



Rose's

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ROUND-UP

A privately-published monthly newsletter covering mainly snippets of Karoo history * Copyright: Rose Willis *
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IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS

A two-day TEDx conference, scheduled to be held in Prince Albert on September 1 and 2, will search for creative ways of helping the community solve ecological problems. TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) is a non-profit organisation, which was started in 1984, to investigate, explore and identify environmental problems and share ideas on solving these. The Prince Albert conference, entitled *Meet Me There: Working Beneath, Between, Beyond and Towards a Thriving Planet*, aims to assist the local community to find solutions to difficult conflicts, through group discussion, says organiser Hélène Smit. The programme features some top local and international speakers, such as **Arthur D Colman**, author of nine books on human life cycle, healing, consultation and leadership; **Elsbeth Donovan**, S A development director of the University of Cambridge Sustainability Leadership programme; **Saliem Fakir**, a genetic engineer, who believes that changing the way we think about energy could change the way we live; **Mpumelelo Ncwadi**, an environmental engineer, co-founder of Land of the Crane and sustainable development professional; **Pilar Montero**, a Jungian analyst and organisational consultant; **Richard Dean** and **Sue Milton Dean**, creators of the Renu-Karoo project; **Thope Lekau**, a guest house owner who inspired township women and the youth to seize economic opportunities and overcome social challenges; **John Parker** creator of the multifaceted Lentegeur environmental project; **Christina Tenjiwe Kaba**, a Woman of the Year, and a City of Cape Town \ Khayelitsha Achiever in Community Development; **Ellen Joubert**, a former environmental lawyer, who moved to Prince Albert seven years ago to start Handmade Karoo and Pick-a-Piece recycling; **Shannon Royden-Turner**, who helps communities find solutions to social and environmental problems and **Brett Bard**, who runs a soil nurturing and organic vegetable cultivation project on his Karoo permaculture market farm. More details from helene@feather.co.za.

BEAUFORT WEST PAYS IT FORWARD

Beaufort West finds itself in the news for many strange reasons. People poke fun at it for being in the middle of nowhere, the antics of a former mayor at one time kept it in the limelight and from time to time stories of prostitution and unemployment hit the headlines. The town was recently in the news again, but this time with a positive angle. The TV breakfast show, Morning Live, visited Beaufort West on July 18, 2012, and, as part of Nelson Mandela's birthday celebrations, announced the development of a R60-million youth centre, to counter such social evils. It is the people of Beaufort West that make the town unique. They all felt humbled last year when a severe drought crippled the town and people from across the country brought water to them. Thousands of bottles indicated that while people may laugh at their expense, they also cared. This year, when severe snow storms hit the central Karoo, the people of Beaufort West again stepped up to the mark. The worst storm hit the route to the north and the area towards Three Sisters, Victoria West and Loxton. Most Beaufort Westers could not even get out of town to see the snow because the main road was parked solid with vehicles. Accommodation rapidly filled and, while every Beaufort Westers who could, took a stranded family into their home, some people still had to sleep in their cars. Then supplies in the shops ran out. Eventually there was no bread, rolls, biscuits or rusks, but the Beaufort Westers again proved themselves to be a caring community and everyone who could baked bread and distributed this among the stranded, proving one good turn certainly deserves another.

NEW LIGHT ON THE KAROO'S MODERN-DAY GYPSYS

The story of the Karoo's half-forgotten, gypsy-like, migrant shearers has at last been captured in a book. Written by Professor Michael de Jongh and published by Unisa Press, *Roots and Routes: The "Karretjie" (Donkey Cart) People of the Karoo*, represents 20 years of research into the lives and lifestyles of these wanderers. Professor de Jongh's committed passion to discovering the origins and stories of these people has contributed immensely to anthropological studies in South Africa, say reviewers. The donkey cart people are direct descendants of the /Xam (San/Bushmen), the earliest inhabitants of the Karoo. These people, the remnants of the ancient hunter-gatherers, are the poorest of the poor. A typical family owns a ramshackle cart, a donkey or two, a dog, a few chickens, scraps of clothing, a few cooking utensils and, perhaps a radio, which may or may not work. Theirs is a hostile and at times violent world. They have no recourse to rights or labour courts. Today, they roam the arid reaches of the upper Karoo constantly moving, sleeping over in make-shift shelters on the roadside, taking advantage of the law that allows people to remain in any public space for 24-hours. These people live on the verge – on the verge of the roadside and on the verge of extinction. While the men temporary work as sheep shearers, the woman scour the verges for road kill which ends in the cooking pots. Now and then a farmer's sheep vanishes. Discovering how this marginalised community survives and how it meets the challenges of its own particular hostile, violent world makes fascinating reading. The book is much more than a day-to-day account of the present-day people. It reveals their past and gives a clear insight into the early history and environment of the Great Karoo. It contains rich sociological data of this a colourful community, which has been neglected by both government and NGOs. It also looks to the future and asks "what now?"

DREAMED OF GRANDPA'S HOME

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A sophisticated, elegant Mpumalanga guest house, has a link with Beaufort West. It is Welgelegen, at Balfour, just an hour's drive from Johannesburg. The house was designed by Sir Herbert Baker and built in 1912, by Andries Mostert, an entrepreneur, who went to school at Beaufort West in the late 1800s. Born in Paarl in 1868 Andries was a sickly boy, then his parents heard of the cures being affected by the crisp clean air of the Karoo and decided to send him to school in the heart of this healthy area. Andries left school when in his teens and went to Kimberley to assist his brother who ran a butcher shop there, but he soon realized his destiny did not lie in the family business. He knew that as a butcher's assistant he would make enough money to buy back his grandfather's farm, Mostert Estates. This was lost when *pheloxera* ravaged the vines and bankrupted his grandfather. Also gone was the magnificent farmhouse, Welgelegen. So, Andries left Kimberley and set off to seek his fortune at the gold mines at Barberton. Once there, to his horror he found the life of a miner was worse than that of a butcher's assistant. It was hard and poorly paid. He went to Ferreira's Camp (early Johannesburg) and joined a team building a railway line from Braamfontein to Elandsfontein. He did so well and so established A M Mostert Construction, a company that handled many landmark construction jobs, such as Church Square in Pretoria and Doornfontein Canal in Johannesburg. It was also a sub-contractor on the Union Buildings.

THE HOUSE MONEY COULDN'T BUY

Andries, at last, had "real money" in his pockets and to his delight his ancestral home, Welgelegen, was advertised for sale. He rushed to buy it, but was pipped at the post by Cecil John Rhodes who acquired it and contracted Sir Herbert Baker to renovate it 'for the premiers of the future'. Andries was heartbroken. In 1911, Coronation Mine went bankrupt, and Andries then acquired the land it owned between Balfour and Nigel. He named this farm Rietbult Estate and planted a huge orchard there. Then in 1912 he asked Sir Herbert Baker to design a house for him on this farm. He named it Welgelegen. Andries went on to make a name for himself in many areas of business. He became a director of The National Bank of South Africa and was one of the founders of Iscor. He died in 1939. Contact : info@welgelegenmanor.co.za

REVEREND TAKES A TUMBLE

Early roads left a great deal to be desired. Many were little more than rugged tracks. The Colonial Chaplain, Rev. J Heavyside, was thrown heavily from his horse one day while taking the air along one of these rugged paths with Bishop Robert and Mrs Sophia Gray. The incident occurred just outside Grahamstown, near Belmont, the farm of Mr J Carlisle, The Reverend suffered a severe contusion at the back of the head, and for a while seemed quite confused. He was conveyed to the Carlisle residence where Mrs Carlisle rendered prompt assistance, states the *South African Commercial Advertiser* of August 1856. Happily the injury was not too serious and much to everyone's relief, the Reverend was able to back ride home again.

CHECKMATE

Robert Conn Donnel died on September 24, 1929, shortly after enjoying a chess game. "Bob" as he was affectionately known was well-liked, warm hearted, generous, highly respected and said to be "an Irishman of sterling worth". He came to South Africa from Ulster in 1894 and immediately joined the South African Police Force in Cape Town. He was seconded to Graaff-Reinet where he developed a great love for the Karoo and decided to stay there. In the Karoo Bob made a name for himself as a poultry farmer and swept the boards wherever his birds were shown. He retired to Queenstown where he continued his love of farming, sport and enjoyment of chess. He was a staunch cricket and rugby supporter and a fine judge of players. Bob had just completed a highly competitive chess game when he had a seizure and died. Many people attended his funeral and extended condolences to his widow, only child, Effie and his brother, Sam.

WRONG MEDICINE KILLS BABY

The five month old son of Mr. George Hughes, an Eastern Cape tailor, died in 1856 because someone made a mistake with his medication. The child and his mother had been ill and local doctor prescribed a dose of medicine for each, stated the *Grahamstown Journal*. "The dose for the mother, which contained a quantity of opium, was inadvertently given to the child and it killed him. The chemist was blamed for mislabelling the bottles, but he contested this and the case went to court. He accused the family of thinking the doses were the same, not reading the labels properly and of giving the fatal dose to the child. This also could not be proved in court because both doses had been taken. It was an immensely difficult case, but in the end the judge chose to believe that the chemist was not at fault and that the mistake was made after the medicine reached its destination. No one was ever sure and the case divided the community.

NOTHING WENT BUMP IN THE NIGHT

When James Attwell set off for Kingwilliam's Town he was aware that thieves roamed the area. When he stopped for the night, he took every possible precaution while parking his wagon at the roadside and "kept awake the whole night in order to be on the alert and prevent any stealing", reports the *South African Commercial Advertiser* of July 7, 1856. However, next morning when James opened his tent flap at sunrise three of his best oxen were gone. The newspaper states that the theft was so cleverly executed that James had heard no sound and knew nothing whatever of the loss until the sun crept across the veld. On the following Wednesday the hides of the stolen animals were discovered at a skin dealer's shop. There was no doubt that these were the missing animals because the hides had the Attwell brandmark on them. "This was not the only theft that took place that night," states the newspaper. "There were one or two more. Hardly a day goes by without us receiving reports of such exploits."

SNEAK PREVIEW

Dr Peter Alcock's book on myths, legends and stories relating to climate and weather patterns in South Africa was a great success. He is now completing a second book entitled *Venus Rising: South African Stellar Beliefs, Customs and Observations*. This book covers South African indigenous astronomical knowledge.

CELEBRATE HERITAGE

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The Department of Cultural Affairs is presenting a one-day Natural and Cultural Heritage Symposium on September 26 in Oudtshoorn in collaboration with the CP Nel Museum. The symposium, which starts at 09h00, costs R30 per person and includes tea, coffee and a light lunch. Speakers include Poem Mooney, Dr. Kutela, Dr. Jan Vlok, Okkie Stander and Renee Rust. There will also be a conducted tour to some of Oudtshoorn's historic buildings. More information from Linda Labuschagne llabusch@pgwc.gov.za.

AND WHEN THEY GOT THERE, THE CUPBOARD WAS BARE

In November, 1854, a cask of brandy arrived at Port Elizabeth and it was empty. Consternation erupted. The hinterland general dealer wanted his goods. He demanded proof from the London suppliers that a full cask had been loaded. The London supplier proved his case. The liability of the captain of the *Shepherdess* was then questioned. He had to prove that the cask had not been tampered with, opened and drunk along the way. Document CO53/11 in the National Archives in Kew, London, states that the case, which was heard by the Circuit Court in Port Elizabeth, was of great interest to the mercantile community worldwide. The captain stated the cask must have been faulty. He was charged "as being answerable for the value of the cask of brandy that had leaked out on board the vessel," state the documents in the National Archives. There was an investigation into how the leakage could have originated? Was it from bad stowage, theft, or some other cause over which the Captain had no control? Considerable evidence was presented and after carefully examination of all documents the judge concluded the leakage arose from warping, so the captain was found not guilty and the people of the hinterland simply had to wait for another barrel to arrive.

ARTIST CALLS FOR SUPPORT

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"I am an artist/photographer who often draws inspiration from the Karoo," writes Warren Nelson. I am calling on like-minded artists to collaborate in mounting an exhibition to open the eyes of fellow South Africans to the beauty, majesty and the secrets of this beautiful area. The exhibition is intended as a fundraiser for the Treasure the Karoo Action Group and as such has their full support. I am currently looking for key people to help make this happen. I feel that we need to exhibit and inspire people to protect this unique, most spiritual area. Further information from wmmnelson@mac.com.

NEPOTISM IN THE CHURCH?

In November, 1854, nepotism was questioned in the Dutch Reformed Church. Someone, using the nom-de-plume *En Clique Tegenstaander, en Tegenstreever*, wrote to the editor of the *S A Commercial Advertiser and Cape Town Mail*, on November 2, saying: I have been informed that it is contrary to the discipline of the *Hollandische Gereformeerde Kerk* in the Netherlands and in this Colony, for several members of one family to serve as parochial ministers, in one presbytery. Can you or any of your readers confirm this? I understood that this disciplinary rule was implemented to prevent one family taking control of the Presbytery, and arranging positive answers to all their questions and their votes? The Rev Andrew Murray Senior is the minister in Graaff-Reinet; his son, John in Burghersdorp; another son, William in Middelburg and yet another Andrew Junior in Bloemfontein. His son Charles, who is about to be ordained, it is said intends to answer a call to the Duivenaar's Fontein church, in Hope Town. Then Rev A Louw, minister at Sannah's Poort, is about to marry, Rev Andrew Murray Senior's daughter. If, in one generation, five or six members of one family, may thus unite votes; may they not, in the second or third generation, swamp the whole Synod, absorb its fees, salaries, and offices?

You can only be young once but you can be immature forever

Dave Barry, one of the great humorists of modern times He won the Pulitzer Prize for consistently effective use of humour as a device for highlighting serious matters. His work inspired a CBS Sitcom that ran from 1993 to 1997