

Thieves strip iconic bridge

■ Kwelera landmark targeted for scrap

BY PETER MARTIN

SCRAP metal thieves are targeting an old iron bridge at Kwelera.

A few days ago the culprits removed large sections of the bridge, which is highly dangerous for young children, who could be injured while playing on the bridge.

The news was conveyed by a keen "bridgeter", William Martinson. Martinson loves to visit old bridges to admire their style and architecture. Martinson sent a letter to Dennis Walters, who has recently published a book on bridges of the Eastern Cape to inform him of the problem.

Walters immediately contacted the Go! & Express to alert people living in the area to the "butchering" of the bridge, which is in reality a monument to the works of Joseph Newey, who built a number of bridges in the Eastern Cape during the late 1800s and early 1900s before his death in 1907.

Walters, a civil engineer, spent 12 years researching the bridges that Newey built, whether they were stone-arch or iron lattice bridges, as is the one at Kwelera.

Walters recently published a book entitled *Bridging the Eastern Cape*.

While working throughout the province focusing on his labour of love, Walters uncovered documents, photographs and drawings featuring some 70 bridges of the province, for which Newey was known to be the engineer while working as a chief inspector for the public works department.

Not many people are aware that Newey designed and built the original bridge over the Kei River as well as the Fish River.

Walters added a great deal of modern photographs to his book which has been well-researched and relates the life story of Newey and his family and how he came to the Eastern Cape.

Newey in fact, lived in a number of areas in the Eastern Cape, including King William's Town and the Great Fish River region.

Unfortunately many of Newey's bridges have since been demolished and have made way for modern vehicular traffic but the many bridges that still remain are a fine legacy for our generation.

Anyone interested in purchasing a copy of Walters's book can contact him on (043) 726-7945. He is prepared to deliver in the East London area.



FALLING DOWN: This photograph shows how thieves are stripping the Kwelera Bridge of iron to sell as scrap metal

Picture: WILLIAM MARTINSON