

Chatsworth

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A background perspective on the town

Chatsworth was proclaimed as a town when a pastor from the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in America first started a church, but the Cape Government of the 1800s did not take responsibility for developing the town. Services such as the installation of sewage, water and roads later became the responsibility of the local authority - the then Malmesbury Divisional Council.

The roads were sandy in the 1800s when the town consisted of about 1300 plots. About 100 of these were

sold by a shrewd developer to unsuspecting foreign investors believing they were buying prime Cape Town properties. The buyers took transfer of these properties but most never settled in Chatsworth and their contact details were lost in time. These properties became known as 'black dot plots' with their locations mere black dots on a map. In the 1980s the owners of these black dot plots had never paid their rates and taxes for 100 nearly years and as their addresses were unknown, they could not be located. The properties were put up for auction and the Swartland Municipality bought the properties and established the Chatsworth housing project. Chatsworth is one of four small neglected towns which were officially included within the borders of the newly established Swartland Municipality in 2000. The responsibility for upgrading the town therefore became the challenge of the municipality.

Today much had been done to improve the town's lack of infrastructure in terms of running water, tarred roads, sewage, and a play park for the children. Now a library has been added to the list. This is an important added service to the Chatsworth community as development was not a high priority since the town's establishment in the early 1800s.

◀ *Front (ltr): Municipal Manager Joggie Stoltz, Dr Ivan Meyer, Minister of Cultural Affairs and Sport with Deputy Director Stefan Wehmeyer, Western Cape Provincial Library Service (2nd from left in the back), Executive Mayor Mr T van Essau (middle 3rd from left), Librarian Ilse Look and (far right) librarian Bruce Lewis during the opening. Seen here with them are some local councillors who attended the event*



◀ *Librarians Ilse Look and Bruce Lewis getting ready for action in the issuing section*



The community

There is a local primary school, three playschools (crèches) and a clinic next to the new library. High school learners attend schools in Malmesbury or Cape Town.

The population is very diverse, consisting of a mixture of races as well as various groups of North African people like Somali's, Egyptians, Nigerians, et cetera.

Wealth alternates between the wealthy living in decent houses and the very poor living in shacks or informal housing arrangements. Three soup kitchens provide nourishment to the hungry on a regular basis, especially at the local primary school. About 34.5% of the total population is unemployed. The municipality has already done much and spent millions to improve the living conditions of people in the town area by providing infrastructure. Economic conditions of residents also alternate between the different income sources, such as farm work on plots around the town, commuters working in Malmesbury (20km) or Cape Town (about 50km), small business entrepreneurs and a small number of artisans such as electricians, bricklayers, et cetera.

The youth struggles with the same issues as in most other towns, such as drug abuse and worsening crime as there is not much to keep them constructively occupied. The library has an important role to play providing information for social upliftment and educating young people.

Background on the library

The first library service was initially started in 2004 and consisted of two Wheelie Wagons housed in a classroom at the AME Chatsworth Primary School and run by a volunteer from the community, Ms Waseela Fataar. As the school expanded, a need for space forced the library to be operated from the school kitchen (in between the soup pots). This situation made it difficult for the community to use



▲ Municipal Manager Joggie Stoltz addresses guests during the opening ceremony

the library as it was only operational for short periods of time. The Swartland Local Municipality and the Western Cape Provincial Library Service joined forces to bring the new library to the community, making it accessible to all.

The project was funded by the Conditional Grant of the Western Cape Provincial Library Service and cost about R180 000. With input from the community via the ward committees, a suitable plot was identified. The plot was owned by the municipality but was transferred to Department of Public Works as there was also a clinic on the same premises. The project was managed by the Swartland Local Municipality and the prescribed tender processes were followed resulting in the construction of the library.



▲ It was great excitement all round during the long-awaited opening of Chatsworth Library. Seen here are Ilse Looek (librarian) with Dr Ivan Meyer, Minister of Cultural Affairs and Sport

The move

After the official paperwork was completed during 2010, the Provincial Library's regional staff moved the book stock to the new premises on 14 October 2010. The librarian, Bruce Lewis, is a local resident and had his training at Riebeeck Kasteel Public Library. As he knows the community well and they know him, he is well adjusted to the needs and challenges of the community. The Chatsworth Library opened on 18 November 2010 by registering new members and started circulating books in December 2010.

The building

Housed in two containers joined in the middle, the library is 33 m². Once inside, it is hard to see that it is a container because the interior is beautifully fitted with individual pine shelves with a curve on the top giving it a luxurious look. Lining the shelves along the two long walls provided space on the far wall for two air conditioners and a display area. The adult and children sections run along each wall, giving the librarian a full view of the entire area without any obstructions. The interior is modern and fitted with an L-shaped counter, making the lower end accessible to small children.

The library also has telephone and fax facilities. A private initiative in the community will provide a copying machine free of charge.

The official opening

The official opening of the Chatsworth Library was held on 20 January 2011 and the keynote address was delivered by the MEC

of Cultural Affairs and Sport, Dr Ivan Meyer. In his address the minister mentioned the positive attitude of those working in public service points to make the most of what is available to them in order to make a difference in the lives of those they serve. The Chatsworth Library is an excellent example of a facility that can deliver an important service but does not have to cost that much to erect. He also praised the teamwork between local and provincial government for such an impressive result, providing a library service with subject-related material, addressing specific needs in the community and being accessible to all.

The Council of Swartland Municipality, with the guidance of the Mayor of Malmesbury, Mr T van Essen and the Municipal Manager, Mr Joggie Scholtz, was very enthusiastic about the project and never failed trying to realise the dream of the community for their own library. Mr Neville Quickfall (Manager: Buildings and Structures) of the Swartland Municipality's Civil Directorate handled the tenders and construction of the library. Ms Ilse Looek (Library Co-ordinator) of Corporative Services managed the funds and worked hard to achieve the excellent outcome. The school (Chatsworth AME Primary) has tried for many years to manage the library service and played a key role in establishing the new library accessible to the whole community. The ward councillor, Basil Stanley, also played a big role in involving the community in the decision making process.

The Western Cape Provincial Library Service Deputy Director: Regional organisation, Mr Stefan Wehmeyer, did the groundwork and ensured the procurement of the Conditional Grant Funds.

Statistics

Official opening 20 January 2011 (Operational since 18 November 2010).

Local municipality: Swartland

Size	33 m ²
Cost	R180 000
Book stock total	3563
Afrikaans Adult Fiction	1116
Afrikaans Junior Fiction	1001
English Adult Fiction	447
English Junior Fiction	236
Adult Non-Fiction	384
Junior Non-Fiction	280
Reference and study	50
Junior Reference	49

Eight periodical titles valued at R2413.93 were ordered since January 2011: *Hoëzit, Huisgenoot, Kuier, Lig, Rooi Rose, Finesse, Tuinier, Vrouekeur.*

Circulation for December 2010

Total	856
Afrikaans Fiction	303
Afrikaans Junior Fiction	307
English Fiction	53
English Junior Fiction	101
Non-Fiction	46
Junior-Non Fiction	46

Membership

Adults	92
Children	112
Total	204

Opening hours

The library is open to the public for 18 hours a week.

Monday	9:00 - 12:00; 15:00 - 18:00
Tuesday	14:00 - 17:00
Wednesday	14:00 - 17:00
Thursday	Closed
Friday	9:00 - 12:00; 14:00 - 17:00



◀ Executive Mayor Mr T van Essen together with Minister Ivan Meyer



▶ Councillor Rudie du Plooy (left) also attended the ceremony



◀ The Chatsworth Wheelie Wagon will fulfil a definite need in the community



▶ (Ltr): Librarians Bruce Lewis and Benita Bailey together with Regional Librarian Anél de Villiers and Chief Librarian Ilse Looek



◀ An attractive display to entice users