

108. The Bellair Dam



Introduction

By Rudi. Allmayer

This story needed an explanation. Irma Jordaan who is our volunteer archivist at the Montagu Museum normally spends time at the archive every Friday. Most Fridays I receive either a WhatsApp/email or visit from Irma about something unusual she has uncovered in the archive. On this occasion she dropped off some copied material about the damage caused to the Bellair Dam wall in the 2003 floods. I had heard about the dam and only knew it was somewhere off the Barrydale Road. A third dam in the Montagu district? The other two being the Pietersfontein and Poortjieskloof dams. I started to read up and talk to people about the dam and then my interest was stirred and it was decided to try and find out more information with a view to doing a story. The dam is situated on the Sanbona Wildlife Reserve and so I decided to contact

the Reserve and see if it would be possible to visit and view the dam. I could not believe the courteous way in which I was treated from my first point of contact to the focused attention I received from Pascale Swanepoel a Wildlife Co-Ordinator on the reserve who was to be my hostess. Fortunately Pascale also has a love for history so discussion was easy and informative. Sanbona is not only serious about their love for wildlife but they are also focused on the history of the reserve. This story has many pictures which will tell the story of the trials and tribulations of this dam.

Some Background

THE BELLAIR CONSERVATION DAM.

By W. Farrant

(The article that appears below is an extract of a well written document presented in civil engineering: vol.1920, No1 about the Bellair Dam. Please use the link to view complete article)

During the years 1911, 1912, and 1913 a large amount of reconnaissance survey was carried out in the more arid parts of the South-Western Districts of the Cape Province by the Irrigation Department, for the purpose of obtaining information for future irrigation development, and especially for the investigation of possible sites for storage reservoirs, as well as the suitability of the land commanded.

In the case of the conservation dam now to be described one of these surveys had disclosed a favourable scheme in the Swellendam and Ladismith Districts, on the Brak River, a tributary of the Touw River, which joins the Groot River, a main tributary of the Gouritz River.

The Brak River has its sources in the Langeberg Range, and the

Warm water Berg, and drains 224 square miles of country above the reservoir site.

The catchment at the mountains is composed mostly of the surfaces and debris slopes of the Table Mountain series for about 22 square miles, and, nearer, at the reservoir, of the Witteberg and Bokkeveld series for the rest of its area.

Almost the whole catchment is very bare of soil and vegetation, and the amount of cultivation within it is practically negligible.

The run-off from rainfall for these reasons can be taken to be somewhat greater than on flatter and more pervious areas, but not much, owing to local causes, namely, the extremely low intensity of rainfall in these parts, the masses of rock debris and coarse sand near the mountains and filling the river bed valley, and the high winds and intense heat for about 9 months of the year.

No rain gauge records have been taken within the catchment, nor any observations of run-off before the actual starting of construction, and so both rainfall and run-off had to be assumed from the best comparative and local evidence that could be obtained.

Much more precise information was available about the land to be irrigated, and it was possible to divide all cultivable land commanded into three classes, namely, first-class river land already cultivated and irrigated by flooding; first-class river land undeveloped, and second class river land, which last is generally the soil furthest distant from the river, and lying under the low hills which almost universally border the river valleys in this part of the country.

The first class soil is a sandy loam, and is more open in texture and easier to work than the harder and barer soils termed second class

The Flood of 2003

DEVASTATION AT BELLAIR DAM

Well-known nature conservationist and *Montagu Mail* correspondent, Andrew Schofield, manager of the Sanbona Wildlife Reserve, 60km from Montagu, arrived at the *Montagu Mail* office a few days after the flood (2003) with a horrific tale of damage after the Bellair Dam burst.

He and his assistant Alison Downie and their staff of 15 lost so much – houses, workshops, offices and personal possessions – in the deluge following the dam burst. Sanbona and surrounding farms suffered extensive damage, with irrigation pipes, fences, and many other installations washed away. Miraculously no-one drowned, with only one springbok losing its life.

Andrew, clearly shocked, arrived in Montagu on Thursday 27th March after battling the whole week to begin restoration of the area and assess flood damage.

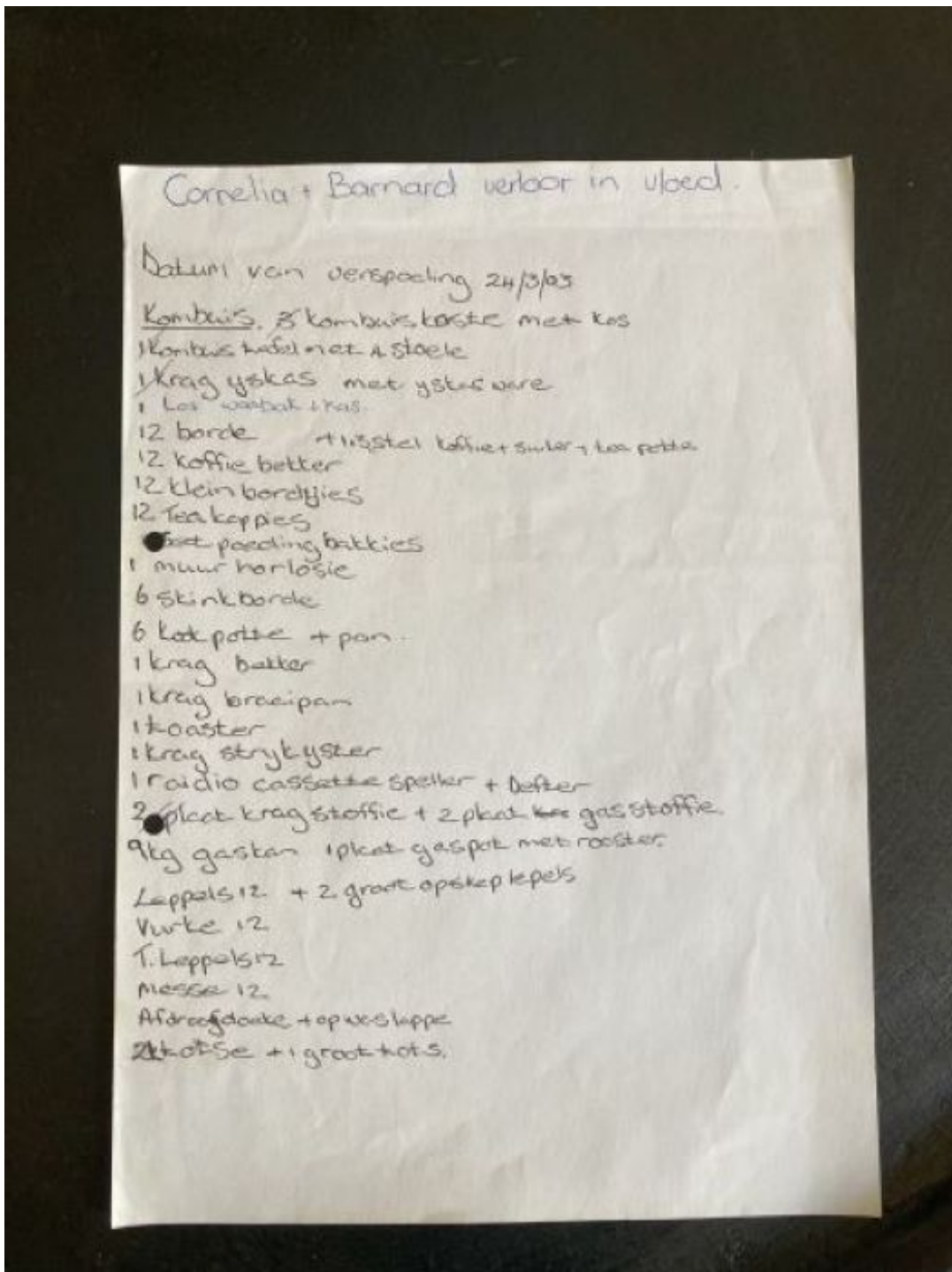
The Bellair Dam surface measures 4km by 1km, with a capacity of about 10 million cubic metres of water. Sanbona Reserve and other farms are situated, near it.

“On Sunday morning, 23rd March, there was only five metres of water in the dam,” Andrew told us. “By Monday morning, after it had rained continuously since the previous evening, the level began rising sharply. By noon there was 13.1 metres of water in the dam, and one hour later, it had risen to 14.7 metres.

“We started evacuating tractors near the dam, as the overflow started to kick in, which it does at 15 metres. Just the overflow flooded the area. By 6pm, we were very worried, but l

never thought the dam wall would go. At 9.15pm it burst," he said.

"Cornelia, our chef at the lodge has lived all her life under the dam wall and she wouldn't believe there was any danger when we evacuated her. So she took only her ID book with her. And that's all she now has," Andrew said.



Devastating photos of the swept-away buildings, taken from the air, were shown in daily papers. Andrew said he later saw a

door stuck in the top of a tree at least three metres above the ground.



What caused the flood of 2003

Andrew Schofield

Montagu Mail May 2005

We know what damage the recent floods caused, but do we know what caused the high rainfall in the area?

This was a classic black South Easter, the term used to describe certain weather conditions. On the first day, 22nd March 2023, a strong cold front passed over the Western Cape, a trough of low pressure stretched from Windhoek to Port Elizabeth, and a strong Atlantic High started ridging in.

But on the second and third days there was a large cell of low pressure on the south coast just off George. The Atlantic High influence diminished, the low deepened and intensified and the on-shore winds were now from the south west and not from the south east as usual.

Flooding then occurred on day three owing to the intensifying low on the south coast, which

was enhancing the cold air advection. From the synoptic chart of 24th March 2023 one can clearly see that cold air was being fed into the Southern Cape from 40° to 50° South, thanks to both the South Atlantic High and the low on the south coast. The cut-off low in the upper levels was located to the west of the surface low over the Southern Cape interior. With this enhanced uplift in the atmosphere on the third day and enhanced surface flow of cool air, it all came together in the atmosphere and produced localised heavy flooding.

At Sanbona we had the devastating loss of the Bellair Dam. To try and put things into perspective, here are some of the rainfall figures for that period. The catchment area to the west got 160mm of rain in 16 hours; the catchment area to the south had 375mm over an 18-hour period.

The first water to reach the dam did so at 6am on the 24th March. The dam's level at that time was 5.8 metres deep. At 12 noon the dam was at 13 metres deep. The dam overflow comes

into working at 14 metres, and this happened at 1pm, which flooded the whole area below the dam, causing incredible destruction.

By this stage all the people were evacuated and what was possible was saved. Radio and telephone calls to all the people below the dam wall were made, warning that the dam could possibly breach. That night the wall gave way, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Sanbona is up and running again. Will the dam be rebuilt? Yes, in one form or another.

The losses will never be accounted for – we will always remember something that we didn't save at the time. The one resounding fact is that nobody lost their lives, although many people lost most of their possessions. The De Koker family who had lived below the dam for 16 years have lost everything. When my wife and I told Cornelia to load everything that she owned and move up the hill, she only took some bedding and her ID book. Theresa Lecoq and Alison Downey also suffered great losses during the flood. All their possessions that were left behind were so badly damaged that they are beyond repair. My saddest losses are my books, manuscripts, study papers and photographs.

On a personal note, I wish to thank all of those generous people of Montagu who helped in various ways.

'n Plaaslike inwoner skryf

Die Bellair Dam

Deur Willem Cilliers

Montagu Mail 2003

Die onlangse verlies van die Bellair dam het 'n mens weer laat

beseef dat as jy onbekend is, jy eers moet doodgaan om die nuus te haal. Ook maar net as jou heengaan onder ongewone omstandighede plaasvind, sal jy moontlik die koerante haal.

So was dit met die betrokke (relatief onbekend) dam. Soos met die heengaan van 'n mens dit 'n groot en soms tragiese gebeurtenis is vir die naasbestaaendes, is dit ook vir 'n relatief klein groepie mense 'n tragiese gebeurtenis om 'n dam wat as permanent beskou is binne een dag te sien verdwyn.

Sommige van ons, soos die Le Roux's en ook Sanbona, het groot finansiële betrokkenheid by die gebeurtenis. Ander soos myself wat op die plaas Sandfontein aangrensend aan die dam groot geword het, moet die nuwe werklikheid inwerk in herinneringe. Die gesig van 'n groot oppervlakte water het altyd die skyn gegee van oorwinning oor die toestande in 'n gebied waar water so skaars is.

Die dam is in 1922 voltooi na meer as drie jaar van swoeg en sweet deur mens en dier. Meganiese huipmiddels was daar min. Een stoomenjin wat water uitpomp, was by die uitgraving van die wal agtergelaat en het later 'n interressante speelplek vir ons as binders gebied. Ongeveer drie honderd arbeiders het die werk gedoen en benodighede is met die spoorlyn, wat van Touwsrivier na Ladismith geloop het, met die s.g. Makadas trein vervoer. (Die naam bleikbaar afgelei van die Engels: "Make a Dash!" wat die omstanders nie so lekker gehoor het nie).

Hierdie spoorlyn is in die vloed van 1981 verwoes en nie weer herbou nie. Bellair was toe vir die eerste keer vol en weer in 1992 en nou in 2003 vir oulaas. Die dam was soms droog vir maande en dus ongeskik vir b.v. vrugteverbouing. Lusern is op groot skaal verbou.

Die familie wat die nouste verband met die dam gehad het was die Fullards van Barrydale. Die ou stamvader, William (Bill) wat parlamentslid was, het die owerhede oorreed om die dam te

bou. Hy het feitlik al die bougrond onderkant die dam opgekoop en tot 'n klompie jare gelede, het lede van die derde geslag Fullards steeds die meeste van die waterreg gehad. Ander besitters was die Van Schalkwyk's (vorige Fullard grond) en die Le Grange's, sowat 25km vanaf die dam.

Die Fullards het nooit self geboer in daardie omgewing nie en ander het die grond om 'n deel bewerk. Drie families Swanepoel het vir baie jare die rol vervul. Jacob Cupido wie se ouers glo van die Oos Kaap gekom het en by nabetrugting feitlik 'n ewebeeld van Pres. Mandela was, onthou ek goed. Hy het ook om 'n deel geboer, was 'n harde werker gerespekteer deur wit en bruin, maar is in armoede dood soos al sy mense in daardie deel

Het die dam vooruitgang in die gebied gebring soos sekerlik voorgehou is deur die oorspronklike beplanners? Ek glo nie. Die water is nie effektief gebruik nie en te min van die opbrengs het in die gebied gebly.

Soos so dikwels gebeur in hierdie droe land van ons het water gelei tot bitter twiste. Tog is dit jammer dat die dam nie meer bestaan nie. Dit is ironies dat nou net toe dit gelyk het of Bellair uiteindelik tot sy reg sou kom met toerisme by Sanbona en intensiewe boerdery deur dr. Hans Le Roux, die dam moes verdwyn.

Sal dit herbou word? Miskien op 'n baie meer beskeie skaal waar die surplus water oor die wal loop. Die opvang gebied is baie groot en wie dit ook herbou sal deeglik in ag moet neem dat feitlik al die water wat inkom die gevolg van 'n vloed is in een of ander deel van die opvanggebied. Die grond onderkant die dam sal dan, net soos nou, blootgestel wees aan vloedskade en sal nie weer vir boerdery benut kan word nie. Toerisme sal die oorweging wees asook die pomp van water na grond bokant die dam vir besproeiing.

Die laaste drie vloede was feitlik 11 jaar uitmekaar. Daar is

'n hele aantal siklusse van verskillende lengtes in weerpatrone en die 11 jaar is (per toeval?) dieselfde as die sonviek siklus. (Die vloed in hierdie omgewing was na aan die pieke van hierdie siklus). Alhoewel daar sterk aanduidings is dat sonvlekkie die weer kan bei'nvloed, is dit nog nie 'n uitgemaakte saak nie en moet 'n mens baie versigtig wees met oenskynlike siklusse in enige veranderlike. (Gedurende 1645-1715 bv. het sonvlekkie feitlik verdwyn en was daar die sogenaamde mini- ystydperk in Europa, maar baie wetenskaplikes is skepties oor 'n verband tussen die twee gebeurtenisse). In 'n droë gebied soos ons s'n is sterk verband tussen reënval en ander natuurverskynsels miskien meer ooglopend.

Dit sal interessant wees om die toevloei in die dam oor die jare te ontleed. Kom die volgende vloed dalk in 2014?

Renewal

A talk with Hans le Roux current (2023) owner of Amanteco

Without the Le Roux family and their single minded determination one can only but wonder if the dam wall would ever have been rebuilt.



A summary of main points covered in the face to face discussion with Hans le Roux

Q: How did the decision to rebuild the dam wall happen?

A: The need for water to irrigate was the single driver.

Q: Who were the principal role players?

A: Andrew Schofield the General Manager of Sanbona and myself.

Q: Who brought the role players together?

A: I approached Sanbona (then Shamwari). The discussions were difficult as we both had different business objectives but fortunately we were able to agree on a common way forward.

Q: How was the business decision justified considering the erratic water supply to the dam?

A: The available statistics gave me the business confidence to drive the proposal forward.

Q: Who designed the new dam wall and why did they choose A Rubble Masonry Concrete (RMC) design.

A: The architect who recommended and designed the new dam wall was Jasper van Breda. The design chosen was based on both acceptable material and labour costs.

Q: What roll did government agencies play in the process?

A: Their role was minimal and of an administrative nature. They provided R3M towards the project with a stipulation that this money could only be used to remove the old damaged wall. The rebuild cost was shared between Amanteco and Sanbona R10.5M. (2003/6)

Q: What prompted the decision for Amanteco to get involved with the funding for the rebuilding of the dam after the flood?

A: The need for water to ensure the survival of our farming operations.

Q: How did it come about that a local contractor Eddie Stemmet Builders was appointed as contractors?

A: The choice of contractor had to be seen in the context of

the locality of the dam. The sourcing of a suitable contractor was done via the collection of quotes. Stemmet Builders was awarded the contract based on two main factors, their record for reliability and their base was Montagu.

Q: What role did Amanteco play during the reconstruction of the dam wall?

A: Amanteco played the major oversight role as we had the biggest stake in the outcome of the project.

Q: How was construction material delivered to site?

A: This was a major challenge from a cost point of view due to the remoteness of the dam. As a commercial farmer I decided on the practical approach and contacted a local sand/stone company and they created a quarry on site. We were able to supply all the sand and stone to the contractor. This entailed the purchase of heavy equipment to operate the quarry and deliver the material to site.

Q: Was a construction village created or were the construction crews ferried in and out daily?

A: We created local accommodation for the work crew's onsite. It would have been totally impractical to transport labour in and out.

Do you have any anecdotal stories about the trials and tribulations experienced during the building of the dam wall?

A: During the rebuild period we were subjected to a number of flash floods. This could have potentially caused major construction delays unless we could find a solution to the problem of water in and around the building site. We created what would be called the Leeu team. They were an eight man team who were deployed to pump water off the actual building site. The name Leeu coming from their interaction with the lions from Sanbona. It was not uncommon especially at night

for the team to arrive on site and be confronted by lions hence their name.

Q: Was the new wall opened with an official ceremony? If yes who officiated?

A: No fanfare what so ever after completion of the build. We were absolutely fatigued after the project completion and were only too pleased to return to our farming lives again.

Q: How do you get the water onto your farm?

A: I have created a pump station at the base of the dam wall with a 5.5km pipeline to my holding dam from where the water is distributed to the almond orchards.

LOCAL BUILDERS TACKLE HUGE DAM PROJECT

Montagu Mail August 2005

When the March 2003 flood broke the Bellair Dam near Barrydale, it was a much bigger disaster than the damage experienced in Montagu. The damage included a totally destroyed house (see *Montagu Mail Issue 69*).

The Bellair dam, owned by the Bellair Irrigation Board (BIB) used to be a 20m high earth-filled dam with a capacity of 10 million m³. It was completed in 1920.

After the dam broke in 2003, the BIB decided to repair it. A Rubble Masonry Concrete (RMC) structure was proposed and, to the delight of Montaguers, the tender for the multiple archbuttress RMC dam was awarded to local firm, Eddie Stemmet Builders.

Work started in April last year, with a staff of 50 housed on the site. When *Montagu Mail* visited the dam, situated in the Sanbona Game Reserve, in June, we were astounded at the size

of the project. The completed structure will be 20.5m high and 166m long, with a capacity of 40 million m³. Pieter and Wilhelm Stemmet, sons of Eddie and Esmarie, are the contractors.



Wilhelm back left, Pieter middle back

“This was a challenge – something different,” says Wilhelm. “However, dam building techniques have been more or less the same since the time of the Ancient Egyptians. The modern construction technology for RMC dams has been extensively researched and reported on by the Department of Public Works and there are many similar dams to this one in Southern Africa, notably in Zimbabwe.”

It is interesting to note that the oldest dam wall in history, still standing, was constructed from stone and gravel enclosed in a skin of uncemented rubble masonry. No wonder – it was built around 4500 BC just south of Cairo! Most of it washed away due to inadequate spillway capacity.

However, the Alicante Dam in Spain, built in 1594 to a height of 43m, was the highest dam in the world for almost 300 years

and still stands.

“RMC dams are built with an outside skin of rock and the space in between is filled with mortar (cement, sand and water) into which rock is trampled,” says Wilhelm. “The resulting product resembles a texture somewhere between that of peanut brittle and nougat.”







This is an ancient construction technique used in various forms for more than 6500 years. The Woodhead Dam (1897) on Table Mountain was the first stone masonry dam in our country.

The Bellair project started with the removal of the leftover original earth dam, followed by foundation excavations. The hard rock underneath was covered by more than 5m of boulders, gravel and sand.







DSC00055



When Eddie Stemmet Builders started constructing the arch-buttress dam, there was a unique hazard associated with the site: as the dam is situated in Sanbona Game Reserve, the animals had to come first. Three hippos shared the construction site with the contractor. Elephants came around at dusk to inspect the day's work and a lioness paid a visit late one night to check out the staff manning the dewatering pumps.

Initially wary, the workers are now at ease with the animals' presence and even the three hippos floating in the water nearby don't faze them anymore.

A huge rolling tower crane is used to place mortar and rock on the wall of the dam. Driving up onto the hillside and looking down on the arches gave us an impressive overview of the size of the operation.



"The dam is fitted with two 540mm outlet pipes, one for irrigation and the other for river releases," says Wilhelm. "The floods are passed over the crest of the spillway section of the wall, which is designed to pass a flood of $2340\text{m}^3/\text{s}$, which is more than four times the volume of the March 2003 flood."

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, the BIB members, Sanbona and Le Roux Agri are financing the rebuilding of the dam. Subcontractors are mostly from Montagu and Robertson. The planned completion date is October this year.



“The inlet tower of the original dam will be retained as a monument to the spirit of the pioneers of dam building in the Klein Karoo,” says Wilhelm, obviously proud of the Stemmet involvement in this monumental project.



Die Dam 2023

Iets oor die firma ESB

Montagu Mail August 1999

Egparewat besighede saam onderneerm, is volop in Montagu. Daar is supermarkte, eiektriesewarewinkels gasteverblyf en restaurants wat man- en- vrou ondernemings is.

Maar bouers? Die boubedryf is egter meesal 'n man se domein, maar hier blink Eddie Stemmet en sy vrou Esmarie albei uit.



30 years 1999



50 years 2019

Die Stemmet vier vanjaar hul 30ste jaar in die boubedryf in

en om Montagu. hulle vertel dat hulle met die aardbewing van September 1969 op Montagu aangekom het en tailose geboue sedertdien of van die grond af opgerig het of herbou het.

Een voorbeeld van laasgenoemde is die Avalon Springs, waarop Eddie Stemmet besonder trots is.

“Dit het nie alles tegelyk gebeur nie,” vertei hy. “Dieter Sowade het die Springs stuk-stuk laat herbou na die vloed van 1981 en vandag lyk dit darem heeltemal anders as toe!”

Die nuutste groot projek waaraan hy gewerk het was die reuse-herbouing van Ashton Canning, wat feitlik platgeslaan en van die grond af opgebou is.

Montagu se poskantoor het ook ‘n nuwe baadjie, danksy die Stemmets. Hulle werk tans ook aan die oprigting van ‘n nuwe sakesentrum in Markstraat.

Dit het alles met ‘n kruiwa in die kattedak begin, vertel Esmarie. Reg aan die begin van hul boubesigheid, toe Eddie besluit het om op sy eie te gaan bou na hy eers vir A.H. Marais op Robertson gewerk het, het hulle net een voertuig gehad. Agterop is die kruiwa gelaai en voorin sit Eddie en twee handlangers.

Deesdae is albei seuns, Wilhelm en Pieter saam in die bedryf en die werksmag beloop tussen 70 en 90, afhangende van die projekte.

Esmarie is minister van finansies en werk saam aan elke projek, veral nou dat die besigheid hoofsaaklik konstruksiewerk onderneem.

Behalwe in Montagu en Ashton kan die Stemmets se handewerk ook in Bonnievale, Barrydale en Robertson gesien word.

Bouery is in albei se bloed – veral in Esmarie s’n.

“Ek hou nooit op nie,” sê sy laggend en wys hoe sy beplan om

voorstel vertrek van hul woonhuis weereens te verander om vir haarself 'n nuwe kamer te bou.

Snippert (2023)

Sanbona Wildlife Reserve and Amanteco Pty. Ltd. decided to rebuild the dam wall and form the new Bellair Irrigation Board. The construction of the dam wall was completed and the final product was handed over in February 2006.

The content of the dam is divided as follows:

33% – Dam reserve – can never be touched

33% – Sanbona – remain in dam or used to maintain river downstream

33% – Amanteco – irrigation of almond orchards.

The Gallery

Courtesy Sanbona Wildlife Reserve



The Heritage Lounge at the Sanbona Wildlife Reserve



Documentation from original dam wall build

Date.	Cheque No.	To whom paid.	Folio.	Salaries.	W
Sept 2		Brought forward.			654
		To A. de Wit			
		.. P. Klassen			
		.. P. Klassen			
		.. P. J. Klassen			
		.. P. Klassen			
4	102	.. A. S. Lullard			
8	103	- Cash balance Pay.			
	104	J. Swartz			
	105	P. J. Klassen			
13	106	D. J. Inel			
	107	L. Oberg.	21	134	
15	108	J. Hurrik			
	109	J. A. de Wit			
21	110	J. J. Wille			
	111	S. Hoffland			
	112	L. Oberg.			
22	113	J. J. Stemmet			
	114	R. Wilson, Lullard.			
	115	Jos. Robertson Lull.			
	116	Ardenne Lull.			
	117	Petersens Lull.			
	118	Price Vincent Lull.			

September 1917

Wages.	Plant and Material.	Forage.	Transport and Carriage.	Printing, Advertising, Stationery.	Postages and Petties.
654 11			164 87		
			19 179		
			6 175		
			6 111		
			7 810		
			7 810		
			29 116		
4929					

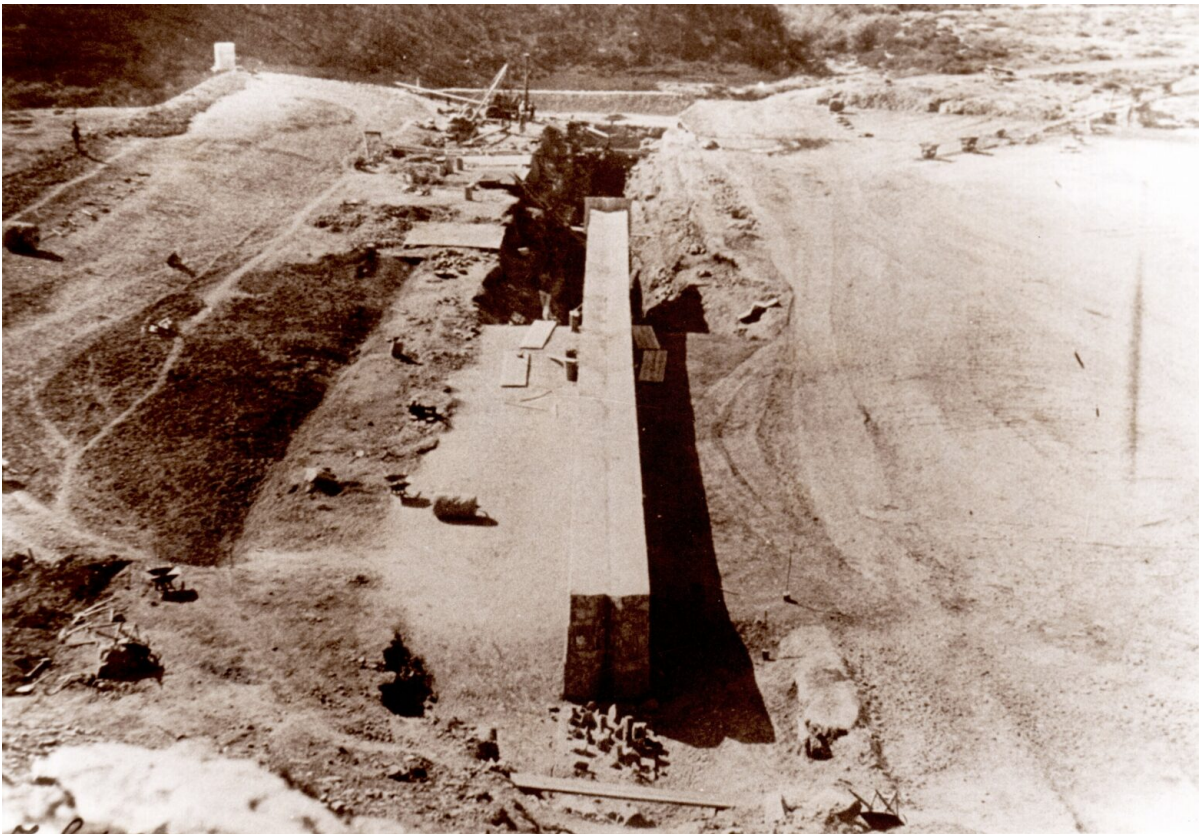
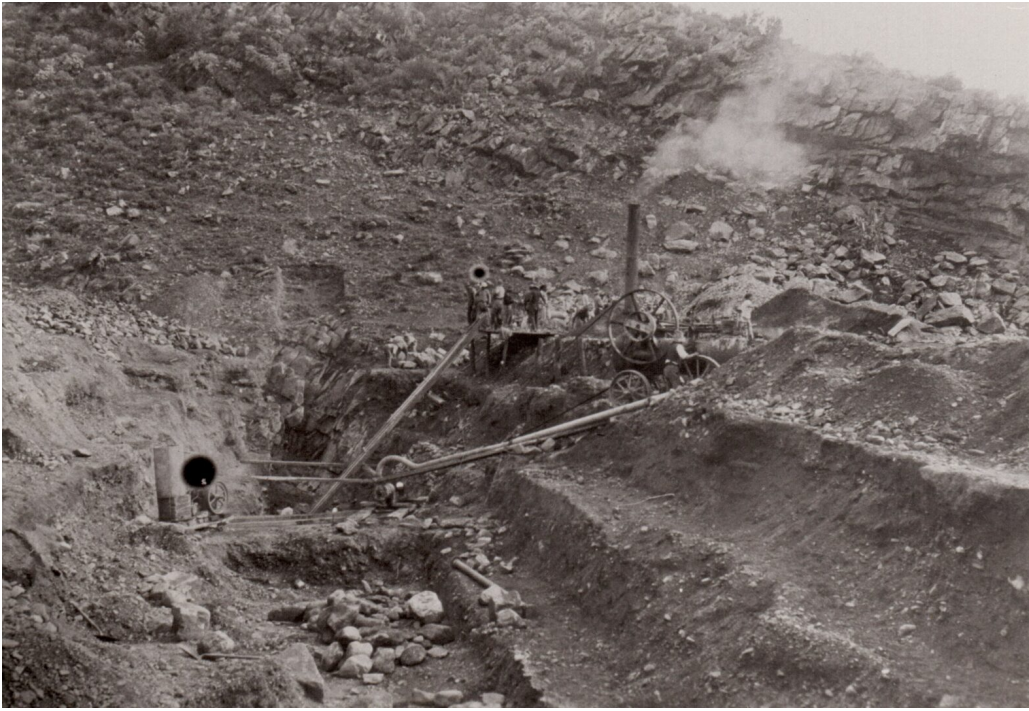


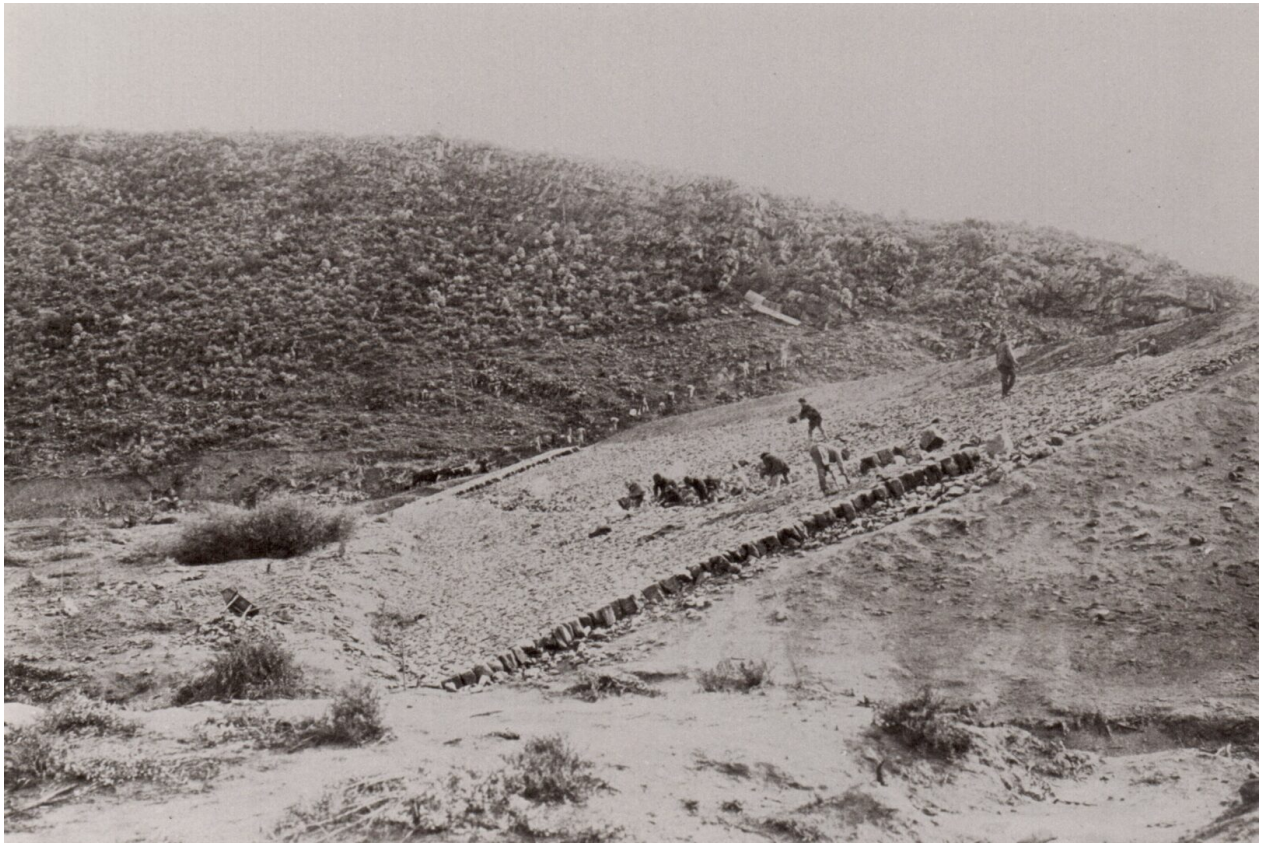
A superb display of early dam photos in the Heritage Lounge



Wildlife Co-ordinator Pascale and her treasure trove of information on the Bellair Dam

The first dam wall under construction









A Special Story for the history books

The picture that follows is of an aeroplane crash next to the

Bellair Dam wall in 1925
submitted by Etienne Cilliers:



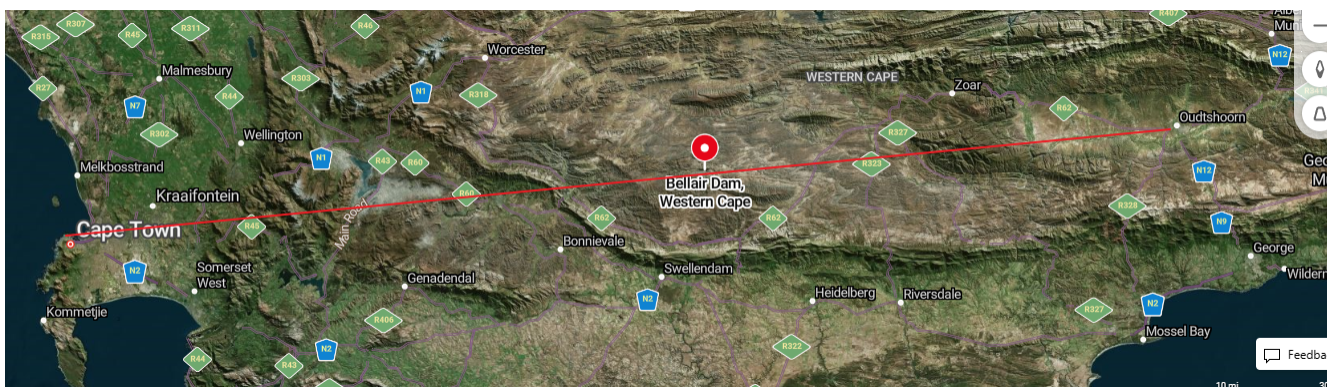
Aeroplane
~~Aeroplane~~ which
came down at
Bellair Dam this
11th April 1925.

According to my father, Willem Cilliers, this accident was big news in the small farming community around the dam and I was intrigued to find out more about this seemingly strange local event when cars, let alone aeroplanes, were a rarity. The photograph itself was handed down via my wife's late dad, Alfred Radford-Hayden, who was the grandson of Manie Steyn – Manie was involved with the dam's maintenance and

lived right next to the dam wall on the picture at that time – which would explain how he got a copy.

With the kind help of Morne Condon (Friends of the Port Elizabeth SAAF Museum) and Montagu Thorne (Friends of the SAAF Museum Swartkop) we were able to identify it as a De Havilland Airco DH.9, a WW1 bomber. (Airco DH.9 – Wikipedia)

What was a military bomber doing at the Bellair Dam? Well here it gets interesting since between March and June 1925, the fledgling SA Air Force ran an experimental air mail service connecting Durban to Cape Town via Port Elizabeth and Oudtshoorn using surplus DH.9's gifted by Britain after the war. (Port Elizabeth of Yore: The Introduction of Air Flight – The Casual Observer and (CONTACT-NOVEMBER-2019-1.pdf (eaa.org.za)) Most likely, the Bellair Dam, which lies directly between Oudtshoorn and Cape Town was convenient a route way point due to good visibility from the air. In any event, it became a fortunate place for an emergency landing in a very unforgiving and sparsely populated landscape!





Pictures: Google

According to local sources, the pilot who was Captain A. P. K. Hattersley was not seriously hurt, but SAAF DH.9 #145 most likely ended its flying days nearly a century ago now there in the hot sand of the Brak River next to the Bellair Dam wall.



Captain A.P.K. Hattersley

1925									
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENTS									
DATE	SERIAL	A/C TYPE	UNIT	ENGINE NO.'S	CREW	PLACE	DETAILS	CRASH	FILE REF.
1 16/1/25	416	SO4K	FTS		S/Maj Joe Mayhew (solo)	ZAS	Engine stalled, lost power, stalled & crashed		
2 28/2/25	140	DH.9				Oudtshoorn		4/10	
3 7/3/25	408	Avro 504K	del & FTS 30/1/15 (EXRAF) FTS	Clerget 41569/3774	Lt O.G. McIntyre A/Sgt H Seymour	ZAS	Boards on L. and nose over		
4 11/4/25	145	DH.9		(ex B.R.P.) 10646/4083445 (immobilised in 1945 - found 20/1/2014)	Lt A.P.K. Hawthley	N. of Bellair Dam on Brek River	X.C. Wymberg - Oudtshoorn E/F F/L • O/T for 200m north in carb.	4/6	
5 17/2/25	141	DH.9					Caught fire in air in Alt. CT. to ZAS (see A/c file) pilots not out - example F/L.		
6 27/2/25	128	DH.9				Mossel Bay	E/F F/L on	4/6	
7 28/7/25	428	Avro 504K		Clerget 5599/53685	Lt R. Bentley (Int) A/Sgt LMR Symes (nord)	ZAS	undershot on L. struck out-bill crashed		DC2/641
8 9/4/25		DH.9			Lt Joubert	nr Oudtshoorn	Force landed Exp A/M wreckage		
9 29/9/25 29/9/25 29/9/25	408	Avro 504K		Clerget 3780/41571	Lt GE Herring Sgt Seymour	ZAS	Fast landing, upskid, hit rocks, a/c coll and a/c O/T onto nose		
10									
11 26/4/25	104	DH.9					boundary accident		
3/12/25	428	Avro 504K	TT 17h 10 TT 17h 10	Clerget 5533/VDNo 53661	Lt SA Pindar (K) Mr G. van Eyck (K)	ZAS	Attempted to land on north Aero at 2200', stalled trying to follow 1st a/c down and	4/6	DC2/641

(normally used by Capt JJC Venter OC FTS)

419 Pina 1/1/1925

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Accident report supplied by Dewald Nel

We are hoping to get more information about the final flight of this remarkable aeroplane and the circumstances around the accident from the Defence Force archives in Pretoria. If anyone knows anything more about this event, please contact the museum.

Contributions: Willem/Etienne Cilliers, Irma Jordaan and the Montagu Mail