

The following list is a registry of straw bale buildings in Southern Africa that the author has come across or managed to verify as having been completed in Southern Africa to date.

There are likely scores of additional buildings that we have not come across before or managed to verify as yet. So, if you are busy with a straw bale building or know of any that are not currently listed, please feel free to download our Questionnaire for the Registry of Straw Bale Buildings in Southern Africa and complete the form for us, so that the project can be added our list:

[Strawbale Bale Building Questionnaire.](#)

## List of Known Straw Bale Buildings in Southern Africa:

- 1) Near *Langebaan*, on the *Cape West Coast*, Mr. Martin Thom and his father in-law built a cottage in 1994. It has weathered several seasons very well, despite the fact that they had no formal knowledge of straw bale building techniques.
- 2) In *Komani, Eastern Cape*, Jay & Karen Groves built a straw bale classroom. Reported in issue #9 of "the Last Straw" 1996.
- 3) In *Smidtasdriif*, near the *Gemsbok Park border*, members of a Khoi-San community with the aid of several volunteers built a community hall. Designed by architect Etienne Bruwer it was built in 1997.
- 4) In *Constantia, Cape Town*, a school classroom at the Waldorf School has been finished and was partly built by the school children themselves. The project designed by architect Etienne Bruwer, was completed in 1997. Due to poor foundation and parapet details as well as cement plasters the walls rotted and the building has since been demolished.
- 5) On the *Doring River*, near *Ceres*, in the Western Cape the architect Etienne Bruwer designed a bungalow resort for Bill Mitchell, to be built on Oudrif Farm, Tel: (027) 482 2397. It was completed in 1998.
- 6) In the *Karoo*, Peter McIntosh built a house for the *Berg en Dal*, organic farm. Accommodation is offered for willing workers, email: [info@berg-en-dal.co.za](mailto:info@berg-en-dal.co.za)
- 7) In *Phillippi* on the *Cape Flats, Cape Town* a community college/Educare Centre designed by architect Etienne Bruwer was completed in 1998.
- 8) On *Verlorenvlei*, near *Elands Bay* on the *Cape West Coast*, architect Andy Horn of Eco Design Architects designed and helped build a house for Sandra Prinsloo. The project was completed in 1998.
- 9) In *McGregor, South Western Cape*, a retired couple Mr. & Mrs. Sneddon built their own house with the guidance of architect Heleene Van der Merwe. The project was completed in 1998.
- 10) In *Constantia, Cape Town*, Silke and Chris Erasmus added a meditation room to their house called 'Temple Beautiful'. The single story, non-load bearing structure was designed by the Architect Etienne Bruwer and building process undertaken by the builder Peter de Kock. It has been built with bales laid flat and hand plastered with cob. A building permit was approved by the South Peninsula local authority and financed by extending an existing bond with Standard Bank. The extension of the building is insured with Mutual & Federal. The project took 5 months to complete and was finished in May 1999.
- 11) In *Blanco near George*, Mr. & Mrs. Mark and Gabby Coetzee-Andrews built their own house as featured in "Country Life" October 1999. The house was designed by the architect Paul Andrew.
- 12) In *Orania, Northern Cape* Architect Christian van Zyl designed and built his own load bearing straw bale structure. The building is double storey and includes four rooms. Contact details: [avstrooi@mjvn.co.za](mailto:avstrooi@mjvn.co.za) 1999-2001. There are apparently now a total of 6 straw bale structures in Orania, such as a house for Cornilia Holm at 169 Robynlaan st, and the local Wynhuis.
- 13) In *Atlantis*, on the *Cape West Coast*, the local council has approved a double story main house and two worker cottages designed by architect Linda Graaft in 1999.
- 14) In *Katumba* near *Knysna*, architect Etienne Bruwer has designed a house for Bruce Varney. The project was completed in 1999.
- 15) In *Constantia, Cape Town*, in 2000 architect Etienne Bruwer built his studio using straw bales in-fill gable walls.
- 16) At *Camphill in Malmesbury*, on the Cape West Coast, Wilfred Bahm has built a craft workshop using a 9 x 18 m pre-fabricated steel structure in-filled with bales. The project was completed in the year 2000.
- 17) In *Noordhoek, Cape Town*, local building permission was obtained for a new 263 m<sup>2</sup> house, designed by Etienne Bruwer for Karen and Anthony Suskin. The house was completed in July 2000.
- 18) In 2000 a guest cottage was built near Ngwempisi river in *Eswatini*.
- 19) In the *Magaliesberg*, the architect Carolyn Schmidt has designed and built a new art gallery as featured in the May 2001 issue of "SA Country Life".

20) In *Teslaarsdal, South Western Cape*, Eco Design Architects obtained Local Council building plan approval for a new house for Dianne Salters. The project was designed by the author and was completed in February of 2001.

21) 2001 - In *Lamberts Bay*, on the *Cape West Coast* the architect Karen Smuts has recently obtained local council building approval for a new house for Lachlan Mathews.

22) 2001 - In *Reebiek Casteel*, in the *Western Cape* a new house for Chaplin Langer has just been completed. The project was designed by the architect Etienne Bruwer.

23) 2000 – 2002 - In *Greyton*, in the *South Western Cape*, Andy Horn of Eco Design Architects obtained local council approval to build a new loft roof house design for Mr. & Mrs. Patience. The in-fill bale on edge construction was completed in April 2002.

24) On the Waterfall Farm near *Van Reenen* in the *Freestate*, Sandy and Margie Berry built a straw bale house which was completed 2002. A guest house was completed in similar fashion in 2007. The main house was featured in the May 2006 issue of 'South African Country Life'

25) 1998 to 2003 - Kit and Patrick Heathcock, near *Atlantis*, of the *South Western Cape* have owner built 3 straw bale houses including a load bearing structure, with the latest house being clay plastered using a gunniting – spray-on – process.

26) 2002 –*Johannesburg, Joubert Park*, The Greenhouse Project an environmental centre, built a lecture room, using straw bale walls. Email: [dorahl@ghouse.co.za](mailto:dorahl@ghouse.co.za)

27) 2003 - *Near Atlantis*, of the *South Western Cape*, Liz and Johannes Braun are building a straw bale roofed house, South Western Cape.

28) In 2003 at the Waldorf School in *Atlantis*, on the *South Western Cape*, the architect Wilfred Bahm has built a straw bale classroom.

29) 2002 to 2003 – In *Scarborough, Cape Town*, having obtained South Peninsular planning permission, Kammi Brodie has built a non-load bearing double story straw bale house with bales laid on edge. It also features a bottle wall, and was designed by the author practicing as Eco Design Architects & Consultants.

30) 2003 to 2004 – In *Groot Marico, North West*, in the Tara Rokpa Buddhist Centre, 181m<sup>2</sup> two story non-load bearing straw bale house, with steel structure. Bales laid flat. Owner built - used 2 major contractors - 1 for the steel work & roof & the other to throw the slab. The slab is an all-in-one reinforced raft like a factory floor. It was not possible to get a bond due to NHBRC. No insurance was obtained during construction. After construction the building was insured initially with Outsurance and more recently through Investec. The building is listed as standard roof and non-standard walls. With Outsurance the owners asked a couple of times if they were sure & they did not seem concerned at all so the insurance did not come at a premium.

31) 2004 *In Montana Park, Pretoria*, Colin Martincowitz owner built a thatch roof and bale wall lodge. Covering a 3000 m<sup>2</sup> footprint and 2500 m<sup>2</sup> of interior space, this rates as South Africa's largest straw bale project. Designed by Dumani Architects there are 20 rooms each with en-suite bathrooms. The building is insured with Thatch Risk Insurance (Santam). Contact details: Tel 012 548 2246, [linkpy@mweb.co.za](mailto:linkpy@mweb.co.za)

32) 2004 *In Prince Albert* in the *Karoo*, Yohan Rissek is owner building a new house with a steel portal frame and straw bale infill. Contact Details: Tel. 023 541 1945, [j.rissik@absamail](mailto:j.rissik@absamail)

33) 2004 – *In Greyton – South Western Cape*, Joel Singer & Carin Von Zeil (architect) have designed a 200 sq m pole frame, straw bale infill house including a thatch roof, of which they have so far completed the guest wing. Contact [wolfkid@worldonline.co.za](mailto:wolfkid@worldonline.co.za)

34) 2004 – *In Pringle Bay, South Western Cape*, an owner builder/contractor John Watson is building a three-storey house including two storeys of non-loadbearing straw bale on edge. Total area 450 sq. m. The structure was approved by the Overstrand Municipality. Contact Details: Tel 021 671 3161, [wjcontractors@absamail.co.za](mailto:wjcontractors@absamail.co.za) (*Unfortunately this building is an example of how not to build a straw bale house with respect to the Cape Coasts' harsh weather conditions, having exposed parapet walls, awkward roof junctions, cement plasters, protruding timber poles etc. During construction water leaked in from the top soaking walls causing the bales to compost! The engineer's approach was that the bales were simply a sacrificial type of formwork for the reinforced cement plasters*)

35) 2004 - *In KwaZulu Natal*, Andrew and Connie Attwood designed and built a new guest house at the Antbear Lodge. Email: [attwood@antbear.de](mailto:attwood@antbear.de)

36) 2004 - *In Pinelands Cape Town*, Gary Glass assisted by Andy Horn, constructed a stable, experimenting with a pre-plastering "cob-bale" technique, which Eco Design have subsequently used with all their bale constructions.

37) 2004 – *In the Karoo, near Ladismith* Peter McIntosh designed a house that is still under construction on the Berg-en-dal organic farm. Accommodation is available for willing workers. Tel: (028) 551 1678, Email: [info@berg-en-dal.co.za](mailto:info@berg-en-dal.co.za)

38) 2004 - *In Hilton*, near *Pietermaritzburg KZN*, owner builder Pauline Bullock built a two storey non-load bearing straw bale house. The house has a steel frame, covering a total of 229 square metres, including a second floor and 48 sq. m of veranda. The house was started in September 2003 and completed December 2004. Has standard insurance with Outsurance and with Investec. Email: [pauline@rapid3d.co.za](mailto:pauline@rapid3d.co.za)

39) 2005 – In *Betty's Bay, South Western Cape*, Sally McConnell has built a straw bale garage and workroom. The buildings were designed by the author and were approved by the Overstrand Municipality. The client self-built literally all by herself, other than for a couple of weekend straw bale building workshops. The pre-coating bale in-fill on edge system was used. She then lived in it whilst building the construction on her main house also approved as straw bale. However, completing the foundation work and slab, she exhausted herself and so decided to employ a main contractor to complete the rest of the house. Unfortunately, after struggling to find a contractor willing to build with straw, she switched to using brickwork. Email: [sallymc@absamail.co.za](mailto:sallymc@absamail.co.za)

40) 2005 – In *Cape Town, De Goede Hoop Estate, Noordhoek*, Anthea Torr build staff accommodation using a framed structure with an infilling of straw bale and cob.

41) 2006 – At the Stanford Valley Farm near *Stanford* in the *South Western Cape*, a conference centre storeroom & workshop space was retrofitted with bale in-fill. Eco Design Architects work-shopped the retro-fitting of an existing pole and asbestos clad store room building, using a combination of in-fill systems i.e. earthen pre-coated straw bale, laid on edge, wattle and daub and light clay construction.

42) 2006 - At the Wolwinkel Academy near *Ceres*, for the *Cape Winelands District Municipality*, a new 4 room accommodation building was built by trainees during a 2-day workshop, facilitated by Eco Design Architects. A structural in-fill of bales on-edge was used with the "cob-bale" pre-coated earthen plastered method.

43) 2007 – Near *Wellington, Western Cape*, Harwaqua Scouts Facilities, a load bearing and non-load bearing dormitory and ablution structure were built by Marcel Brulisauer a Swiss engineering master's student as part of his project and about 200 odd volunteers over the weekends.

44) 2006 to 2007 – In *Nieuwoudtville, Hantam Municipality* has approved plans for six new chalets with planted roofs, rubble trench foundations, a stone and timber pole frame with "cob-bale" in-fill. The gate house using the same construction methodology was completed in April 2007, Email: [idp@hantam.co.za](mailto:idp@hantam.co.za)

45) 2008 – Near *Stanford* in the *South Western Cape* at the Stanford Valley Farm, a Conference Centre a worker's cottage was extended using a timber frame, with an in-filling of pre-plastered "cob-bale".

46) 2008 – In *Hout Bay, Cape Town*, in Hout Bay Road, Micelle & Grant Spooner build a double story garage and office space using a steel frame and a straw bale in-fill and cob plaster. They have used a steel frame structure with bale and cob in-fill. (Note: the protruding steel work will create cold bridges through the wall and create places for condensation to occur, which unless designed for, will lead to maintenance issues).

47) 2008 – Mr. Mzamo Lulamile (contact [lula\\_mzamo@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lula_mzamo@yahoo.co.uk)) plans were approved by *Kungwini Local Municipality* with the technical assistance of Eco Design Architects in Bronkhorstspruit, *Gauteng* for a new residence at Tiegerpoort farm.

48) Dec 2008 – May 2010 in *Kalbaskraal* in the *West Coast District Municipality* Eben & Alecia Fourie owner built their double floor barn. Using exclusively reclaimed timbers and owner building, while living in a caravan on-site, they finished the house for under R200 000! Consisting of 188 m<sup>2</sup> of interior space on 120 m<sup>2</sup> of coverage, there is a structural frame of stone piers and timber poles. Herbert Arendse from Mamre did the lime dung plasters. Eric Stanley Houghton did the Engineering. Email: [artfours@gmail.com](mailto:artfours@gmail.com)

49) 2009 – In *Barrydale*, Eco Design Architects had their plans approved by the *Swellendam Municipality* for Mrs Carol Morris who went on to owner build her house using a brickwork braced timber pole frame, with an in-filling of pre-plastered "cob- bale", with a lime sand plaster and lime wash finish. The author ran a weekend training workshop with the owner to initiate the bale building. Email: [carol@mud.co.za](mailto:carol@mud.co.za)

50) In 2011 – In the *Natal Midlands*, Mr. & Mrs Chersie built 2 guest house buildings and their main house using the bales of local grass baled on their farm. The bales were laid flat between a timber pole frame and connected with threaded steel rods. The bales were covered in mesh and plastered with a lime, cement sand mortar. The guest house is open to the public [www.satorifarm.co.za](http://www.satorifarm.co.za) and Louis can be contacted at 082 551 7402

51) 2012 - Gecko Guest House on the N7, *Piekeneers Kloof*, south of *Clan William, Western Cape*. Bales were laid between a pole frame with stonework corner piers. Regular cement plaster was used over a chicken mesh netting.

52) December 2011 – in *Melkbos in Blaubergr Municipality* - Eben Fourie completed a 127 m<sup>2</sup> straw bale cottage for 3 fountains Estate. Email: [artfours@gmail.com](mailto:artfours@gmail.com)

53) 2011 to 2012 - in *Wattville in Johannesburg* - The OR Tambo Narrative and Environmental Centre near the OR Tambo International Airport is a R45 million project of the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. Eco Design Architects and Consultants were contracted as the Green Consultants (unfortunately only after the contractor was already on site) to assist the project team. Straw Bale Construction was used for the 3 Environmental Centre pavilion buildings, which have walls up to 8 meters in height. NB Unfortunately, the architects refused to adapt their design, which included addressing protruding bale buttresses, zero roof overhangs, protruding inverted steel structures and hidden gutters that overflow directly over the walls. As already experienced and as anticipated, this is resulting in a number of maintenance issues.

54) 2012 - near *Robertson, in the Western Cape* - Le Roux & Fourie Vignerons built a wine cellar, which includes 9,0 m high walls in-filled between a steel portal frame.

55) 2012 – *Midrand JHB* in Farmhall, behind Broadacres, a new 2 storey straw bale house and training centre called the Starflower Project was built for Stuart and Laura McDermit. The project was designed by Shimwell Design to which the author gave consulting advice and ran a series of hands-on workshops in October and November of 2012 using an in-fill “cob-bale” system. See: <http://allabouthealth.co.za/starflower/?p=6>

56) 2012 – Near *Atlantis, South Western Cape*, in 3 Fountains Estate – a 90 sq meter single storey house straw bale house was owner built. The house was bought in 2015 by Lesa La Grange.

57) 2013 – In *Grabouw, Western Cape* the Ukuqala - Village of Hope built a single story non load bearing extension in straw bale to an existing orphanage. A group of students from the University of Stuttgart partook in a design and build project. Eco Design Architects & Consultants facilitated a two-day straw bale and earth building workshop in March 2013 and the building was opened two weeks later. The Bales were laid on edge using the earthen pre-coating “cob-bale” method and a lime straw clay sand plaster finish was used. Visit Village of Hope’s website as well as the students blog page: <http://www.uni-stuttgart.de/ioeb/ukuqala/>

58) 2013 – In the *Free State*, Sandy Barnes has owner built a single-story non-load bearing straw bale house on his farm with the bales laid flat. The house is 154m<sup>2</sup> with an additional 61m<sup>2</sup> of veranda space. The building was self-financed. Building work started in February 2013 after attending Eco Design’s straw bale training workshop at Star Flower Project in JHB. The Bales were laid flat using the “cob-bale” method and were plastered with our lime dung plaster recipe. Sandy is open to contact. E-mail: barnes.alexh@gmail.com. Visit Sandy’s blog at: <http://www.deneysfarm.blogspot.com/>

59) 2013 – *Carlitzdorp, Klien Karoo*, 2 load bearing straw bale studios were built by Deon Kirk.

60) 2014 – In *Marloth Park, Crocodile Bridge*, in *Mpumalanga*, A new straw bale house/lodge was owner built by Magnus Booysen. The author is held a training workshop in Nov. 2013. The owners have a facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Green-Kruger-Lodge/352128624843017>

61) 2014 – In *Napier, Western Cape*, a new straw bale house was owner built by Mark Smith. A steel portal frame structure with pre-coated earth plaster bales on-edge was used as in-fill. A training workshop was given by Eco Design Architects & Consultants on the weekend of 16-17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2013. The owners respect & attention to detail was evidently very poor and thus the author expects maintenance issues to develop.

62) 2008 - 16 – *Gqunube near East London, Eastern Cape Province* – Barry Muller owner built a 175m<sup>2</sup> non-load bearing home, using bales made from the local grass laid flat between a timber pole structural frame. The walls were covered in chicken mesh and plastered with regular cement sand plaster.

63) 2015 Phase 1 & 2019 Phase 2 – *Hylton, Pietermaritzburg, KZN* - phase 1 & 2 of a new house owner built, with NHBRC exemption, by Rosanne and David Larsen with a steel portal frame and straw bale in-fill. The author held a 2-day training workshop in December 2014. The project was designed by architects Richard Stretton of Koop Design. Contacts: [rosanne@africamediaonline.com](mailto:rosanne@africamediaonline.com) and [editor@africamediaonline.com](mailto:editor@africamediaonline.com)

64) 2019 in *Bonnievale, Western Cape*, Leanne & Japie Groewald (Cell: 073 3542 777) owner built a non-load bearing lime cement plastered straw bale home with bales laid on-edge. Municipal approval was obtained from the Winelands District Council. In 2023 it was featured on the lifestyle DSTV program called Kwella.

65) 2019 in *Greyton, Western Cape*, owner --built alteration to a straw bale gable wall, with much of the construction being done in a 2 --day SAIA accredited workshop that was facilitated by the author and his team.

66) 2022 – *Rosendal, Orange Free State* Anton Burggraaf has built a 50 square meter cottage after baling his own blaes in a home-made press as he could not obtain te rectangular bales in the local area.

67) 2023 – *Wellington, Western Cape*, Conrad (cell: 084 7342 087) of The Wild Bunch Flower Farm built a new non load bearing straw bale ablution facility.

68) 2024 – *Hout Bay, Cape Town*, Ms. Mendel’s plans for a 70sq m straw bale loft roof cottage were approved. Eco Design Architects have done the design and are planning a series of participatory workshops once construction begins.

69) 2024 in *Prince Albert, Great Karoo*, the Rissik family are renovating and extending their straw bale and earthen brick home of 167 sq m. Eco Design Archiects have submitted the plans to council and are awaiting planning permission to begin construction.