



Friends of Smuts House (FoSH)

2024 Newsletter

Talks & Walks

Dear Friends,

Summer is in full swing with extreme heat during September-October, but also lovely rain showers during January-February-March and this last week of October. We had a few cold weeks in winter, but our talks during June-July were well supported by our resilient supporters!

1 FoSH COMMITTEE

Committee members are Nigel Coni (treasurer), Ron Mengell, Elise (talk host), Ian McFayden, Christo Rabie (chair, newsletter, marketing), Cilla Taylor ad hoc (membership) and heritage specialist (speakers).

2 TALKS AND WALKS

We will have approximately 10 talks per annum (February - November)

In addition, we hope to also host 4 walks per annum:

- 1 bird walk
- 1 plant/flower/grass walk
- 1 geological / geographical walk
- 1 historical Irene tour which links with the Smuts farm Doornkloof, with the farming activities, the local history and the Smuts couple Jannie and Isie as well as the area's history before 1900.



2.1 TALKS 2024

February 2024 – When objects speak of lived experience, the artistic memory of the Italian POW at Zonderwater

Claudia Fratini explored the concept of artefacts as memory making and memory holding objects. It will discuss how material culture, in the form of artefacts and built structures, becomes an interface between past and present – an act of memory for those who made and built the artifices; a means of memorialising for those who gaze upon these endeavours in the future/present. Material culture left to us by the Italian POW from Zonderwater will be analysed and allowed to speak of the lived experience of these POW who resided in a camp South of the Sahara from 1941 to 1947, a camp appraised later for the humane way how Jan Smuts treated POW's.



Restored frescos in the hospital chapel



P.O.W at work



Col. Prinsloo's headstone
Made by ex-PoW

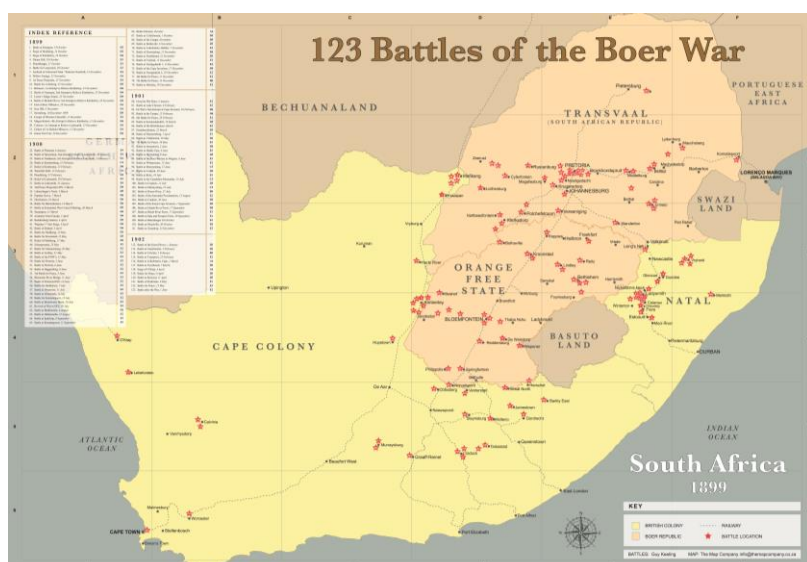
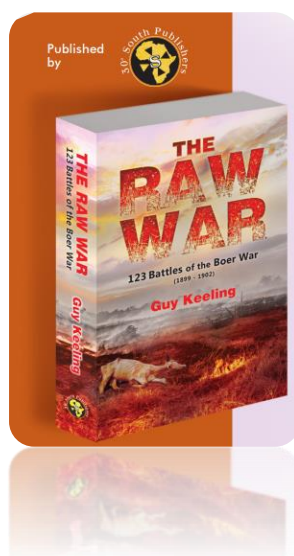


Picture frame
Bardia memento

March 2024 – Guy Keeling's successful book launch of "THE RAW WAR's 123 battles during the Boer War"

The talk focused on how the Boers had no strategy but won some defensive battles early in the campaign. While the British had a strategy and lost some inexcusable offensive battles early in the war. Each battle is summarised analytically and opens debate. The talk was structured into 6 phases of the Boer War. His experience in the Angola guerilla war served him well by drawing parallels between these two wars as well.

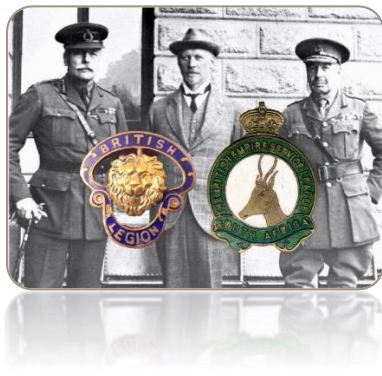
Guy is currently working on another Boer War publication as a reference work.



April 2024 - The South African Legion

Maurizio Paoli chairs the Johannesburg branch of the SA Legion, a registered NPO with 15 branches countrywide. He will talk about the formation of the SA Legion and the involvement of Gen JC Smuts, with the focus on social work upliftment of our war veterans after WW I. This aspect of Smuts (and his wife) has been underplayed in historical reportage and it underpins their pragmatic approach in assisting humanity.

The war veterans purchased the Big House on Doornkloof in 1961, to become a museum and with the distinctive aim to preserve the legacy of both Jan and Isie Smuts, which forms part of the Smuts Foundation's mission and vision. The talks will also focus on two very iconic animals which accompanied our troops to North Africa in WW II.



May 2024 - Professor emeritus Tilman Dederig

The enemy within: German internees in South Africa in WWI

Soon after the eruption of hostilities in Europe, the Union government began to arrest German and Austrian males between the age of 18 and 56. As in other belligerent countries, German residents were exposed to a sudden wave of xenophobia and nationalist war propaganda.

Many Germans in South Africa had not defined their identity within clearly demarcated categories of national and ethnic identity until the outbreak of war. Despite their precarious situation, however, the political struggles between Afrikaners and British South Africans ameliorated the treatment of the German prisoners because Afrikaner sympathies provided an antidote to excessive Germanophobia.

This presentation will contextualise the internment of German 'enemy aliens' in South Africa as a marker of the totalising aspects of interstate hostility in the 20th century which did not exempt civilians from being drawn into the global conflict.



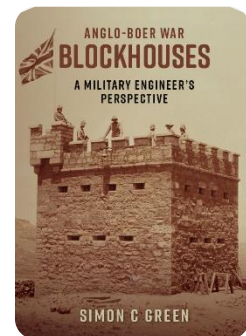
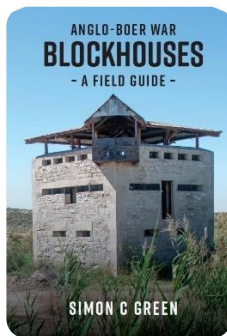
South African Germans in WWI in Jhb and Fort Napier (Pietermaritzburg)

June 2024 - Simon Green

The block houses and Anglo-Boer War on the Doornkloof farm

Taking the Irene geography of Cornwall Hill and Smuts Hill (a post-war term) into consideration, the placement of block houses in strategically purposeful positions, explain the logic of activities during the Anglo-Boer war on the Doornkloof farm.

The logistics of the local railway line; water sources in the area; the influx of interned local population into separate concentration camps, the influx of Cornwall Regiment; the concentration of a black labour camp; a Boer rebound behind the Big House; commando (and possibly Smuts) activities and van der Bijl war neutrality on Doornkloof farm about touches on the main aspects of Irene during war times in 1900.



July 2024 - Prof. David Boucher, Cardiff University
JC Smuts and the Welsh mine workers strike of 1917

The visit of General Smuts to South Wales in October 1917 is widely referenced in biographies, and histories with the intention of illustrating his powers of persuasion and immense popularity in Great Britain during his time in the British Imperial War Cabinet.

A mythology has grown up around the visit which has served to mislead even the most devoted Smuts scholars as to the nature and purpose of his visit to Cardiff and Tonypandy.

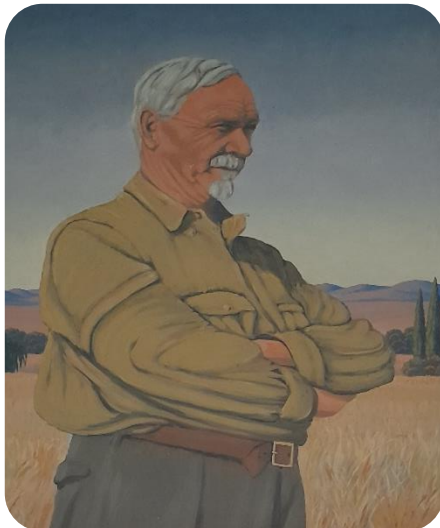
This talk will give the broader context against which Smuts' visit to South Wales has to be placed and try to give an assessment of the respects in which it may be claimed that the visit was a success.



August 2024 - Advocate Marius Ackermann

Marius Ackermann is a reckoned speaker at the Friends of Smuts House. Past talks have reflected on the portrayal of Jan Smuts in public art and last year we have been treated to a well- researched talk on Smuts the lawyer and some of the court cases in which he was involved as attorney.

The focus on HC de Kock, a gifted journalist, artist and parliamentarian and witness to interesting times will shed light on diverse aspects of Smuts' life. The Smuts study houses the De Kock collection, which Marius has perused for this talk. It is a privilege to have access to these important archival records by means of this talk.



Painting of JC Smuts by HC de Kock

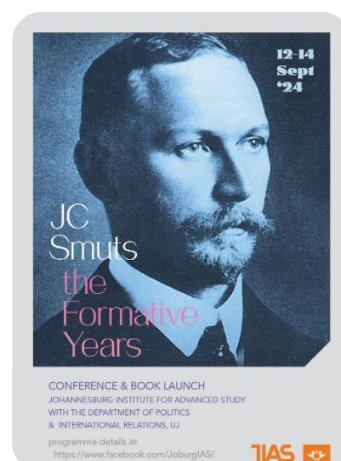
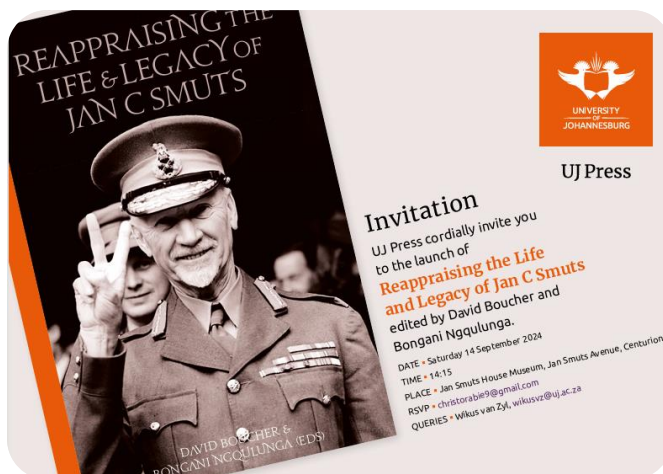
Smuts House Museum



Photograph of Smuts in Italy during WW II by HC de Kock

September 2024 - REAPPRAISING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF JAN SMUTS

Publication launched at Smuts House Museum on Saturday 14 September 2024. Last year's 2-day conference, hosted by the universities of Cardiff and Jhb, has resulted in this publication by various authors, edited by prof. David Boucher and Bongani Ngqulunga.



The launch took place after this year's conference "JC Smuts, the formative years"



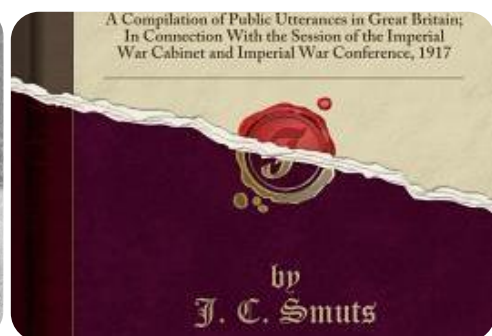
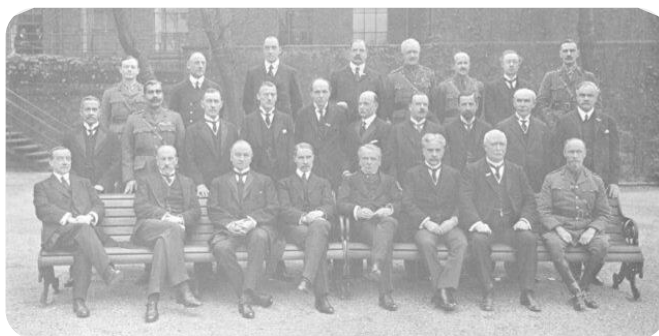
October 2024 – Emeritus Prof Kobus du Pisani (University of the Northwest, Potch)

Man of the moment: Jan Smuts' triumphant arrival in London, March 1917

Jan Smuts was not even supposed to have gone to London in 1917, but he did and when he arrived in the British capital, he was given a hero's reception as the man of the moment.

A strange turn of events led to his meteoric rise to prominence on the world stage. In this talk I intend to focus on the 100 days or so, from December 1916 to March 1917, when Smuts was elevated to the status of an icon in the British Empire, at a stage when the Empire was still near the top of its greatness.

During the next two years (1917-1919) Smuts would experience the climax of his renown as an international statesman.



JC Smuts, front row far right. WWI War Cabinet member in London, 1917

**October 2024 - Dr Claudia Gouws, University of Northwest, History & Heritage Studies.
Jan Smuts and the lost African Kingdom of Mapungubwe**

Mapungubwe, an Iron Age civilization that existed in the confluence of the Sashe and Limpopo rivers between 900 and 1,300 AD was discovered by Jerry van Graan in 1932.

Since 1933, archaeological investigations have established that these sites represent a sequence of human settlement, subsistent farming and state development. General Jan Smuts, a Prime Minister of the Union Government, played a significant role in the proclamation of Mapungubwe and Greefswald farm as a National Park during the period that follows.

UNESCO inscripted Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape as a World Heritage site in 2003 for its outstanding universal value. The vision of Smuts was fulfilled in the establishment of the Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area lately.



Mapungubwe Museum visual - museum poster

2.2 WALKS 2024

February 2024 - Bird Walk

Guide - Marna Buys, Birdlife North Gauteng

Approximately 60 bird species were identified on the walk.

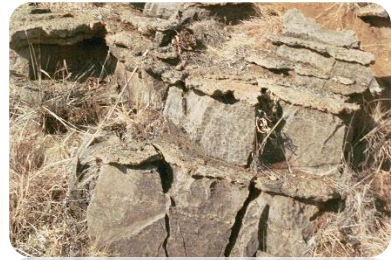


August 2024 – Geology walk on site

Prof Adam Bumbry of the University of Pretoria

Prof Bumbry researched South African scientific data and local evidence on continental drift. The Doornkloof farm of Jan Smuts provided excellent specimen of past geological events which relate to some of the earliest signs of life on earth in Darwinian theory of evolution. Cambridge named JC Smuts, Darwin and Milton the poet as the 3 top students of the university in more than 500 years of Cambridge's history.

The walk delivered information of highly educational value on the layman's level.



Left to right - Stromatolites; Quartz; Chert and dolomite

9 November 2024 – Site walk of Doornkloof farm, viewing the farming features

Friends of Smuts; Christo Rabie & Annemarie Carelsen

Kindly refer to the e-mail or WhatsApp on details for this walk.



The Jan Smuts farm Doornkloof still shows approximately 20 features such as cattle kraals, windbreaks, water troughs, water reservoirs, a milk room, cow shed, sheep herder's hut and many more, which we will view and discuss.



A separate newsletter will report on the FoSH projects for 2024.

Braam van Wyk will be able to do a grass walk for us on site early next year. We need to have fire breaks and controlled fire on premises to produce potash and to enable us to better observe a bulbous flower splash.

FoSH Chair: Christo

End October 2024