunities like Venice in its relation between

harbour and city. His examples in teaching were drawn from sources as diverse as Greek temple siting, the way in which the Hindu temples of Durban were placed, the organisation of buildings in the Malay Quarter, or the form and shape of Greek villages. The catholic nature of his taste and the inquiring nature of his scholarship gave his lectures and writings a great freshness, whether he dealt with architecture, heraldry or red wine!

Never a follower of fads and their obscure language, his writings and language were free from jargon. As a teacher he was enthusiastic. To him, as he told me every year, the new batch of students was the best ever. He communicated with great clarity, although this was tempered by the enigmatic in the choice of metaphor and allusion. He was of liberal mind and in the struggle with the limits of freedom vis-a-vis order, he would come down on the side of freedom for the creative in design. Long before the feverish debate on Post-Modernism he taught that parallel with the creative urge to make the new, there was the need to come to terms with inherited values. With this he showed us the role of irony and mannerism in architecture and art. Although the movement now so strong for the preservation of good old buildings had a powerful influence in his teaching, he was cautious of attempts to a codification that constrained the inventive.

He leaves no long list of buildings built - these were few in number as he never sought out a role as practitioner. This is not to say that his buildings have had no influence, for his own house built some thirty years ago has given inspiration and pleasure to his pupils, friends and colleagues. In its design he gave physical expression to his teachings to wonderful and enduring effect.

He lived to see his students come back as professors and heads of departments and gain approval for their skills from their peers here and abroad, and rewarded with prizes, awards and honours. He did not live to see his teaching return its due in built form in both scale and quality of building in the Durban region. After the first development flurry of the fifties and early sixties, Durban receded into a political and investment backwater that did not provide the sustained economic growth needed to feed the talents of his pupils. They built well and with imagination but mostly the work was small in scale.

Since the death of Dr Rex Martienssen, South African architecture has needed a man of scholarship to fulfill the cultural need we have for heroes of myth and legend. Biermann seemed a natural successor for this role, for he knew well the decline into schism and rigidity that brought

the modern movement in architecture to an end in South Africa. His hope was that a deeper understanding of the forces at work in South Africa's own and rich cultural history would yet help restore its architecture to optimism and give it a creative role in South Africa's future.

Great teachers live on in the minds of their pupils, and despite the great and sad dispersal of talents spread out from South Africa, his pupils here and elsewhere find themselves asking as they contemplate their latest concept, 'I wonder what Barrie would think of this?'

*Hans Hallen, April 1991*

"PROFESSOR BARRIE BIERMANN received many academic honours and made a name for himself as a lecturer, author and critic. Yet for all the clarity and wit of his exposition, he lived and died an enigmatic figure.

He was notoriously absent from staff meetings, he was away travelling as often as he could manage, and he had a knack of disappearing into thin air after you had followed him down a corridor. He also shied away from the duties of overt leadership. Still, his presence and his influence permeated the school.

He was often obstinate in his opinions, and yet he could be completely flexible in his assimilation of new ideas, right to the end of his life.

He was enormously erudite, yet he sometimes espoused causes and ideas that seemed to border on the eccentric.

He was profoundly articulate, yet it was from him that I learned the value of obscurity in exposition.

To me Barrie was essentially a student and a teacher, and the trail of his interest is to be found in many of the books in the library and many of the minds of his colleagues and students. His approach to teaching can best be described as homeopathic, since he did not so much present the student with distilled wisdom to ingest as stimulate the students' capacity to learn, often using mystery and obscurity in this task.

He spoke with the quiet self-assurance of the enlightened intellectual, whatever the controversy his words raised. Right to the end, for better or worse, he was captain of his fate.

Although he was already retired, we will miss him sorely now that he is gone, for he is truly irreplaceable.

Vale Barrie Biermann!"

*Derek Wang*

*Dr Wang is Editor of 'This Wk,' the weekly news sheet of the Natal School of Architecture, from which this tribute is reproduced. Editor.*