

FROM THE EDITOR

Once again, our abject apologies for the fiasco after the hacking of the UCT site and all the messages that filled our in-boxes over a two-day period.

We hope everyone has undone the temporary rule that Geoff du Toit advocated (relegating the SAICE...lists messages to "deleted" items) and so are able to receive this newsletter.

BRANCH BUZZZZING

What you may have missed since Newsletter No.1 of 2014:

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February, at the **Cape Town Science Centre**, and Tony Murray (who put forward the proposal that was accepted at the 2010 AGM) and Doug Smetherham handing over the "cheque" for R50000 to Julie Cleverdon, enthusiastic and lively Director of the Science Centre.

The 2010 AGM resolution on the sponsorship of the Centre was actually for an amount of R70000. What remains

to be done is to decide what a semi-permanent exhibition portraying civil engineering at the Centre might look like, for which the other R20000 was set aside. Please visit the Centre, if you haven't already done that, and then forward your suggestions to Doug (Doug.Smetherham@mottmac.com).

Some SAICE members joined the crowd of 200 plus at the Centre for the colloquium on **Fracking**, organised by **Greenpeace** who don't want it to happen until or unless there is an assurance that the process will be responsibly controlled by people who know what they are about. Speakers David Fig and Carin Bosman, among others, were well informed but doubtful about the ability of advisers to politicians to properly inform them, or of the civil service to adequately monitor or manage fracking operations. Carin (BSc (Chem. & Biochem), UP, MSc (Environmental Management), NWU Potch), who used to work for DWA&F and was sceptical about many of the EIA's that were merely cut and paste efforts, pointed out that there are only three Geochemists in S.A. and less than 20 chemists associated with water quality, so they would be busy!

It seems that current legislation may make it possible for the fracking projects to evade assessment by the Department of Environmental Affairs, and instead to be approved by the same agency that is tasked with promoting mineral exploitation. A two-year extension of a moratorium on fracking, announced by the Minister after the recent Mining Indaba, only applies to new applications and the acceptance of existing proposals from three proponents will not be affected by the extension.

President Stanford Mkhacane spoke to a small audience (29 people there, including the President and CEO) at the Athenaeum on the 26th of February, laying emphasis on the need for provision of services in rural areas and to disadvantaged communities. He also noted the increase in the proportion of Black persons in SAICE's membership, which increase may have escaped the notice of those who seem to regard SAICE, (and more especially ECSA) as the preserve of a certain grouping.

During question time, Eric Foster described his firm's efforts to mentor young Engineers and Technicians and to ready them for their interviews for Professional Registration. He noted that there is a reluctance on the

part of many people to apply for registration, despite their having gained more than enough experience to qualify and he called on SAICE to conduct a survey among such potential candidates to establish the reasons for their hesitation.

Unfortunately Gordon Laing was unable to present on the 19th of March as advertised (or on the 26th, which we also thought of trying), but fortunately Tony Murray stepped into the breach with his lecture on Charles Cornwallis Michell whom he regards as the Father of the Profession in South Africa. CC Michell's career started in the army. Though he had no engineering qualification, he managed to impress his CO with his engineering skills. After being wounded in battle, he was, among other things, a lecturer at Sandhurst, then Professor of Fortifications at Woolwich Military Academy, after which came his appointment as Engineer & Surveyor General of the Cape Colony at £700 per annum. He got on well with people, which, with his ability to sketch and paint scenes helped in no small measure to motivate the building of necessary infrastructure.



Michell's alignment of Sir Lowry's Pass, built in 1830 (at £2782 8/6 for which Sir Lowry Cole got into trouble for spending without Whitehall approval) is much the same as today's. It replaced the dangerous Gantouw/Eland's Path/Hottentots Holland Kloof route that carried 4000 wagons per year with a high rate of attrition (of wagons). Other roads/bridges successes included the building of a road (the current alignment of Voortrekker Road included) linking Cape Town and Somerset West, cutting a two to three day trek to a two to three hour journey, Montagu Pass and the survey and design of Michell's Pass (named after him). He set up the system for land ownership, planned the

triangulation of the Colony, designed churches and lighthouses and set up the postal system.



One interesting anecdote about a Michell bridge was the origin of the name “Sugar Bridge” given to the wooden bridge at Buffeljagts, east of Swellendam. It was early days of Portland Cement so Plaster of Paris was used to cement the stones of the piers together, but they had to use sugar as a retarder. Locals were intrigued by all the sugar used in bridge building. (see also Graham Ross's “Mountain Passes, Roads & Transportation in the Cape: A Guide to Research”.

UPCOMING EVENTS

REGIONAL AWARDS COMPETITION Just a reminder to get those entries prepared in time – see details below.

BRANCH MEETING 16 APRIL 2014

Topic: Movements at PRASA
Presenter: Eddie Chinnappen
Date: Wednesday 16 April 2014
Time: 17h00 for 17h30
Venue: Athenaeum, Newlands

REGIONAL AWARDS 21 MAY 2014

Topic: Worthy candidate projects
Presenters: Various
Date: Wednesday 21 May 2014
Time: 17h00 for 17h30
Venue: Athenaeum, Newlands

Entries for the SAICE Western Cape Regional Awards for Excellence in Civil Engineering close on 30 April 2014. Projects that were substantially complete in 2013 are eligible. There are three categories:

(a) Projects of Outstanding Technical Excellence

(b) Projects directed towards benefiting or otherwise involving a specific community

(c) Projects in an international context.

- Competition rules available from Steve Fanner (fanner@telkomsa.net) or Keith Mackie (keith@mackie.co.za) and may also appear on the Branch website (www.saicewc.co.za)
- Please submit your written entries to Steve (Box 1085, Durbanville, 7551, or 13 Azalea Street, Durbanville, 7550) on or before the closing date of 30 April 2014.

BRANCH MEETING 18 JUNE 2014

DOUBLE HEADER

Venue: Aurecon, Century City

Topic 1: The SKA Square Kilometer Array

Presenter: Willie Esterhuyze

Time: 17h00 for 17h30

Topic 2: TO BE ADVISED

Presenter: Prof Mark Zuidgeest

Time: 18h30

HOW YOUR NEWSLETTER GETS TO YOU

We have been sending out branch newsletters through emails and surface mail and requesting you to advise us if you have been getting it both ways. Simply stopping posting to those with email addresses is an option that has been discussed on several occasions during committee meetings, because the cost has been of the order of R6000 per newsletter and there has been no significant reduction in response to our requests. Please let Cheryl know so we can cancel surface mailing to you if you are able to receive your newsletter by email: cheryl.wright@uct.ac.za.

WE ARE LISTENING...

If you have any comments regarding Branch activities, please let us know via email (doug.smetherham@mottmac.com) or post on our website <http://www.saicewc.co.za>.

ARE YOU CONNECTED.....?

We regularly send out email messages to members via E-flash. If you would like to be on the E-flash address list, send an email to marianne.vanderschuren@uct.ac.za with the heading SAICE E-flash (you need not put anything in

the text if you don't want to), or fill out the Contact Page on the Branch Website <http://www.saicewc.co.za>.

Remember to tell us about changes in email / other addresses. All official records are kept at National Office, so any changes in your personal details should also be sent to the National Office: SAICE National Office, Private Bag X200, Halfway House, 1685. Tel. 011 805 5947/48/53; Fax. 011 805 5971. Email: civilinfo@saice.org.za

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