Historical Walk through Montagu

Montagu-Ashton Tourism Association
27 Bath Street
Montagu 6720

1. **The Montagu Country Hotel (1875)** - This distinguished Art Deco building holds the distinction of being Montagu's first hotel. In 1880, it became the centre of political controversy when President Paul Kruger of the Transvaal planned to visit with his entourage. While townspeople eagerly anticipated this prestigious event, the hotel owner's political convictions led him to withdraw his offer to host the grand reception. The resourceful women of Montagu stepped in and successfully organized the reception at Joubert House on Long Street instead.

2. **42A and 44 Bath Street (1899)** - This elaborate late-Victorian structure stands adjacent to the Standard Bank and originally housed the ABC Bank (African Banking Corporation) and bank manager's residence. The building exemplifies Dutch Renaissance revival architecture, featuring an off-center portico, ornate gables, and elegant cast-iron verandahs.

3. **The Spanish Flu Memorial Plaque, Bloem Street** -
The devastating 1918 influenza pandemic stands among history's most catastrophic natural disasters, infecting 500 million people worldwide and claiming 50-100 million lives. South Africa suffered the fifth-highest death toll globally, losing half a million citizens—62% in the Cape region. Montagu's community endured significant losses during this tragedy. A commemorative plaque was unveiled on November 22, 2018, marking the centenary of this worldwide catastrophy and honouring the hundreds of local residents who perished.

4. **The Dutch Reformed Church (1858-1862)** - This impressive Neo-Gothic cross-shaped church was designed by George Burkett and constructed by Barry & Nephews for £4,490. The building was enhanced in 1906 with eastern and western galleries designed by John Parker, expanding its architectural grandeur.

5. **No. 30 Bath Street (1856)** - This corner building features remarkable roof construction—its thatched roof spans two rooms deep without central support, unusual for buildings of this period. The adjacent smaller building at No. 28 originally served as its outbuilding and has housed diverse functions: police station (with trap door), library, post office, accountants' offices, restaurant, and art gallery.

6. **No. 24 Bath Street (1860)** - Originally built as two semi-detached houses, one section served as the Magistrates Court. When demolition threatened in 1982, Mrs. Esther Hofmeyr intervened to save this structure. The building features lovely fanlights above both front and interior double doors.

7. **5 Bath Street, Kingna Lodge** - An attractive late Victorian to early Edwardian house, built circa 1898. It was converted to a six-bedroomed guest house, Kingna Lodge, famous for the historic visits in 1995 of past Presidents and Nobel Peace prize winners, Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk.

8. **No. 20 Bath Street (1854)** - This T-plan, thatched Cape Dutch house showcases four beautiful florid gables and represents one of two central-gabled homesteads in Bath Street. The house features an exceptionally attractive front door with fanlight above.

13. **19 Long Street** - A rectangular thatch roof house, two rooms deep with end gables the same as No. 17. The house was originally No.17's cellar but was sold and converted into a residence.

9. **St. Mildred's Anglican Church (1871)** - This small church represents one of many designed by Sophy Gray, wife of Robert Gray, the first Anglican Bishop of Cape Town. Though never formally trained as an architect, she possessed boundless enthusiasm and thorough knowledge of English rural church architectural style.

10. **No. 9 Rose Street (1911)** - This imposing Edwardian villa housed the Dutch Reformed Church parsonage and was designed by John Parker for Dr. D.F. Malan, then "dominee" and later Prime Minister of South Africa. The house features a 30-meter central passage with 15 rooms, plus a charming workers' cottage near the river.

11. **No. 26 Long Street (1865)** - This structure exemplifies an unadorned five-bay Cape Georgian double-story dwelling from the 1860s. Unusually, the doors and windows are not symmetrically placed on the façade.

12. **No. 17 Long Street (1859)** - This rectangular thatched house features a square, pedimented front gable and simple fishtail end gables. The façade displays bays separated by pilasters, with a beautiful double door and three attractive fanlights.

14. **No. 32 Long Street (c. 1860)** - This L-shaped house features typical thatched roofing with straight end gables and an adjoining cellar. An external staircase leads over the cellar doors to the loft, while the flat-roofed annex represents typical rural house enlargements of the era.

15. **No. 25 Long Street (1853) - Joubert House** - As Montagu's oldest surviving residence, this building's outbuilding supposedly served as the town's first lockup. By 1970, deterioration forced the municipality to declare it uninhabitable. The Montagu Museum purchased, restored, and transformed it into a house-museum in 1983. The kitchen floor features genuine peach pips, with a nursery and herb collection in the back garden.

16. **No. 40 Long Street (1892)** - This five-bay, double-story Cape Georgian house displays richly decorated parapet and ground-floor pilasters. Alexander Floris Kriel had this stately residence built as his "tuishuis" (town house).

17. **No. 33 Long Street - 'Bonheur'** - This lovely Victorian townhouse features a high-pitched roof and cast-iron embellishments ("broekielace") adorning the veranda. Turn left into Church Street. While only two buildings are officially proclaimed, nearly every home from Long Street to Bath Street represents our best-preserved architectural stretch, each worthy of heritage registration.

18. **Mimosa Lodge** - Beginning as a simple single-story thatched farmhouse, this building was later converted to a double-story hotel. Originally a private residence, it later became a boarding house. After extensive renovations that stripped away carpeting, even the wooden staircase creaks authentically. The premises continue operating as hotel and restaurant.

19. **"Eerste Pos" (First Mail)** - Located opposite Mimosa Lodge, this was Esther Hofmeyr's retirement home. Arriving in Montagu as a young teacher in 1941, she stayed at Mimosa Lodge before moving here. Much of Montagu's preserved appearance, particularly Long Street, can be attributed to her dedication in persuading homeowners to restore rather than demolish or modernize their properties. The building now houses a brewery.

Visitors often ask about our traditional white walls and dark green woodwork. Historically, whitewash (watery limewash) allowed walls to breathe and dry properly after rains. The white color reflected harsh summer sunlight, keeping interiors cool.

20. **No. 35 Long Street (1860)** - This rectangular thatched house features a square, pedimented front gable and fishtail end-gables. Once owned by artist Francois Krige, it was sensitively restored by architect Revel Fox.

21. **No. 42 Long Street** - Though not officially proclaimed, this building holds historical significance as a typical British Colonial townhouse prevalent throughout the Karoo region.

22. **No. 44 Long Street** - One of the smallholdings that provides Long Street with its historic agricultural character, this property used to extend all the way to the Kingna River. In 1984, the owner discovered an archival photograph showing the house originally had a half-hipped roof gable. The restoration included this unique-to-Montagu gable feature.

23. **The Mission Church (1907) - 41 Long Street** - Now housing the Montagu Museum, this building depicts the history of the church and community. The original organ, pulpit, and brass baptismal font all date from the turn of the last century.

24. **No. 46 Long Street (1860)** - This rectangular thatched house features straight end gables, beautiful chimneys, and timber stairs. Previously known as Four Oaks, only one of the original four oaks remains from the once oak-lined Long Street.

25. **48 Long Street** - The building is known as 'Blou Pieke' and was a boarding house. It had fallen into disrepair but was recently purchased and restored to its original appearance.

26. **KWV Building (1930s)** - Montagu features several fine industrial buildings, including the Kooperatiewe Wynbouersvereniging (KWV) buildings at the corner of Long and Kohler Streets. While not formally protected, these complexes contribute significantly to the town's character and evidence its agricultural and distilling heritage. One of the buildings currently houses an art gallery, the Odeon theatre, a restaurant and shops.

27. **21 Piet Retief Street** - This elegant late Victorian house exemplifies the style with multiple decorative gables, "broekielace" (metal tracery) around the stoep, and quoined corners.

28. **The Montagu Coat of Arms** - In 1968, Montagu's municipal council obtained arms from the Cape Provincial Administrator: a white and black shield with grapes, griffin head and shoulders with three diamonds, topped by a demi-eagle rising from a mural crown. The ceramic coat of arms at the municipal offices entrance was created by prominent local potter Inez Kachelhoffer.

29. **3 Piet Retief Street - Library and Municipal Building (1893)** - In 1893, the Church Council apportioned part of the church square to school trustees. The building was enlarged in 1910, hence the date on the central gable. The town council purchased and renovated it for municipal offices in 1975. During renovation, workers discovered a flask containing a 'Deo Gloria' document with VIP names from the 1893 cornerstone laying, five coins, and newspapers from May 1892. These items remain in council safekeeping.

30. **11 Mill Street, Montagu West: The Blue House, 'Poesiehoek'**- Built circa 1886, this double-story Karoo Cape Georgian house features simple unadorned parapet with keystone work around windows, doors, and corners. During the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic, it served as a hospital where many died, leading to haunting beliefs. Later used as a brothel by twin sisters, then a convenience store, it's now a private residence.

If time permits, continue exploring Montagu West, known for its typical Karoo cottages.

31. **The Montagu Nature Garden, 41 Van Riebeeck Street –** The garden was established in 1954 by the Montagu Horticultural Society. It was proclaimed a nature reserve in 1961 under the care of the then Montagu Municipality, now the Langeberg Municipality. The Montagu Nature Garden Association, a non-profit organisation run by volunteers was appointed in 1994 by the municipality to tend the park on their behalf.

The Nature Garden is well worth a visit and is only just over a kilometre from the tourist office.