

Exciting maritime and whaling museum expo set to rejuvenate Parow

A disused Jewish synagogue in Parow is currently being turned into a state-of-the-art maritime and whaling museum.

The museum, the brainchild of a former International Whaling Observer/Inspector, anti-whaling NGO, Whale Mark, is a R42.5 million four-phase project funded mainly by private enterprise.

When completed in its entirety hopefully towards the end of next year, the facility's three buildings (two of which are still to be constructed) will house a maritime museum, a whaling museum, conference facilities, 10 arts and craft workshops, classroom for students enrolling in 20 marine academic courses, a seafood restaurant, coffee shops and a curio shop stocked from the workshops.

However the doors will hopefully open in time for the 2007 festive season but this is dependent on whether the money to complete the first phase can be raised as quickly as anticipated.

Ken Botes, who heads up Whale Mark, and previously worked for the City of Cape Town, had for years been looking for the ideal site that was accessible to schools and tourists and had plenty of parking for up to 50 buses and other vehicles. Although offered six sites including Hermanus, Saldanha, Blouberg and Robben Island, his instinct told him that he should first establish a base from where he and his team could work from close to Cape Town. To ensure total success Ken believes the Parow site was the most viable and feasible of them all.

It was through an advertisement in the newspaper that he found the disused Jewish synagogue. An application to the Parow municipality (which is a City of Cape Town sub-structure) followed and he was invited to present his proposal to the sub-structure committee. The outcome was that the committee was impressed, there was not even one objection raised, nor from the public, and after negotiating the usual red tape associated with such a venture he was finally given the go-ahead in 2006.

Coincidentally, one of the conditions attached to the allocation of the synagogue imposed by the Jewish community which



Peter Warren standing in the main hall where the fish tanks will be located.

sold it to the City of Cape Town in 1991, was that it should be used as a museum. It was further decided that it should incorporate the existing Parow Museum which houses Captain Parow's artefacts (Capt. Parow was a ship's master and property baron).

Although Ken has been collecting marine artefacts for decades, he was delighted, thanks to Ruwekus Fishing, to come across former skipper Peter Warren, whom he discovered has also been collecting and keeping a treasure trove of marine artefacts, paintings, and unusual preserved fish species and even has two old whale guns.

Realising that they were "talking the same language" the two teamed up and Peter, apart from now being heavily involved in the development of the museum, has agreed to empty the four homes in which all his treasures are stored, and donate most of them to the museum once it is complete.

A guided tour of the venue reveals the amount of work there is to be done for Phase 1 to be completed at a cost of R9, 7 million. But using a bit of imagination picture two metre high individual tanks lining both side walls of the ground floor totalling 34 metres, and filled with South African marine fish, 300m² of colourful and original mosaic work of art covering the floor and some of the wall area, a big screen and seating, and display cabinets around the outer perimeter of the second level while the balustrades are made safe using ships railings and fish net.

As mentioned this project has the full support of the City of

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IN BRIEF

Pay your levies or pay

Pam Yako, Director-General, warns that tough action will be taken against fishing companies that failed to declare and pay the 2006/7 levies on their catches. According to a *Business Day* report, Pam Yako says the widespread failure of the industry to pay levies has jeopardised the financial sustainability of the Marine Living Resources Fund, which is responsible for the conservation and economic development of the marine and coastal environment.

She also said the department now had the ability to act against fishing companies thanks to its new financial and administrative system.

Paper quotas still exist

The hake trawl fishery has complained about EU trawlers fishing in South African waters under the auspices of joint ventures they have formed with smaller South African quota holders.

There are apparently eight new trawlers in this fishery and more applications are pending. The South Africans claim this is unfair because EU vessels are subsidised by their governments and can pay the quota holders more than they can get locally.

A *Cape Times* report quotes Tim Reddell of Viking Fishing that the deals struck with foreign vessels were similar to the old "paper quotas" of the past where people sold their quotas for cash.

"The foreign vessels join up with the small SA quota holders, who abdicate their right in exchange for a pile of cash. We thought with the allocation of long-term fishing rights we would have a system which would eradicate paper quotas, but it seems to have entrenched them," Tim is reported to have said.

Rare whales beach

Two rare True Beaked whales beached at Buffalo Bay near Knysna during July where they both died.

Both females, the adult was found to have a broken jaw, but the sub-adult was found to be in good health. It is believed the reason the whales beached was because one whale accompanied and nurses an injured whale.

And at Muizenberg, Cape Town a deep water dwarf sperm whale also washed up on the beach but was found dead.

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Cape Town which sees the creation of this museum as a first step to upgrade the Parow business district which it concedes has become stagnant. There are many plans in the pipeline but the Arts and Culture Department, recognising this was an opportunity for a job creation project, has agreed to allocate funds to various artists with a view to producing unusual South African products that are fast moving and can be successfully marketed nationally and internationally.

Linked to this output is the variety of hands-on courses to be offered, mainly to scholars. Colleges and universities will also find the courses innovative and creative. These are stone and sandstone carving, embroidery, jewellery, shell refurbishing and polishing, pottery, woodcarving, model miniature boat building, miniature metal craft, glass blowing, taxidermy, plastic and rubber moulding and bone craft scrimshaw - amongst others. The goods will be manufactured at the museum's 10 open workshop facilities for the tourist to view, some of which will then be placed on consignment with the curio shop to sell to the tourism trade.

Currently it is envisaged that scholars from the 2200 schools in the Western Cape will attend the workshops as part of their school curriculum with a view to providing the stimuli for them to ultimately become artists themselves. The Provincial Government Curriculum Department has already visited schools to decide on additions to subjects and how to incorporate these into the modules, and already the museum is fortunate to have the master painter, Dr Conrad Theys on board as well as Gavin du Plessis, a lecturer, and teachers and Principal, Francoisnette Swart, from the Provincial Art school of the Western Cape, to assist to train the children. There will also ultimately be a satellite project in place where schools are visited.

Main income

However, the main income will be from visitors and the sale of arts and crafts, the export of which will be handled by a professional marketing team. It is estimated that in the first 12 months about a million feet will pass through the door and with the support of government, fishing com-



Ken Botes and Peter Warren standing in front of a old lifeboat, one of the features of the new museum.

panies, embassies, oil companies, the Rupert and Murray trusts, and retailers such as Pick and Pay and Shoprite, this number should increase.

Ken says the whaling marine tourism industry is very fragmented and to have such a vast array of memorabilia under one roof will be a major draw card. Tailored as "Under One Roof" a visit will be affordable, at just R3 per child; unlike other places of interest in the metropole where the price tag is generally a lot higher. This is to make the museum more easily accessible to children with a view to encouraging them to become "Junior Whale Mark Officials" at their schools and patriots for the museum.

The museum is looking for patrons and encourages marine education, job creation, conservation and tourism oriented companies to become partners.

"We will be delighted to provide space to exhibit your portfolio as part of the historical legacy for our children," says Ken, adding that given the general high cost of building and renovation they are seeking assistance in making this project the success it deserves for everyone to enjoy the wonders of our oceans.

Furthermore as a donor you will receive recognition on the new website, and there will be on-site branding and newsletters and many other opportunities. You can contact Ken on 0834163062 or by emailing info@whalemark.org.za or if you would just like to make a donation, contact Clive Fox, President of Lions South Africa on 0721590028 for further details.