

Accessible Heritage Sites within the Modimolle-Mookgophong Local Municipality (M-M LM) – Part 1

There are numerous formal and informal heritage locations on and around the Waterberg plateau – but the majority either lie outside the M-M LM or are on private property whose owners may not welcome visitors – or both.

The following heritage sites are ones within the M-M LM and readily accessible to the public:

Modimolle hill (Kranskop): Modimolle is Sepedi for “the spirit has eaten”. This refers to one of two legends- that a former chief used to throw his captives off the sheer southern cliff face of the mountain; or that a monster living on the hill enjoyed eating small children, following the alleged disappearance of children on the hill over time. Either way, the hill is revered by many people in the district as a sacred place, even to the extent that the medicinal shrubs and herbs growing on its flanks are believed to have greater potency than elsewhere.

Eersbewoond: now just a rail siding between Modimolle and Bela-Bela, on the R101 road from Castle de Wild to Buyskop, Eersbewoond was so-named because this was where the first trekkers into the region, the Jerusalem gangers, settled in the early 1840s before they moved west along the Alma valley towards Rankin’s Pass.

Modimolle town: several sites of interest:

- **Grave of Ernest Olferman Collins** (1821-1868), the founder of Nylstroom in 1866. In the main cemetery, Thabo Mbeki Ave.
- **Original Gereformeerde Kerk and its replacement** (cnr Kerk & Calvyn). The original church, built in 1889, was used as a hospital and mortuary by the British forces in 1900. Today, it houses a fine collection of Bibles dating back to the 18th Century. The new GK, designed by Gerhard Moerdyk (note his well-known octagonal structure) was built in 1930.
- **The NGK (die Witkerk)**, (cnr Thabo Mbeki & Kerk), a magnificent building, opened in April 1899.
- **St Michael’s Union Church (formerly Anglican)**, built in 1904, (cnr Kerk & Joe Slovo).
- **Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk**, (opposite Wit Kerk), built in 1922, on the site of the original church.
- **Anglo-Boer War concentration camp** – the remains of 525 people, mainly children under the age of 16, who died in the Nylstroom camp during its short existence from June 1901 to February 1902.
- **The Mosque** (Vos St), next to the Klein Nyl River, was built in 1987 on the site of the original structure, which was built in 1909. The position of the mosque is a reminder of how the town’s Indian (mainly Muslim) community was forcibly relocated in the 1960s from the neighbourhood immediately

surrounding the mosque to a barren site on the south-eastern edge of the town, to be called Asalaam.

- **The Magistrate's Court and post office building**, on Nelson Mandela Ave, next to the present Post Office, built in 1890. Later used as the HQ for the local commando, the building is now occupied by various police departments.
- **Ons Hoop and Ons Toekoms**, built with funds raised by the three Dutch Reformed sister churches in 1927/28 as boarding hostels for girls and boys respectively.
- **Strijdomhuis**, (Friedberg St), the home built for Advocate JG Strijdom, MP for Waterberg from 1929 until his death in 1958 and Prime Minister from 1954-1958. The house was designed by Moerdyk and built in 1952; today it houses memorabilia from the Strijdom era.
- **Modimolle station**, originally built in 1899, located outside the town in order that the magistrate's wife was not irritated by the sound of the trains. In front of the station stands a 0-6-0 locomotive, one of the first engines used on the Nylstroom-Vaalwater line from 1925.
- **NTK building**, located next to the railway line off Ahmed Kathrada St., built in 1949 to house a peanut butter factory ("Apie" and "Nyl" were the brands), with the headquarters on the upper level.
- **Modimolle town hall**, at the municipal offices. Behind the fairly modern façade stands the original hall, built in 1931 as a donation to the town by Ludvig (or Ludwig) Field, the Norwegian immigrant who became an important local businessman, philanthropist and councillor.



Ludvig Field (1862-1944)

Modimulle mission station: built on the farm Middelfontein 564KR, close to where the old tar road between Modimolle and Mookgophong (R101) approached the N1 freeway, Modimulle was built by the Berlin missionaries in 1867. The property was land-claimed in about 2005 and the present condition of the buildings is unknown.

Forssman's Pass and old coach road: this is the road marked Groenfontein that turns off the R101 about 7 km out of Modimolle on the way to Mookgophong. Local

entrepreneur Carl Forssman was involved with its construction at the turn of the 20th Century.

Mookgophong municipal offices: in the well-maintained grounds in front of these handsome modern buildings stands another old locomotive, a 19D engine used on the main line from Pretoria to Polokwane until the 1950s, and also on the Nylstroom-Vaalwater line.

Naboomspruit Hotel: (Louis Trichardt St, Mookgophong), built in the early 1920s.

Doornfontein School: Located 20 km out of Modimolle on the R33 road to Vaalwater is the Doornfontein Winkel. Turn off there and after 1 km is the Doornfontein school. This school, although no longer in the original building, is the oldest school still operating in the Waterberg, having been founded in 1896.

Grave of Petrus van der Merwe (1819-1895): located next to the R33 between Modimolle and Vaalwater on the farm Elandsbosch 372KR, about 25 km from Modimolle. The van der Merwes were amongst the first settler families in this valley, in the 1860s.



Graves of Petrus van der Merwe (centre) and family members on Elandsbosch.

Zandriverspoort: 45 km from Modimolle on the R33 to Vaalwater, this was the earliest, and for many years the only wagon route onto the upper Waterberg plateau. First described by Carl Mauch in 1869, the poort was treacherous in the rainy season. A small hotel, postal agency and store was established at the southern entrance to the poort in the 1890s by Carl Forssman; a police post was built at the top of the first rise in the road (blue gums mark the place today). During the Anglo-Boer War, several skirmishes took place in and around the poort. There are Boer skanse (simple forts) on top of several hills, and the grave of a British soldier, Lt Charles Powell, in a valley close to the road (both on the property of the Mashudu resort).



Zandriverspoort and the grave of Lt Charles Powell

Old mill, Vaalwater; on the main road through the village. Built by the Kirkman brothers in the 1920s and later taken over by John Chaney (who also owned the hotel at Zandriverspoort).



Old Kirkman mill on the main road through Vaalwater village, with NTK silos (built in 1984) behind.

Botha Museum, Vaalwater: located west of the village on the road to Bulgerivier, at the Vaalwater Rivieroord, just before the Mokolo River Bridge, the museum displays a wide variety of artefacts from the Vaalwater area; there is also a fine collection of vintage tractors.

School and Maternity home, Zanddrift: not accessible to the public, but visible from the gravel road to 24 Rivers, the school was built in 1924 and the maternity home a few years later.



The old school on Zanddrift

Davidson house, 24 Rivers: Built in 1910, this was the home of EA (Ted) Davidson, his wife Molly and their children. The house still stands, is carefully preserved by the family and can be visited by appointment.



The Davidson home, 24 Rivers

St John's Church, 24 Rivers: This church was the first to be built on the Waterberg plateau. It was intended to serve the Anglican community in the district. Funds were raised by the Fawsett / Peacock sisters (Molly Davidson's aunts) and the church was built in 1914, according to a design from the offices of Sir Herbert Baker, the architect of the Union Buildings.



The church of St John's, 24 Rivers