

terest amongst historians to pay some much-deserved attention to the South African home front during the Second World War.

All in all, *Hitler's spies: Secret agents and the intelligence war in South Africa* is not only a captivating read for the general public but it is also an important contribution to the historiography of the OB and the South African home front during the war. Kleynhans offers an exciting glimpse into the southern African intelligence war and simultaneously addresses a mammoth gap in the historiography of the OB. The book comes highly recommended for anyone interested in reading a fresh perspective of the South African home front during the war, as well as anyone interested in the OB as an organisation. What *Hitler's spies* is especially successful in is conveying a professional, academic version of military events in an understandable and enjoyable way without utilising the outdated “drum and trumpet” approach.

*Die ossewa en sy spore [“The Oxwagon and its tracks” – Book review in English]*

**(Pretoria, Imprimatur, 2020, 372 pp. ISBN: 978-0-620-89142-4)**

**Erik Holm**

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Prof. Erik Holm is known for his work with the restoration and preservation of all wood-spoke carriages. He founded the “Houtspeek Klub”, as well as published the newspaper for it. His interest in carriages rekindled interest in it, and collections of carriages began to emerge, as well as wagons pulled by a team of oxen. Thus, Holm revived the wagon culture, thus ensuring its survival for the foreseeable future.

The “Houtspeek” newspapers were useful references regarding dimensions, detail, construction, as well as other finer details about wagons and other carriages. The “Houtspeek” currently exists as a Facebook page where enthusiasts exchange information. The corpus of work that Holm had gathered around the ox wagon, not only in writing but also in repairs, saved many carriages,

and for that, he must surely get the credit. He saved valuable cultural-historical treasures.

His research was finally recorded in 2020 with the publication of *Ossewa and its tracks*. The book begins with a brief introduction to the types of wagons as well as the evolution from the jaw wagon to the goat wagon, accompanied by photos of different variants and scale plans. The first chapter discusses in depth the parts, differences as well as tent constructions of wagons. The traction equipment is also discussed in reasonable detail.

The next chapter discusses the wagon making industry. This chapter is an excellent technical summary of the actual construction methods of wagons. The types of wood and their uses are particularly good, as well as the list of manufacturers of iron axles. The big wagon makers such as Merryweather et al. are well treated and are followed by a helpful list of wagon makers who have worked in towns. However, this list could have been much better and more comprehensive after consulting contemporary newspapers, magistrate documents and tax registers (which are freely available in our archives). The ZAR magistrate's records, in particular, like to indicate residents' trades, and some of these names do not appear on the list. The book's list is a good starting point but can be supplemented.

One aspect that has not been discussed in-depth here is the construction of wagon canvas as well as the types of materials used and how they were made waterproof. The section on painting only touches on the available paint technology, but not on their compositions. For the restaurateur, this would have been helpful information. The photos of the painting are slightly small. Full-page templates of the types of patterns and painting would have been better. For this chapter, the research into existing painted objects would also have helped to create a complete picture of the type of folk art.

The treatment of the wagon in the formation as well as in the use of South African historical events is thorough, although some of the illustrations here are slightly small or of poor quality. The use of wagons in the South African War (1899-1902) with approximate quantities is useful and opens up a new aspect on the subject. Of utmost importance is the section on the wagons and their expenses, as well as the section on the wagon licenses. However, it is sad that the photos of the wagon licenses are so small and unclear.

The use of oxen and other animals for traction is treated well and concisely. The cultural legacy of wagons, whether linguistic or elsewhere, is a handy cultural-historical reference. The explanation of the linguistic use of the chariot in proverbs is, in my opinion, one of the most complete here. The wagon's influence on poetry, music, and other literature is well discussed through this concise study, opening new research possibilities.

The next chapter on the ox-cart as a symbol begins with the words "Canonization as an Afrikaner symbol", words that slightly simplify the ox wagon's symbolism and more profound meaning for the Afrikaner. The souvenirs of the 1938 Great Trek anniversary could also be discussed further thanks to contemporary sources and the influence it even had on architecture. The 1938 Great Trek anniversary itself and the wagons used and built for it are covered concisely. The 1949 and 1988 Great Trek anniversaries are treated very briefly, and the wagons used and made for the events and the logistics, planning and the specific political currents around them (1988, for example, had two parallel anniversaries) are not touched on at all.

The ox-wagon monuments and the wagon in the use of monuments could also have received more attention in the book. The wagon's use in heraldry, stamps, and other objects is useful. Still, it would have fitted better in an extensive chapter explaining the use of anniversaries and manufacture of souvenirs and the influence the ox-wagon had on them.

The treatment of wagons in art, whether European or indigenous, is slightly on the thin side. Here a section on WH Coetser would have been appropriate as well as on other artists' works. The chapter could have provided a detailed discussion on this.

The discussion of model wagons, toys, and children's literature is a beautiful addition to the corpus of cultural-historical information. Of course, the construction of model wagons and their history is of utmost importance. However, the children's literature section would have been better suited to the previous chapter, where the language and literary uses of the wagon are discussed.

The list of existing wagons and collections is a valuable piece of work. The catalogue of existing jawbone wagons is a wonderful resource, yet certain replica wagons are classified among the originals. This is sure to cause great headaches for future historians and researchers. The existing catalogue of goat

wagons is a wonderful reference guide. The use of GPS coordinates of the location of the wagons is a fantastic idea and will help in the future to be able to place the relocation of the documented wagons, which will also help with their preservation.

Overall, the book is an improvement over existing books on the subject. However, editing, factual errors and poor footage do detract from the book. The book is a good starting point for future research. If the book used more contemporary sources, along with better photos and footnotes, it could surely have been the standard academic work. All in all, a handy book for any cultural historian or wagon enthusiast.