THE AFRIKAANS LANGUAGE MONUMENT

From Concept to Being
The girl who kicked off her European shoes, pulled on Indonesian socks and tied her “vellies” (rawhide shoes) here in Africa, she is that treasure that we call Afrikaans.

– Chris Chameleon
The Afrikaans Language Museum and Language Monument in Paarl celebrate the birth and continuing existence of Afrikaans.

Everyone who can or wants to speak Afrikaans, or who is interested in the language, should visit this unique museum and monument to learn more about Afrikaans, the third most spoken language in South Africa. Afrikaans is the mother tongue of more than seven million speakers and is spoken by just as many people as a second or third language.

*Statistics South Africa 2011
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Inception of the monument

The idea of constructing a monument to the Afrikaans language was raised on 14 August 1942 on the farm Kleinbosch in Dal Josaphat near Paarl. The event was the unveiling of a memorial plaque at the cemetery, in honour of SJ du Toit, DF du Toit and PJ Malherbe, three founder members of the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (GRA) or ‘Society of True Afrikaners’, who are buried there.

This led to a public meeting in Paarl on 26 September 1942 where the Afrikaanse Taal-monument Komitee (Afrikaans Language Monument Committee) was formed. The chairman was Reverend PJ Loots, and the vice-chairman was the well-known Mr SPH (‘Oom Seppie’ or ‘Uncle Seppie’) de Villiers. The rest of the committee consisted of Drs AL de Jager, W de Vos Malan, JJ Muller, GG Cillié, Messrs GC Burger (secretary), HA Rust, WA Joubert, WH Louw, and Miss J Meyer.

The aim of the committee was to raise funds for the construction of a ‘worthy language monument in Paarl’, and to provide bursaries to ‘deserving post-graduate students studying specific aspects of the Afrikaans language’.
The venture was embarked on with great enthusiasm and a so-called Oproep (Appeal; or ‘Movement’ as the committee called it) was composed to bring the matter to the attention of all South Africans. Although the ‘Oproep’ enjoyed widespread media coverage, the fundraising was not as successful as had been hoped for, and more than three decades were to pass before the monument eventually became a reality.

From 1963 onwards, the Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurbond (ATKB), (an association for the promotion of the Afrikaans language and culture, which was assimilated into the Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereniging (ATKV) in 1991) was intensively involved in the effort, and gradually took on all the administrative and secretarial duties. The organisation also played a significant role in fundraising.

In 1964 the committee organised a competition for the design of the monument, and invited 12 architects to participate. The brief stated that the monument had to be visible from afar and among other things had to depict the cultural and political flowering of Afrikaans. Architect Jan van Wijk’s design was selected as the winner.

As early as 1963, the terrain west of Bretagne Rock on Paarl Mountain had been chosen for the monument. In 1968 the Paarl municipality transferred approximately 84 hectares to the state at no cost.

Construction of the monument began in late 1972 and was completed at the end of 1974. The total cost of construction was around R700 000. The monument was inaugurated in 1975, a hundred years after the founding of the GRA.
WHO AND WHAT WAS THE GRA?

- Arnoldus Pannevis, Dutch linguist, realised that the language spoken by South Africans was already a language in its own right. He proposed that it be called Afrikaans.

- Pannevis wrote to the British and Overseas Bible Society proposing that the Bible should be translated into Afrikaans so that everyone in South Africa could understand it.

- The Bible Society commissioned Rev SJ du Toit to ascertain whether there really was such a need.

- Rev Du Toit invited a group of friends and relatives to a meeting on 14 August 1875 in the house of his cousin, Gideon Malherbe, to discuss this matter.

- The meeting was attended by CP Hoogehout; ds SJ du Toit; GJ Malherbe; DF du Toit (son of DP); August Ahrbeck; PJ Malherbe; DF du Toit (son of DF) and SG du Toit.

- The men decided to launch an association which could campaign for the acknowledgement of Afrikaans as written language, and thus the “Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners” (Society of True Afrikaners) or GRA came into existence.

- One of the first things the GRA did was to publish an Afrikaans newspaper titled Die Afrikaanse Patriot, which appeared for the first time on 15 January 1876.

- Various other Afrikaans publications were printed on the printing press of the GRA and distributed.

- The GRA stopped meeting at the beginning of the 20th century. By that time the Afrikaans Language Movement had built up enough momentum to be unstoppable.
INAUGURATION

Over 40 000 people attended the inauguration of the Language Monument, held in the amphitheatre, on 10 October 1975. The official dedication speech was delivered by the then prime minister, Mr BJ Vorster. The programme featured performances and recitations by well-known Afrikaans actors and voice-artists. Among these was a dramatisation of the inaugural meeting of the GRA, written by Pieter Fourie. Interestingly (given that in those days apartheid was still flourishing), Adam Small’s poem ‘Nkosi sikelel iAfrika’ was recited.

In the months leading up to the inauguration, a row nearly erupted when leading white Afrikaans writers threatened to boycott the occasion if coloured writers were not invited as well. Consequently, various coloured writers together with representatives from other sectors of the coloured community were invited. Many attended the festivities, along with a large number of coloured schoolchildren. However, certain white writers still stayed away.

The event was also a choir festival with nine choirs participating, including the Bel Canto Choir conducted by David Samaai, the Primrose Choir conducted by Abdullah Maged, and the Drakensberg Boys’ Choir conducted by Louis van der Westhuizen.

The highlight of the occasion was the arrival of eight torches (each representing a founder member of the GRA), which had left the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria on 14 August for Paarl along various routes. The prime minister and seven descendants of the GRA founders received the torches and used these to ignite the main flame. This symbolically represented the spread of the language to the furthest corners of the country, returning to Paarl, its point of origin.
Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika

Hier, halfversteen
onder die geel gloed van die son
staan-staan ‘n swartman
en sy twaalf rooi beeste
in gelid
en in die stilte
wat groen glinster teen die bulte
wys die dorings wit;
ou geeste
kan weer leef soos ou vulkane
as die bloed in hul bly kook het
vir ’n duisend mane,
maar wie kan vir ons bid
dat God die wêreld seën
en elke os en nasie
vet laat reën
en ons laat weet hoe feilbaar was Nonkwasi.

– Adam Small (uit Sê sjibbolet, 1963)

Interestingly (given that in those days apartheid
was still flourishing), Adam Small’s poem
‘Nkosi sikelel iAfrika’ was recited at the
inauguration of the monument.

Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika

Petrified,
fossilised and still,
under the glowing yellow sun
like the one
of Van Gogh’s at Arles,
a black man guides
his twelve red cattle
in the shimmering silence
glistening green on the Eastern hills,
(also white with thorns).

Who knows:
Spirits of old
– of the long dead –
may live again like old volcanoes
if the blood in them had kept boiling
for a thousand years ...

And there’ll be prayer for us
and our earth
and all our people will be blessed,
and will forsake their fast,
and know how false
was the prophesy of Nonquasi!

Translated by
Adam Small
from his
volume
of verse,
Sê Sjibbolet,
May 2016
Inspiration for the design

One of Van Wijk’s most important design considerations was that the monument should harmonise with and complement the natural environment. He explained that he visited the proposed site on Paarl Mountain via an old fire-break: ‘My wife and I first walked around here, and then we drove to Franschhoek and also to Klapmuts, to view the terrain from afar, because the monument had to be visible from a distance.’ Van Wijk felt that the lines and other elements of the monument should reflect the natural lines and forms of the environment, and that the building materials should blend in with the rocks on the mountain.

The next step was to look for a suitable image that could represent Afrikaans. The geometrician in Van Wijk immediately recognised a mathematical hyperbola in the imagery used by the famous writer CJ Langenhoven to describe the growth of Afrikaans, namely a ‘rapidly ascending arc’. Thus the idea of the main column was born, with an opening at the apex to represent growth. Van Wijk said to himself: ‘Wonderful – there you see your language – a nice shape. But it can’t be just a shape, it must also have definition.’

To visually express this definition, van Wijk used the words of writer NP van Wyk Louw who described Afrikaans as the language that connects Western Europe and Africa, like a bridge. Louw also described Afrikaans as a ‘gleaming tool’ and a ‘double-edged sword’. All these concepts shaped the monument in the mind’s eye of Van Wijk, and were eventually realised in its structure and symbolism.
CJ (CORNELIS JACOBUS) LANGENHOVEN, also known as Sagmoedige Neelsie (an affectionate diminutive meaning ‘sweet-natured Neels’; Neels being the short form of his name), was one of South Africa’s most prolific writers. In the early decades of the 20th century he was viewed as a national treasure. In July of 1914, in Bloemfontein, he delivered a lecture, entitled ‘Afrikaans as language medium’, before De Zuid-Afrikanse Akademie voor Taal, Lettere en Kunst (The South African Academy for Language, Literature and Art). Architect Jan van Wijk used the following words from the lecture as inspiration:

Were we to plant a row of posts in a line down this hall, ten posts to represent the past ten years, and on each post we made a mark at a height from the floor corresponding to the relative written usage of Afrikaans in the respective year, and we drew a line through the marks, from the first near the floor to the last, there on the other side against the attic, then the line would describe a rapidly ascending arc – not only ascending swiftly, but ascending on a rapidly increasing scale. Now let us, in our imagination, extend this arc for the following ten years hence. Do you see, gentlemen, where the apex will be, out there in the blue sky high over Bloemfontein, in the year 1924?
NP (NICOLAAS PETRUS) VAN WYK LOUW was one of the greatest Afrikaans writers, poets and thinkers, and part of a literary group known as the Dertigers (Poets of the 1930s). In 1959 he wrote an essay on the status of Afrikaans, bearing the title ‘Laat ons nie roem nie’ (‘Let us not boast’). In this he wrote, among other things:

Afrikaans is the language connecting Western Europe and Africa; it draws its strength from these two sources; it forms a bridge between the great lucid West and mystical Africa – the sometimes still so obscure Africa; they are both great powers, and great things can arise from their association – this is perhaps what lies ahead for Afrikaans to discover.

HE ADDED: It is not by virtue of our merit, ours as Afrikaners, that we have been given a tool forged in two smithies so far apart, and over so many centuries. It has been given to us; we did not produce it. Our task (and if there ever is to be any merit, this alone can be ours), our task lies in how we use and will use this gleaming tool, this double-edged sword.
The history of the wording that appears on the paving at the approach to the monument, which states ‘Dit is ons erns’, dates back a long way, to 6 March 1905. On that day, the politician JH Hofmeyer (known as Onze Jan or ‘Our Jan’) delivered a speech in Stellenbosch with the title ‘Is’t u ernst?’ (‘Are you dedicated?’). He was the guest speaker at a meeting of Ons Spreekuur (roughly translated: ‘Our Discussion Hour’), a Dutch language and cultural organisation for students. Ironically, this speech was not aimed at promoting Afrikaans. Onze Jan was an advocate for simplified Dutch, and his speech was a plea for the restoration and recognition of Dutch. This was, of course, in reaction to the British regime’s anglicisation policy.

Many of the pro-Afrikaans members of the audience were rubbed the wrong way by his allegations that English was being spoken everywhere at the expense of Dutch, by people he called ‘Dutch-Afrikaans boers’.

In reaction to this speech, historian and language activist Gustav Preller wrote a series of articles in De Volkstem between April and June 1905, under the heading: ‘Laat’t ons toch ernst wezen’ (roughly: ‘Come, let us be dedicated about this’). He thus turned Onze Jan’s call to his own advantage, using it to spur on the use of Afrikaans instead of Dutch. He pointed out that the problem lay not with a lack of dedication, but with the disregard for Afrikaans exhibited by the government of the day.

In 1908, once again in Stellenbosch, Dr DF Malan, chairman of the Afrikaanse Taalvereniging (Afrikaans Language Association) and subsequently member of the Volksraad (House of Assembly) and prime minister, delivered a powerful plea for the use of Afrikaans in a speech entitled ‘Het is ons ernst’ (‘We are dedicated’). This speech was so popular that it was distributed in pamphlet form.

When, in 1974, a central theme was sought for the 1975 Taalfeesjaar (Language Festival Year), the Afrikaans form of this quotation, namely ‘Dit is ons erns’ was decided upon. The phrase subsequently appeared on all publications connected with the Language Monument, and was even used on the monument committee’s official stationery.
Architect Jan van Wijk proposed that the words be inscribed in the paving at the approach to the monument, to attract people’s attention as they ascend the steps, and to draw their attention to what the monument stands for.
Building process

- The monument was erected by ATM Construction, a consortium comprising Murray & Stewart (Boland) and Holtzhausen & Hugo.

- The complex task of positioning the monument proportionally correctly and in the correct place was achieved by using scale models and then mathematically converting these into precise geometrical arcs.

- The geometrical arcs were then projected onto a three-dimensional system of axes using 1100 points to determine the outlines of the monument. For every point, three co-ordinates were determined by a surveyor, using a large boulder on the site as reference point. The resulting geometrical model was then used to construct shutters, or moulds, for the curves of the monument. Before the concrete was cast into the moulds, the co-ordinates were once again confirmed mathematically.

- A special concrete mix was cast in a preconstructed system of shuttering, which was made up of a metal framework lined with marine plywood. Each section of metal piping was shaped to the requisite curvature on site. At the tops of the columns, where the curves became too narrow for this method, wooden moulds were made.

- The concrete mix used for the monument consisted of cement, white sand and Paarl granite. Because the architect wanted to reflect the colour of the rocks on the site, he insisted on using the greyish-brown outer layers of the granite as well as the bluish inner part. The texture of the rocks on the site was imitated by removing the outer cement layer of the hardened concrete with pneumatic hammers, so as to expose the granite chips embedded in the mixture.

- The main spire was tested by the CSIR in a wind tunnel in Stellenbosch, and it was found to be able to withstand wind speeds of up to 160km/h.
“Where are you, my language? What do you look like, my language? Where can I fetch you from – to place you here?”
– Jan van Wijk
The Afrikaans Language Monument must be seen as a sculptural rather than an architectural work and therefore assigning a specific architectural style to it is not strictly relevant.

If one were to discuss the monument in terms of architectural style, however, elements of Brutalism will be noted in the structure. Brutalist buildings are described as “often constructed of cast concrete, which allowed for thick walls with deep recesses for the windows. Also ... the cast concrete [is] often executed in rough finished aggregate, with the imprint of the casing forms functioning to create additional visual appeal.”

It must be noted, however, that there are only certain elements of this style present in the monument and that the overall style cannot be described as Brutalist. Some of the most important elements of Brutalism, such as stark lines, a blockish appearance and square or rectangular forms, are not present in the monument.

Van Tonder claims that Jan van Wijk did not borrow or use any existing architectural style or elements when he designed the language monument. He is of the opinion that the design was very personal and therefore it would not have been possible to reapply this design without compromising its meaning. The use of raw concrete as can be seen in the Monument was, however, common practice during the 1960s and 1970s. Many monuments built in South Africa during this time consisted of concrete as well as natural rock elements obtained from the environment.

Jan van Wijk’s other monuments, in particular the Irish monument, are also in many ways similar to the language monument (for example abstractness, round shapes and columns of increasing height). The Irish monument was designed in the same period in which Van Wijk was working on the Language Monument and was also unveiled in 1975. Van Wijk also re-utilised the elements of amphitheatre and dome in his monument for Bishop Zulu, who died in 1988.
The Voortrekker Monument at Winburg is the South African monument with the greatest resemblance to the language monument. This monument has similar abstract motives, rich symbolism, hammered concrete, a circular form and massive domes with varying heights. Although this monument was unveiled in 1969, architects had to submit proposals for its design in the same time period during which proposals for the language monument were made. The architect Hans Hallen’s design won the competition. If these two architects had in fact been influenced by one another’s work, it will be impossible to determine who influenced whom.

The use of raw concrete in monuments was a world-wide phenomenon at this time. Interesting examples are a series of approximately 25 monuments built during the 1960s and 1970s in Yugoslavia to commemorate the Second World War, and several post-modernist monuments in America. It can therefore be accepted that the use of raw concrete and abstract forms was a fairly common practice world-wide during this time and that this trend was followed by local architects.

A DISPLAY OF LIGHT

Visitors often enquire about the date on which the sun shines into the main spire of the Language Monument. They are however confusing it with the Voortrekker Monument, where the sun shines on the centre of the Cenotaph every year on 16 December at twelve o’clock.

Jan van Wijk’s vision was that the main spire of the Language Monument should be open at the top, to indicate that the language is still growing. The rising interior of the column has a series of openings through which the variations of light and the sun outside conjure up a variety of light displays. This light, along with the water of the fountain, symbolise the vigour of the language, which requires sustenance.

Van Wijk said of the Language Monument: “At any time of the year, on any day, under any circumstances whatsoever, there is a display of light ...”
Symbolism

A-C represents the different languages that shaped Afrikaans:

1. To the left (west) of the approach to the monument stand three columns (A), representing the languages and cultures of Western Europe – Dutch, Portuguese, German, English and others. No single column represents a specific language; the number three was used because it is indivisible. The columns progressively diminish in height to express the diminishing influence of the European languages on Afrikaans. These columns begin as separate structures which then merge into an ascending arc to form part of the main outline of the monument. The tallest of the three is roughly 13.5 m tall.

2. To the right (east) of the approach is a podium with three round convex mounds (B), which represent the southern tip of Africa. It symbolises the influence of Khoi and other African languages (i.a. isiXhosa, isiZulu and seSotho). These structures progressively increase in size, thereby indicating the increasing African influence on the language. They are positioned in an arc that connects with the monument’s main curve (symbolising Afrikaans), thereby connecting them physically as well as spiritually.

3. The Indonesian languages and dialects (mainly Malay) are represented by a wall (C) on the stairs leading towards the monument. The wall is positioned between the arcs of Western Europe and Africa so that (being from the East), it is separate, but yet united with these two forces, which combine to form a bridge symbolically depicting the basis of Afrikaans.

D-E visually expresses the inspiration Van Wijk found in two Afrikaans authors:

4. Where the two arcs of Western Europe and Africa meet (D), a bridge is formed, symbolising the fusion of languages from these two continents, as described by NP van Wyk Louw.

5. The main column, or spire of the monument (E) represents the ‘rapidly ascending arc’ and accelerated growth of Afrikaans, inspired by CJ Langenhoven. This column stands in a pool of water, further reinforcing the concept of Afrikaans as a living, growing entity requiring sustenance for its continued existence. The sharp lines of the spire suggest Van Wyk Louw’s ‘double-edged sword’. The spire is approximately 57 m, with its tip blunt and open, to indicate continuing growth. The play of light inside the monument, caused by the pond and openings in the main column, symbolises the language as a ‘gleaming tool.’

F places Afrikaans in context with Africa:

6. A second, shorter column (F), representing the Republic of South Africa (the birthplace of Afrikaans), stands in the same pond. It is hollow, and open to Africa, indicating the continuous interaction and discourse taking place between Afrikaans, South Africa and Africa. The column is approximately 26 m.
DOES YOUR LANGUAGE SPEAK AFRIKAANS?

Afrikaans is a melting pot of languages which inherited words from many different languages. Many of these words reached us via other languages, notably Dutch and English.

**DUTCH** – smous (hawker), kasarm (rambling building), pampoen (pumpkin)

**PORTUGUESE** – kraal (corral, fold), mielie (corn), ramkie (home-made guitar)

**KHOI** – abba (piggyback), koedoe (kudu), geitjie (gecko)

**MALAYSIAN** – amper (almost), baie (many, very), piesang (banana)

**GERMAN** – heimwee (nostalgia), sweis (weld), blits (lightning)

**FRENCH** – parlement (parliament), boetiek (boutique), stasie (station)

**NGUNI LANGUAGE** – donga (gully), indaba (meeting), pasella (free of charge)

**SOTHO LANGUAGES** – mampoer (moonshine), makietie (party), maroela (marula)

**ENGLISH** – krieket (cricket), bottel (bottle), piekniek (picnic)

**ARABIC** – koeskoes (couscous), assegai (assegai), koffie (coffee)

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**WHAT IS ARABIC AFRIKAANS?**

Afrikaans in Arabic script is one of the earliest forms of written Afrikaans. It was used at the Cape from the early 1800s. Islamic slave children received religious instruction in their home language, later known as Cape Afrikaans, but still had to write in Arabic. Special symbols were developed to represent Afrikaans sounds phonetically in the Arabic script. Abu Bakr Effendi’s *Bayaan-ud-diyn* (An Explanation of the Religion) was printed in Arabic Afrikaans in 1871. At least 78 books were written in Arabic Afrikaans between 1870 and 1950.
The monument’s architect, Johan Carel van Wijk (2 May 1926 – 20 May 2005), obtained a B.Arch. degree from the University of Pretoria in 1949. He worked for architectural firms in Cape Town, Pretoria, London and New York. In 1960 he married Erna Marais. In 1963 he established his own practice which eventually expanded into a company with partners, directors and offices in Verwoerdburg, Johannesburg, George, Mossel Bay and Mmabatho. In 1993 he and Erna moved to Wilderness in the Southern Cape, where he lived until his death.

During his career, Jan was involved in more than 870 projects, including the building complex of the University of Johannesburg (previously the Rand Afrikaans University), and several commissions for the Rembrandt Group. Apart from the Language Monument, he designed several other monuments, among them one for the 43 child victims of the Westdene bus tragedy.

Of all the projects that Jan undertook during his lifetime, his magnum opus, the Language Monument in Paarl, lay closest to his heart. It was therefore entirely fitting that his ashes were interred in a granite boulder on the site, and it is surely no coincidence that this was the selfsame rock where he and his wife had rested, one day in 1964, while exploring the mountain in preparation for his design.

During his lifetime, Jan received various awards, among which a medal of honour for architecture from the South African Academy for Arts and Sciences (1983), and the Chancellor’s Medal (1994) and Alumni Laureate (2003) from the University of Pretoria. An excerpt from the latter award reads as follows: ‘Jan van Wijk’s work is true to the context and culture from which it originates. His work illustrates a sensitive attitude to the South African landscape and finds expression in organic forms that portray his love of nature.’ These qualities were already evident 40 years before, when Jan designed the Taalmonument.

Van Wijk’s plea continues to live on, long after his death: ‘Afrikaans ... create it, speak it, love it, learn it, teach it, carry on with it. Don’t let it die. Up there, at the very top, the spire forms a root tip that stands for growth, growth without ceasing, like Afrikaans.’
JAN VAN WIJK
☆ 02.05.1926
† 20.05.2005

ARGITEK VAN DIE AFRIKAANSE TAALMONUMENT
Paarl Mountain is some 500 million years old, and famous for its three enormous granite domes named Paarl Rock, Bretagne Rock, and Gordon Rock. The indigenous Khoi pastoralists named it Tortoise Mountain, because of its appearance.

Approximately in the middle of the site where the Language Monument is situated, there is a rocky outcrop consisting of a group of granite boulders. They are all small replicas of Paarl Rock and create the impression that nature has repeated the same lines and curves over and over on the mountain.

**VEGETATION** – The vegetation on Paarl Mountain is unique, as it comprises a type of fynbos (indigenous plant type) that grows in clayey granite soil, and is found only in certain limited areas, such as this mountain and against the foothills of mountains in Somerset West and Wellington. The fynbos is particularly dense and reaches a height of two to three meters as the veld matures. The grey-leaf sugarbush (Afrikaans ‘suikerkan’; *Protea laurifolia*), spinning top cone bush (‘tolletjiesbos’; *Leucadendron rubrum*) and slangbos or ‘Khoi-kooigoed’ (*Seriphium plumosum*) grow prolifically. A feature of Paarl Mountain is the hillocks and piles of round granite rocks around which evergreen trees such as rock-candlewood (‘klipkershout’; *Maytenus oleoides*), rockwood (‘kliphout’; *Heeria argentea*) and wild olive (‘olienhout’; *Olea africana*) thrive.

**BIRDS** – A variety of bird species endemic to the south-western Cape, such as the Cape sugarbird (‘Kaapse suikervoël’ or ‘suikerbekkie’; *Promerops cafer*) and orange-breasted sunbird (‘oranjeborssuikerbekkie’; *Anthobaphes violacea*) occur in the fynbos. Raptors such as the African black eagle or Verreaux’s eagle (‘witkruisarend’; *Aquila verreauxii*), booted eagle (‘dwergarend’; *Aquila pennatus*) and the jackal buzzard (‘rooiborsjakkalsvoël’; *Buteo rufofuscus*) can sometimes be spotted. Several types of canary, the Cape spurfowl (‘Kaapse fisant’; *Pternistis capensis*), the southern double-collared sunbird (‘klein-rooiborsjakkalsvoël’; *Cinnyris chalybeus*), and the Cape bulbul (‘Kaapse tiptol’; *Pycnonotus capensis*) can also be seen.

**ANIMALS** – Small wild antelope such as the southern or Cape grysbok (*Raphicerus melanotis*), grey rhebok (Afrikaans ‘vaalribbok’; *Pelea capreolus*) and klipspringer (*Oreotragus oreotragus*), as well as other small mammals including the rock hyrax (‘dassie’; *Procavia capensis*), Cape porcupine (‘Kaapse ystervark’; *Hystrix africaeaustralis*) and scrub hare (‘kolhaas’; *Lepus saxatilis*) inhabit the mountain. Predators recorded on the mountain include the caracal or African lynx (‘rooikat’; *Felis caracal*), black-backed jackal (‘rooijakkals’; *Canis mesomelas*) and banded mongoose (‘gebande muishond’; *Mungos mungo*). It is likely that lions once occurred here, and it is suspected that leopards from surrounding mountains still occasionally visit Paarl Mountain.
A network of paths makes Paarl Mountain ideal for strolling, walking and hiking. The Language Monument walking trail takes roughly half an hour to complete, and the Klipkershout circular route through the Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve takes about two hours.

In the past, Paarl Mountain was a popular camping site. Every year during the Christmas holidays, people would pitch tents at the aptly-named Krismiskamp and at Meulwater and Okraal. By day, the ‘Oukralers’ played games such as jukskei (a traditional Afrikaner folk sport played with the wooden pins from ox yokes) and at night they made music led by musician Manas de Villiers. ‘Die Oukraal-liedjie’ (‘The Oukraal Song’) composed by him and his wife Amie is still sung throughout the country today.
Other language monuments

IN SOUTH AFRICA:

The monument on Paarl Mountain is not the only language monument in the country. The oldest one, as far as can be established, is in Burgersdorp and was actually erected in honour of the Dutch language. The towns of Kroonstad and Welkom both erected monuments to Afrikaans in 1959.

The nation-wide campaigns for raising awareness and collecting funds for the Language Monument in Paarl created a wave of patriotism, and many towns decided to erect their own monuments round about the time of the language festival year, 1975. We are aware of monuments in Aberdeen, Belfast, Burgersdorp, Delareyville, Ermelo, Johannesburg, Kroonstad, Ladismith (Cape), Lichtenburg, Louis Trichardt, Milnerton, Ohrigstad, East London, Petrus Steyn, Reddersburg, Reitz, Riebeeck West, Touwsriver, Ventersdorp, Welkom and Worcester.

IN THE WORLD:

As far as we could ascertain, there are only a few other language monuments in the world, including a monument to Russian in Belgorod, Russia, and L’obélisque des idéogrammes, a monument to four indigenous languages in Bamako, Mali.

There is also the Shaheed Minar in Dhaka, Bangladesh, a monument honouring the martyrs of their language movement. As in South Africa, there were bloody uprisings around the language problem in that country. There are smaller replicas of the Shaheed Minar in many Bangladeshi communities around the world, including Italy, America, England and Japan.

Recent research shows that there are about 60 other language-related museums in the world.

Visit the ATM’s website at www.taalmuseum.co.za for more information.

Please let us know if you have more information about any language monuments.
The oldest language monument in South Africa, as far as we could establish, stands on Burger Square in Burgersdorp. It was unveiled on 18 January 1893. The statue was damaged by vandals during the Anglo Boer War, and after the war Lord Milner had the whole monument removed. The people of Burgersdorp demanded their monument back, and since the original statue could not be found anywhere, the British government had a replica erected in 1907. In 1939 the missing statue was found in a trench in King William’s Town, minus its head and one arm. In 1957 this statue, still in its damaged state, was erected behind the replica.

On the campus of the University of Johannesburg (at the time the Rand Afrikaans University or RAU) a monument consisting of three granite boulders from Paarl Mountain was unveiled on 12 August 1975. The inscription is “Smal swaard en blink” (Thin, shining sword), words with which iconic Afrikaans writer NP van Wyk Louw described the language.

Lichtenburg also unveiled a language monument in 1975, through the mediation of the Rapportryers. It is in the shape of an oyster with a pearl inside. Langenhoven’s words “Afrikaans, our pearl of great value” were affixed around the ball in brass letters.
The Afrikaans Language Museum and Monument (ATM) today incorporate the Paarl Amphitheatre. The Language Museum is situated at 11 Pastorie Avenue, in the former home of Gideon Malherbe, a founder member of the Society of True Afrikaners (GRA). The 4 000-seat amphitheatre is situated close to the monument against the southern slope of Paarl Mountain and is often used for hosting big events.

After two years of self-government, ownership of the ATM was transferred to the state in 1977. Today, the ATM is a public entity governed by a council which is appointed by the national Department of Arts and Culture. It receives an annual subsidy from this department and generates additional funds through sponsorships, donations, entrance fees, facility hire, product sales, and events. Please contact us if you would like to make a donation or to subscribe to our newsletter.

VISION AND MISSION
As an inclusive institution, the ATM strives for all South Africans to respect and appreciate Afrikaans. In this spirit, the ATM works hard to encourage and support Afrikaans among the youth and non-mother-tongue speakers. The ATM constantly endeavours to establish mutual respect between Afrikaans and other indigenous languages by, among other things, acknowledging and exhibiting the mutual influence of different languages one another.

OBJECTIVES
The institution's main objectives are to gather relevant material and information; conduct research on Afrikaans; portray the origin, development, use and growth of Afrikaans through exhibitions, lectures and articles; offer educational programmes, guided tours and cultural activities; and to preserve the ATM’s cultural history heritage sites, as well as the legacy of Afrikaans itself.
The Afrikaans Language Museum before restoration in 1975. Gideon Malherbe had the house built in approximately 1860 in the late-Georgian style. He was one of the founder members of the GRA which was established in this house on 14 August 1875. The ground floor of the house has been restored back to approximately 1875 to give visitors a glimpse of the lifestyle at the time. The first floor hosts an interactive exhibition about Afrikaans and its development.