

St James
Rovos Rail's Elegant Guesthouses



*A Place of Charm
and Tranquility*

Script: Michael Walker

Artwork and design: Mariana McCann-Pereira
- email: mariana@cleverpixel.co.za

Printers: Shumani Printworks, Parow.



Introduction



After the British Occupation of the Cape in 1806 the new governing authorities permitted locals to enter the whaling industry as against the V.O.C. Council of Seventeen's previous restriction, which limited free burgher activity for fear of losing tax on the sale of whale oil and other whale-related products. This restriction opened the way for many Americans and other whaling nations to hunt whales off the Cape coast and False Bay, especially the Southern Right Whale.

The British saw the foolhardiness of this restriction and immediately waived it. The income from the whaling industry thereafter jumped dramatically and by 1812 was the third highest earner in the Cape Colony after wine and agriculture.

The whaling stations of the early 1800s in False Bay were situated near Seaforth Beach, Simon's Town. Complaints, however, from the local naval personnel and residents about the unpleasant and often obnoxious smells, forced the whaling stations to relocate. The coastline between Kalk Bay and St James was ideal. It was sparsely populated and had an ideal landing beach (Danger Beach) which was flanked by a rocky outcrop to which the whales' carcasses could be secured.

Previously, in July 1809, a certain Johan Hendrik Muller had delivered a Memorial to His Excellency the Earl of Caledon requesting a 15-year land title on a piece of land along the mountains of Kalk Bay, Cape District. He stated: *That your Memorialist is the possessor of a place situated at Kalk Bay and supports himself chiefly with the Tanner's trade and is obliged*

to keep some bullocks as well as other cattle for his said profession. That your Memorialist customarily sends his cattle to graze at a field lying about Muizenberg but which field gives no sufficient pasturage in the winter season. That in the vicinity of his said place upon the hill between the mountains of Kalk Bay and Muizenberg layeth a large piece of Government land which may be given as a loan place and which your Memorialist is very desirous to obtain for grazing his cattle. Your Memorialist therefore humbly begs leave to address your Excellency and to pay your Excellency should your Excellency graciously be pleased to grant him the said Government land on loan and him paying the usual rent per annum.

This 15-year land title was never granted, and within four years of his Memorial Muller realised that there was a great future in the whaling industry, which far exceeded that of his tannery business. He must have been a resourceful and enterprising individual after the whaling stations both in Simon's Town and Kalk Bay had been closed because of protests from the local residents due to the obnoxious smell from the boiling of blubber and rotten carcasses. Muller realised that the coastline north of Kalk Bay (i.e. St James) was ideal. It was free from any houses, hotels and/or boarding houses and had a beach (Danger Beach) which was especially suited to the securing of the carcasses on the rocks alongside the beach as well as having a sandy strip on which to beach the carcasses.

On this basis Muller amended his Memorial and applied in May 1813 for a newly legislated perpetual grant, which consisted of: a strip of land that ran above the Kaapsche Wagenweg (Main Road) from Kimberley Road to the south border of the St James Hotel and extended up the mountain slope by some 60 metres, and a small portion of land, 265 square roods, below the Main Road from The Barnacle to Larboard Watch (97 to 107).

The Government Land Surveyor W. F. Hertzog measured and surveyed the grounds on 12 June 1813 and noted the borders. These quitrents were granted on 4 April 1814. On the land above the Main Road Muller built a whaling station (later Villa Capri), while the land below the Main Road gave him access to the rocks to which the whale carcasses were secured (there were still a number of metal rings attached to the rocks of Danger Beach in 1950). Here the whales were cut up and taken to the whaling station for processing for oil and baleen. Whalebones were also cleaned and used for fencing (as against timber that rotted) and land survey beacons.

In 1822 after Lord Charles Somerset had replaced the Earl of Caledon as Governor of the Cape, Muller received his original large quitrent grant, described as 'Barren Rocky Land', as requested in 1809. This grant measured 7 morgen and 390 square roods and was surveyed by John Melvill, Government Surveyor, on 9 January 1821, and approved on 15 October 1822. It was a triangular piece of ground that extended up the mountain slope at an approximate angle of 45 degrees from today's Kimberley Road to above today's Boyes Drive and then dropped in a perpendicular line down the south boundary of the St James Hotel.

When Muller died in 1841 the executors of his estate sold off these quitrents, which were then divided into seven numbered lots plus a north end lot (not numbered but referred to as the remainder). Among these seven lots were:

Lot 3 - Both sides of Ley Road, St James, which later included the Homestead.

Lot 4 - Both sides of Pentrich Road, St James, which later included Seaforth.

Lot 5 - Both sides of Hillrise Road, St James, which later included St James Manor.



Sophia Jamison's Cottage (centre) 1874. Later (1877) known as Watson's Cottage and in 1892 renamed Hamilton Cottage. Vancouver House under construction (left), Pentrich (left - centre). This photograph was taken about the same time as that on page 15.

Lot 3 was initially sold out of J. H. Muller's deceased estate to W. J. Langeveld in June 1842. In early 1844 Langeveld was declared insolvent and Lot 3 was sold by the executors of his insolvent estate to William McDonald. The ground passed steadily down the line: Messrs James Bell (1846-47), Francis Pocock (1847-1853), Johannes Stukeris (1853-1865), Adriaan Zeederberg (1865-1867) and Heinrich Pieter Hablutzet in October 1867.

The Homestead

(94 Main Road) Lot 3

The Deed of Sale diagram in 1865 (refer page 9) noted that a dwelling stood on the ground, which was then owned by Adriaan Zeederberg. Hablutzet altered this dwelling, known today as The Homestead, in 1870. He was not always resident and on occasion let out the house to various tenants.

The history of The Homestead included what might be termed an unusual incident with regard to what became known as 'The Wall of Hate'. It stands on the Kalk Bay side of The Homestead, and was built c.1878. The building of this wall occurred after William Mortimer Farmer (1836-1899) built his home, Seaforth, closer to the Main Road than The Homestead, despite agreeing not to, and thereby blocking the view from The Homestead across the bay to Simon's Town. (The Homestead is set well back from Main Road.) In response the owner of The Homestead (Hablutzet) built a high wall on the boundary of his property with Seaforth, thereby cutting out part of Seaforth's view of False Bay and Hottentots Holland and some of its early morning sun. A court case ensued where Farmer tried to compel Hablutzet to demolish the wall. Farmer lost the case whereupon Hablutzet raised the wall by another six

feet. Seaforth burned down in 1939 and a new house was built in 1942, but 'The Wall of Hate,' remained.

John Nicholls had rented The Homestead from Hablutzel in January 1874. During his stay his two daughters tragically drowned off Danger Beach and in their memory Nicholls and his three brothers financed the building of a baptismal font at the Holy Trinity Church in Kalk Bay.



The Nicholls' baptismal font.

John Nicholls, manager of the Colonial Bank and co-founder of the Standard Bank of British South Africa, had taken his three daughters to Danger Beach to paddle in the waves. A large wave engulfed the girls and the backwash pulled them out to sea. Their voluminous dresses kept them afloat while Nicholls, a non-swimmer, rushed along the road to Kalk Bay pleading for help. A group of fishermen, realising his plight, set off from Kalk Bay in a boat to rescue the girls. They miraculously saved one daughter, Edith, but the other two sisters, Emma and Madeline, drowned. Despite their drowning, John Nicholls rewarded the fishermen handsomely. Later that year, after the Holy Trinity Church, Kalk Bay was completed and consecrated (29 September 1874), he and his three brothers donated a memorial baptismal font to the church, which is still in use today, some 137 years after the disaster.

During Prettijohn's ownership (1916-1920) the Homestead stables were demolished when the Council expropriated the ground for the building of Ley Road.

The most eminent owner of the Homestead was the first Archbishop of Cape Town, William West Jones. Archbishop Jones (1839-1908) bought The Homestead, 94 Main Road, from the deceased estate of Heinrich Pieter Hablutzel in 1902. It was his holiday home until his death in May 1908 while attending the Lambeth Conference in London. He was buried



The Homestead - c. 1908

in Holywell Cemetery, Oxford. He was survived by his wife Emily (née Allen), whom he had married in 1879, and their two sons. He left The Homestead to Emily in his Will and she stayed there for some five years until she sold it to Mary Cathcart in 1913.

When Robert Gray, First Bishop of Cape Town, died in September 1872 there was a considerable delay in finding a successor. This was mainly due to the split within the Church caused by the Bishop Colenso controversy. Jones accepted appointment as Bishop of Cape Town in 1873, was consecrated in 1878 and in 1897 became the first Archbishop of Cape Town. He was a tall, dignified and youthful personality and his visits to St James must have been most refreshing especially when he was tied up with the problems of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). Here he tried to mediate between the two combatants to secure a lasting peace, and had to endure untrue accusations by the Boers that he was biased towards the British.



*Archbishop William
West Jones - 1899*

Archbishop Jones won a great reputation for pastoral gentleness and was highly respected by the community. His death while in England was a great shock and he was deeply mourned. At the time of his death he was engaged in raising funds for the completion of St. George's Cathedral. The St. John the Baptist Chapel in the Cathedral is a memorial to him, and his bronze effigy lies on an empty tomb on the south side. An inscription in gilt records the main events of his life.

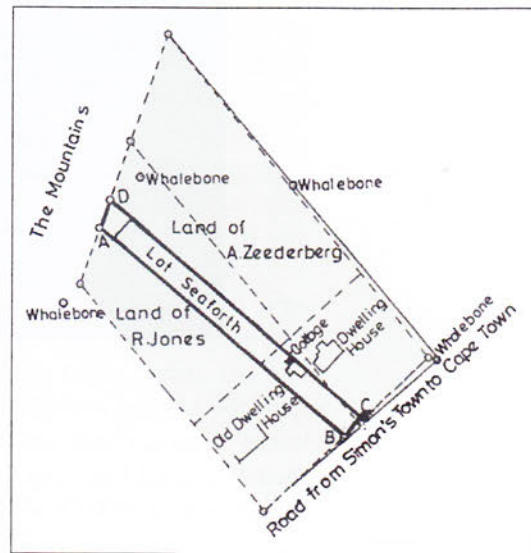
After Mary Cathcart's (1913) ownership, the home passed through the hands of Nicholas Prettijohn (1916), George Swart (1920), and on his death in 1934 to his son Arthur and daughter Mary.

The Roy Garlick Trust Co. owned The Homestead in the 1940s and did extensive renovations, which included a new concrete slab over garages and the construction of a completely new stairway (Architect: Brian Mansergh).

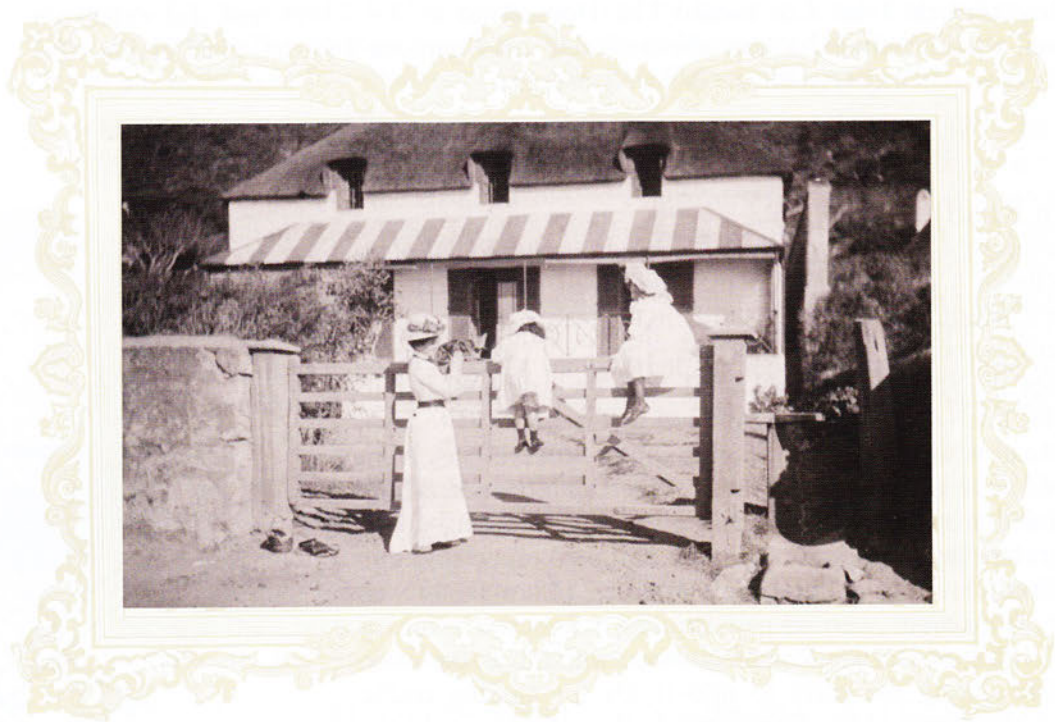
Seaforth

(96 Main Road) Lot 4

The executors of J. H. Muller's deceased estate sold Lot 4, which included a dwelling-house that may well have been part of Muller's whaling complex, to Johan Adriaan Louw in July 1842. Louw owned Lot 4 for nine years and sold the property to Johannes W. Stukeris in April 1851 who then divided it into two smaller lots (A and B). Lot A stood to the north of today's Pentrich Road while Lot B stood to the south. Stukeris' insolvent estate sold Lot A in December 1865 to Rice Daniel Jones, which now included a small lot with cottage and was described as Seaforth (refer diagram opposite). Jones' assigned estate sold this lot to William Brading in July 1869. Brading (1826-1891) was a wealthy shopkeeper who owned Brading's Superior Grocery Store (est. 1853) in Durban Road Wynberg, which was the main thoroughfare during the early to mid-1800s for passing traffic *en route* to the farms of the Constantia Valley. Brading sold the property (land with buildings) to William Mortimer Farmer who demolished the the old dwelling-house and cottage and built



Lot 4 - December 1866. Note: Whale-bones used as site beacons, and first known recorded reference to the name Seaforth.



*Seaforth House - c. 1905 'The Wall of Hate'
and whale-bone beacon (right).*

a home, retaining the name Seaforth. William Mortimer Farmer owned many properties in St James. He was born in Wynberg on 3 December 1836. He was heir to the Maynard fortune and rose to prominence in the 1870s when he, among others, made a notable contribution to the economic upliftment of Wynberg. He was a successful businessman and was a partner in W. G. Anderson & Co., the shipping agents for the Union-Castle Line. He was also a Member of the Cape Legislative Assembly serving the Wynberg Constituency from 1879 to 1883. He died in England in 1899 and his deceased estate was liquidated in 1900.

Seaforth, a thatched-roof home of some four bedrooms, then passed through the hands of further owners (Servaas van Breda 1888 and Louisa Trollip 1897) until it was bought by William Fletcher in 1902. Fletcher was the founder of the renowned department store Fletchers. Later known as Fletcher and Cartwrights, which stood on the corner of Darling and Adderley Streets Cape Town. Fletcher died in 1916 and Mary Emerson Armour (née Smith), a widow, bought Seaforth from Fletcher's deceased estate on 4 October 1916. She accommodated boy boarders from Star of the Sea from 1917 to 1920. In June 1920 she added a large front verandah to the home (Builder: Eastman & Co.). She sold the home some five years later for £3500 in December 1921 to Bridget O'Callaghan (née Kilkerry) who had married William Thomas O'Callaghan in 1869. Her husband had died in 1919. He had been the proprietor and owner of the International Hotel in Mill Street, Cape Town. Bridget changed the name Seaforth to Kilcreen, presumably the place of her birth in Ireland. Bridget died on 12 May 1928, aged 78. Her immovable assets included the International Hotel (valued at £24252) and Kilcreen. Her two daughters, Catherine Cassidy and Eileen Walsh, both widows, bought Kilcreen from their mother's deceased estate for £3000. Catherine, or

Kate as she was better known, was the elder daughter and she and Eileen ran Kilcreen as a Residential Hotel between 1935 and 1937. In 1939 tragedy struck and Kilcreen was gutted by a fire. The old historic home was reduced to ashes. Eileen and Kate, who was then in her seventies, sold the property, the house having been demolished, to Sophia Walker of Pretoria for £3250.



John Perry - 1930

Sophia Walker employed architect John Perry who was in partnership with Broderick St Clair Lightfoot (Perry and Lightfoot) to design a new double-storey home on the site (but closer to the Main Road). The home, then called Mare Video, was ready for occupation by early 1942. Sophia Walker was not long resident at Mare Video and in January 1944 she sold the home to Marjorie Moxon of the Meikles family in Rhodesia. Marjorie Moxon did further additions in 1952 (Architects: Lightfoot, Twentyman Jones and Kent). Thereafter subsequent owners were Arthur Rushton-Brown (1959), Dawn Elizabeth Henderson (1969), and Keith Macfarlane (1976) who renamed the house Seaforth thereby restoring the original historical name of the mid-1850s.

Rohan and Anthea Vos purchased the house from Richard and Eveanne Friedman in November 2010. The Friedmans had done extensive refurbishments to the house in 2006 so only a few minor changes were undertaken before Seaforth, now named St James Seaforth, was opened as a luxury guesthouse in July 2011.

St James Manor (originally Balgarthen)

(108 Main Road) Lot 5

Included in the eight erven, which originally formed part of Lot 5 in J. H. Muller's deceased estate, was a thatched-roof house built 1874. This was the original home of Philip Morgenrood, and it was here that the members of the Dutch Reformed Church worshipped in a small room intended for a stable behind Morgenrood's home, before the Dutch Reformed Church was built in Kalk Bay.

George James Findlay, who bought the thatched-roof house in 1885, named the house Vancouver House. (He later bought Villa Capri in November 1887). He chose the name in memory of his stay in Vancouver, Canada, where he had moved in 1862 'for business and health reasons'. Findlay sold Vancouver House to Joseph Mossop (of tannery fame) on 7 December 1895.

Mossop did various alterations and improvements to Vancouver House and sold it to James Tennant Molteno in September 1899. J. T. Molteno (later Sir) was the son of Sir John Molteno. Molteno then sold Vancouver House to William Molteno Bisset in May 1902 for £3105 who changed the name of the house to Somerset House. He played rugby for South Africa against W. E. MacLagan's touring British team in 1891 and was the South African team manager on the next British rugby tour to South Africa under J. Hammond in 1896. He was a founding partner of the firm of attorneys Bisset, Boehmke and McBlain (who are still active today) and was President of the Law Society in 1919-1920 and again in 1924-1925. He sold the home in 1912 to John William Jagger of wholesalers J. W. Jagger



William M. Bisset
1867-1958

& Co. who again changed the name during his ownership (1912-1924) to Balgarthen. John William Jagger (1859-1930) was a highly successful entrepreneur who arrived in Cape Town from his home county Yorkshire in 1880. He established the well-known firm J. W. Jagger & Co. Ltd. and during his stay in St James from 1912-1924 he was Chairman of the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce (1909-1913). In 1914 he established The Chair of Economics at SACS, the forerunner of the U.C.T. He donated generously to the U.C.T. from 1902-1930. This included a donation of £10 000 for English books to establish a library, which is now named the Jagger Library in his honour. In his final years at St James he was Minister of Railways and Harbours (1921-1924) in General Smuts's Government.



John William Jagger
1859-1930

John Ernest Orr bought the home from Jagger in 1924. Orr died in November 1935, aged 70, and Dorothy Orr, his wife, inherited Balgarthen per Orr's Will. She died in March 1963 and her daughter Glendyr inherited the home from her mother's estate in September 1963. Glendyr's husband Dr Peter Packer, was the son of the famous South African authoress Joy Packer, wife of Admiral Sir Herbert Packer, Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic Station, Simon's Town (1950-1952).

In August 1967 Balgarthen was sold to Johannes Gerhardus (Jan) van der Horst who became the Managing Director and later Chairman of Old Mutual. In January 1970 the house was sold to Graham Joshua Beck, the well-known coal-mining entrepreneur, wine farmer and horse breeder. In 2000 the property was split into two holdings and transferred to Anchorprops 11 and 12 (Pty) Ltd, then in December 2006 was transferred to two companies related to the Shamwari Game Reserve.



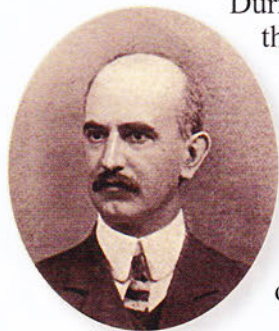
Main Road, with Vancouver House (today's 108) under construction, 1874. Pentrich and The Homestead in background. Note: Whale-bone boundary posts on the mountain slope.

Rohan and Anthea Vos of Rovos Rail purchased the property on auction in July 2009. After extensive refurbishments the house was re-opened as the St James Manor and continues to operate as a six-room five star guesthouse.

The architects of Balgarthen

Charles Henry Smith (1863-1930), ARIBA (1895)

Charles H. Smith was born in London in 1863 and served part of his articles with Mr Durrant, architect and surveyor, New Wandsworth, Surrey, from 1879 to 1880. He then left to join the Royal Engineers in 1881 and attended the Royal Engineers' Architectural School at Chatham in 1882 before being employed for three-and-a-half years as a draughtsman in the Royal Engineers' Department, Aldershot.



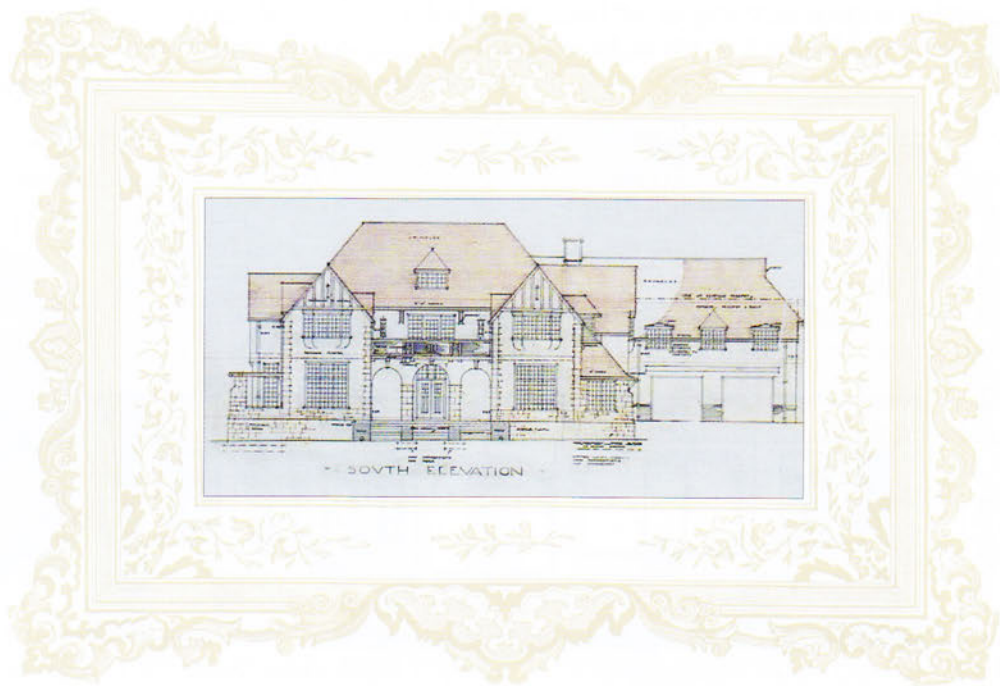
In 1887 he was appointed chief draughtsman to the Commanding Officer Royal Engineers, Cape Colony, where he remained until 1892 before returning to England. He was back in Cape Town in 1896 and successfully set up his own practice that lasted until 1928. He was a founder member of The Cape Institute of Architects in 1902.

Charles Henry Smith
- 1905

In 1919 Jagger called in architect Charles Smith, who did all J. W. Jagger & Co.'s work, to redesign the double-storey home with major additions, which included two bedrooms at the back of the house and a large impressive verandah in the front opening onto the garden (Builders: Bakker & Co.). Refer to illustration opposite.



C. H. Smith's alterations of the sea-facing front of Balgarthen 1919.



Mansergh's redesign of the front of Balgarthen in 1935.

Brian Mansergh (1897-1977), ARIBA (1922)

Brian Mansergh was born in Wynberg on 30 May 1897 and was educated at Rondebosch Boys' High School and at SACS. He studied Civil Engineering (1919-1920) at the University of Cape Town before joining the office of architects Kendall and Morris. After a spell overseas studying architecture at Liverpool University, working in New York and for Herbert Baker in London, he rejoined Kendall and Morris' office in 1924. Later the partnership of Kendall & Morris was dissolved (1925) and Mansergh remained with Kendall. After 1932 Mansergh became a lecturer in architecture at the University of Cape Town after the sudden death of lecturer L. F. McConnell. This was a temporary post and lasted one year.

Mansergh opened his own practice in 1932, and the following year was elected President of The Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, as it was then known.

In February 1936 Dorothy Orr requested Brain Mansergh to do extensive additions to the house, which included a complete new frontage. Plans were approved in 1936 and 12 tenders were received, the lowest from J. Korte at £8200. See illustration opposite.

One cannot write about Brian Mansergh without reference to the legacy he left in the origination of the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. Although this is beyond the scope of this research, it will suffice to mention that were it not for him and Dr S.H. 'Stacey' Skaife, there would have been no Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. 'Without Mansergh's stimulus and efforts the plight of the "fairest cape" might not have been recognised.' (Reference: *Between Two Oceans: Flora and Fauna of the Cape of Good Hope*, page 30, by Michael Frazer, published by David Philip Publishers (Pty.) Ltd., Claremont 1994.)

Mansergh died in 1977 aged 80. He was a divorcee and had no children.



Brian Mansergh - 1933