



# Celebration of HERITAGE ARCHITECTURE

Throughout KwaZulu-Natal, East Griqualand and Zimbabwe one can find the rich cultural legacy of Marianhill architecture in the form of about 30 mission stations.

Pioneered by Austrian born Abbot Franz Pfanner and German born Brother Nirvard Strecher (a roof carpenter by trade), the architecture in these buildings is distinctly different than that of the Edwardian architecture at the time. The craftsmanship and skills in the construction and planning of the various sites are remarkable, largely due to the fact that both men were very knowledgeable on modern technology at the time.

Stations were planned to be completely self-sustainable in line with the original Benedictine Rule for monastic life, which required a monastery to be as self-sufficient as possible in order to limit contact with the outside world.

various areas of the proposed sites.

For its ease of transportation, metal roof sheeting was used and became characteristic of Marianhill architecture of the time. Pioneering buildings would be manufactured at Marianhill Monastery and carted in kit form to proposed sites via ox wagon.

The locations of the sites were planned to be no further apart than a day's travel by ox wagon, thus providing the travelling teams with a safe overnight haven within another mission. Marianhill Monastery manufactured specialised carpentry, glazing and leaded light which were transported to the various sites.

Sadly, by the 21<sup>st</sup> century some of these fine pieces of architecture had become derelict and fallen into a state of disrepair. Specialist heritage architect and renovation expert Robert Brusse says: "By far the best way of preserving these exemplary pieces of heritage architecture is for the buildings to

tranquil retreat into a sought-after wedding venue and getaway.

Cheryl explains: "I randomly watched a show, featuring the entrepreneur hotelier Liz McGrath, who single-handedly built up an empire. The only experience she had was that she travelled a lot. I thought that if she could do it, then I am certainly capable." And capable she has been!

Cheryl has project-managed each and every addition, alteration and renovation at King's Grant for the past twelve years. With no formal training besides a keen eye and natural interest in architecture, she has built the establishment up from a humble 8 rooms in 1996 to 13, with plans on the cards for further expansion.

The alterations have been subtle and sensitive to the original architecture. This has been achieved in the recycling of the original material, such as bricks and timber. The stunning green corrugated roofs, which are in stark contrast with the red brick buildings, have been replaced using Safintra's Classicorr Corrugated profile.

Safintra has been a major sponsor in the architectural community of heritage architecture courses. Sally Stromnes, national marketing manager of Safintra Roofing, says: "The company strategically aligned itself with this very important discipline due to the fact that there are so many beautiful old buildings that need to be renovated and preserved.

"It is a well-known fact that the corrugated metal sheeting had a major impact on colonial architecture in South Africa for various reasons – ease of transportation, easy erection, security and the safe harvesting of rainwater. It is therefore vitally important to train professionals in this niche market of heritage architecture to ensure that the renovation of these beautiful buildings takes place in accordance with the requirements of the South African Heritage Resources Agency. We as a company are proud to be involved in the preservation of the rich and diverse architectural legacy in South Africa," she says.

*Safintra Roofing & Steel*

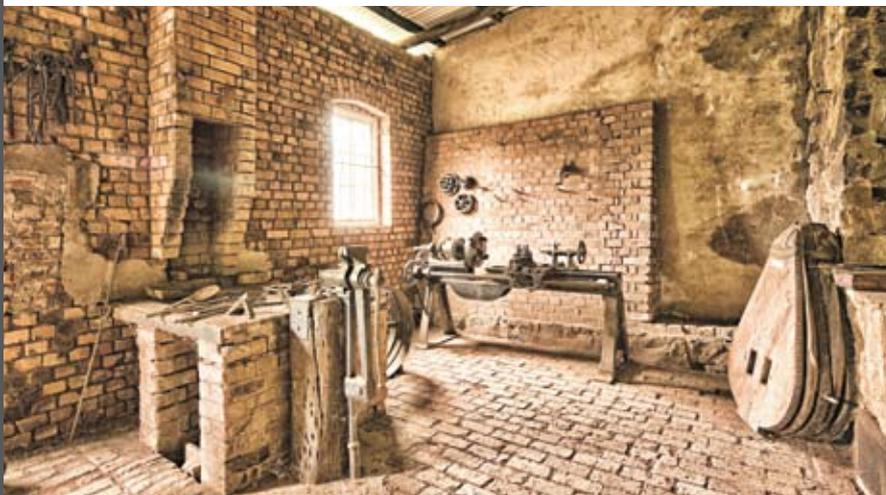
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**Safintra makes sure that heritage sites do not wither away. They sponsor heritage architectural courses to support the restoration and upgrade of these sites.**

In line with this thinking, one of the priorities in the construction of a new mission would be the construction of a mill for the grinding of wheat. Most mills were either water- or wind-powered.

In essence, "green" principles and technology were implemented some hundred years prior to it becoming "in vogue". In addition to this, potential mission sites were scouted based on the availability of clay to manufacture bricks and the availability of skilled stone masons in the

remain inhabited and functional. Non-habitation unfortunately leads to vandalism and destruction."

Many of these missions still remain within the Diocese, but a few have been sold to private owners. A fine example of this is St Isidor Mission outside Ixopo, which became King's Grant Country Retreat after a brave neighbour to the property, Cheryl Biggs, acquired the establishment in 1996 and started the mammoth task of lovingly restoring and converting this