

# Beiaard- en Klokkencultuur in de Lage Landen

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Carillon and Bell Culture in the Low Countries



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## Bells in the Western Cape of South-Africa

Tertius De Wet, Jef L. Teugels & Pieta Van Deventer

### Abstract

Due to its historical position as the earliest settlement, the Western Cape became the home of many heritage sites, including the home of many bells of historical interest tied to the home countries of its early immigrants. South Africa was fortunate to escape the ravages of the European wars where many bells were lost, and often rare bells are still found in the Western Cape.

From 2008 onwards the authors systematically traced the location of bells, and over the last fourteen years visited and documented 500+ bells. These were visited in their current locations, measured acoustically and physically (where possible), photographed, and inventoried in a digital library at Stellenbosch University.

In this paper an overview is given of the more interesting bells in the inventory, discussed in their ties to the historical development of the Western Cape. These bells are found at mission stations, churches, farms, public buildings, and originate from a variety of countries and founders.

### Samenvatting

Dankzij haar ligging als eerste vestiging werd de Westkaap thuisland voor veel erfgoedsites waaronder locaties van historische klokken die belangrijk waren voor de vroegste inwijkelingen. Zuid-Afrika ontkwam aan de ravages van de oorlogen in Europa en met het verlies van vele klokken tot gevolg. Vaak werden dan ook zeldzame klokken ontdekt in de Westkaap.

Vanaf 2008 hebben de auteurs systematisch kloklocaties geregistreerd met als resultaat het bezoeken en inventariseren van meer dan 500 klokken over de periode van veertien jaar. Klokken werden in hun locatie opgezocht, hun geluid en afmetingen werden (waar mogelijk) opgemeten, ze werden gefotografeerd en geïnventariseerd in een digitale bibliotheek van de Universiteit van Stellenbosch.

In dit artikel wordt een overzicht gegeven van de interessantste klokken uit deze inventaris, met als achtergrond de historische ontwikkeling van de Westkaap. Klokken werden gevonden op missieposten, kerken, boerderijen en officiële gebouwen, en zijn afkomstig uit een gamma van landen en van elders.

**Keywords:** VOC, supply station, colony, British occupation, history, heritage, digital library, articles on bells

## 1. Introduction

In March 2008 during the visit to Stellenbosch of one of the authors (JLT), who at that stage was involved in research of bells in Flanders, the authors became aware of the existence of a carillon in the tower of Cape Town City Hall and of a wealth of bells spread all over the province. We first focused on the carillon,<sup>1</sup> an instrument erected in memory of the South African victims of the First World War.<sup>2,3</sup> However, despite it being an important part of Cape Town's and South Africa's heritage, it was clearly forgotten. Studying the carillon and writing about it, e.g., in *Top of the Times*, a section of the *Cape Times* and in the publications mentioned below, we hoped to make the city aware of this historical jewel, forgotten in their city. Thus started a joint research program over the past fourteen years and still continuing. Its purpose is to develop an inventory of the bells of the Western Cape and through our writing on this, create a greater awareness of the historical value of these bells as part of our cultural history.

The inventory currently has information on over 500 bells and is used in two ways. A digital platform on bells was created as a part of the central digital library of Stellenbosch University, see <https://digital.lib.sun.ac.za> for the latter. The bell library forms part of the *Images* digital community as a sub-community *Bells of the Western Cape*. It can be visited at <https://digital.lib.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.2/3975>. Items are stored in three categories as photographs, as a table of physical and acoustic measurements (whenever they could be made), and a brief text on the bell(s). The latter item covers the geographical location of the bells, their decorations and inscriptions and some further background information.

1 De Wet 2012.

2 De Wet 2013.

3 Lewis 2014.