



Rose's

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ROUND-UP

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FESTIVAL TO TICKLE THE TASTE BUDS

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The first annual Karoo Food Festival is scheduled to take place in Cradock from March 21 to 23. “Our aim is to use Karoo and its food to turn the area into a culinary destination,” says organiser Lisa Antrobus. “We hope to inspire ‘foodies’, who travel in search of new tastes, to adventure into the Karoo, but we also hope those who simply love the region will come to Cradock at the end of March to enjoy a feast of Karoo fare. The festival will not only focus on traditional Karoo dishes, it will also include innovative ways to cook and serve the region’s culinary delights, such as ostrich, world famous Karoo lamb, port and wine. There will be something for everyone from the gourmets to the weight watchers and the health conscious. Organised in conjunction with Slow Food Karoo, the festival aims to encourage visitors to stop, stay and savour the flavours of good food and wine at fair prices in beautiful surroundings.” For more information contact: Lisa Antrobus Ker at lisa@tuishuise.co.za.

TOP COOKS READY TO COMPETE

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Prince Albert’s top cooks are standing by to entertain *Kyknet* viewers with recipes and stories of Karoo food. Several will take part in this TV programme’s reality cooking show, *Kokkedoor* in February. This show, produced by Cape-town-based Homebrew Films, takes the form of a cooking competition based on traditional Afrikaans “legacy foods” and “nostalgic meals”. Updated, classic dishes, adapted to appeal to modern-day tastes and lifestyles will be featured, but the challenge will be to stay true to the original taste and history of the meal. Would-be contestants had to write an essay of between 600 and 1000 words explaining why they wished partake in *Kokkedoor* 2013 and submit a complete menu for a Sunday lunch. More info from: princealberttourism@intekom.co.za.

THE MAN WHO STUDIED THE RAIN

In January, 1877, Mr S Jackson, who farmed at Brakfontein, near Victoria West, wrote to the *Cape Monthly Magazine* to explain weather patterns in the Karoo. He felt these were of vital interest to all Karoo farmers and merchants, so he forwarded a register of rainfall in Victoria West for a period of four years. “It will be perceived at once that summer is our rainy season, as winter is yours,” he stated. “When it rains in the upper country - and so long as it rains there - it very seldom rains here. It follows, of course, that when your rainy season is prolonged beyond its usual time, we invariably suffer from drought. Again, winter rains in Cape Town are often simultaneous with high north-west winds in this quarter. Our summer rains rarely set in until the

Cape south-easters have begun to blow. We recently had a very heavy fall of rain - four inches in two hours - such is the weather of the Great Karoo."

VICTORIAN MELODRAMA IN CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

Most people who visit Graaff-Reinet are impressed by its Victorian Gothic Dutch Reformed Church. Designed by Charles Freeman, it was the third church to be erected on that site and while some preferred the earlier buildings, most found this one "dramatic". Perhaps this was due to Freeman's great love of melodrama," says Bartle Logie in *Traveller's Joy*. Freeman arrived in Natal in 1860 with the cast of the Victorian melodrama "*Pepper's Ghost*." Because of ill health he considered returning to England, but while his ship was in Cape Town harbour he saw a Cape Town Public Works Department advertisement, applied and was appointed to the benefit of South African architecture.

ALL SHOOK UP ON THE EARLY ROADS

Travel in the 1800s was far from easy. Roads were rugged and post carts extremely uncomfortable. In June, 1871, Dr Atherstone wrote that he had been "condemned to sit for 31 hours in a box called a post cart" all the way from Grahamstown to Beaufort West. "There was no proper back to the seat which was covered only by a thin, knotted leathern pad. Hydraulic pressure and saturation had caused this to become harder than the box-lid itself," he wrote in the *Cape Monthly Magazine* of June that year. "We travelled at a constant pace - 8 miles ($\pm$ 12 km) an hour - and maximum oscillation made me feel like a bottle shaken into froth and foam by a delighted school boy." Apart from this, he said, there was nothing peculiar to note along the way. "You travel through troughs in the sandstone ranges filled with rhenosterbosch - through a country without history - through hills of bare rock and valleys of rut and tortuous rivers - the worst parts are passed in the dark. You try to think, but your thoughts get beaten up, jolted and jostled together and you can't recognise one as your own. And, when they are split up and mingled with dreams, the taciturn driver violently shakes you or pokes your side, swearing he will not stop to pick you up if you fall off, but another minute and you're off again lunging into the Land of Nod. Then, another poke brings you back with a start. You ache all over. Oh what a night! One youngster remarked: 'This trip has given me a headache in the stomach.' After we hit a rut, he exclaimed 'That shook the stars right out of my eyes.'"

READY TO SELL HIS SOUL FOR A REST

Dr Atherstone thought there might be some respite when they stopped to change horses. "Oh how I pleaded for a bed, a corner of the floor, a table, just half an hour's rest to calm my giddy brain and quivering nerves, but no, the driver's stern voice echoed like a knell through my exhausted frame and we were off again with two fresh steeds. As we bounded into the twilight I drew my cloak tighter around me, droplets of mountain mist distilled on my beard, and the day faded into night. Pale moonlight then exaggerated everything, lending a supernatural grandeur to the scene. We seemed to be constantly plunging over an abyss at a pace of 10 miles an hour and at an angle of 45 degrees. Now and then the ghostly sound of the driver blowing a warning on his horn tore the night as we galloped along," said Dr Atherstone. The cart drew up at a wayside stop called "The Club" near the post office at Blanco, outside George. There I saw Tom Bain, the son of my cherished friend, standing in the doorway. The sight of him aroused every atom of nerve

power, but I could hardly communicate - sounds were too vague and indistinct – I felt I had earned my sleep.”

GEORGE NOT A FAVOURITE

Up to this point, Dr Atherstone explained, the post cart had been travelling through the *Zuurveld*, a waste of old red sandstone ranges. As they neared George, he explained this was not his favourite village. “The road descended the barrier down to the granite of littoral plains extending from the coast to within a hundred yards of “the extinct village of George which startles travelers with its ghost-like lifelessness.” From there plains rolled on towards Knysna where the “conglomerate and new red sandstone” made an appearance. The splendid passes of the Zwartberg have gradually increased traffic to the Karoo and are allowing the wealth of districts like Beaufort and Oudtshoorn to be brought to the coast.

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE NOT APPRECIATED

Atherstone mentioned some private ventures, such as the copper and lead Maitland Mines that were also rich in silver, yielding 50 oz a ton, as well as the gold mines near Knysna, but adds: “there is little use in wasting time over these private enterprises in a country like this, where such things are so little appreciated.” He also described the broad, flat area between Oudthoorns and Riversdale, “dissected only by the Gouritz River which drains the Gough and Karoo. Here mile upon mile of tobacco trees grow in pure white sands. Their flowers, with those of the aloes and heath of the coastland, yield vast quantities of honey. In times of drought this has saved the inhabitants from famine. In fact in 1868 a farmer, named Zwarts, made £200 from his wild hives. Sadly English bees, imported at great cost, with Nutt hives, have not performed well, perhaps because of the genial climate and plentitude of flowers.”

FAMILY SEARCH DICOVERS UNKNOWN SMALLPOX CAMP

Michelle Lotter is searching for details of her forefathers, one of whom died of smallpox in the Somerset East area. It seems an ancestor Christoffel Johannes Lotter, (born on January 16, 1821) owned the farm Maatjiesgoedfontein and died there on June 18, 1892. His son, also Christoffel Johannes Lotter, (born on June 9, 1863) is said to have died at a smallpox camp near Somerset East on June 3, 1902, yet no one seems to have heard of this camp. Many historians confirm that outbreaks of smallpox across the Karoo. This led to the establishment of lazarettos, or isolation hospitals, to treat smallpox and other epidemics. In his book *Epidemics: The Story of South Africa's Five Most Lethal Human Diseases* Howard Phillips discusses various outbreaks of smallpox. It seems the first in 1713 was caused because the *vlaggeman* or lookout on Lions Head was either too drunk or otherwise incapacitated to hoist the flags or fire the guns indicating a small fleet had arrived in Table Bay. So, no surgeon was sent out to inspect the ships and give them a clean bill of health. Then, a quantity of linen infected with smallpox was sent ashore to be washed and this led to the epidemic which killed many Khoi and San and destroyed early Cape Town's social structure. Outbreaks continued until 1893, when “the worst outbreak” was recorded. One old San hunter said it left no people, only stones, states Phillips. The other diseases he names are plague, “the dreaded disorder” which raged from 1901 – 1907, Spanish flu, which threatened the existence of the entire race from 1918 -1919; poliomyelitis, “the middle class plague that appeared several times from 1918 to 1963” and HIV/Aids – “a catastrophe in slow motion”.

WHO SHOULD BE BLAMED?

“As smallpox spread the Basters accused the Korana of bringing it to them,” says Philips. “The Hurutshe Tswana blamed the Ndbele for ignoring instructions from their ancestors and so provoking the outbreak, the Xhosa blamed the British for introducing the disease, Muslims saw it as the Hand of Allah, and fiercely religious Christians considered it a punishment curable only by prayer and penance.” Measures to control outbreaks were sporadic. In Kimberly some doctors, like Leander Star Jameson, who had links to the diamond mining industry, publically denied the disease. They diagnosed it as a rare skin disease because they feared its cost to the mining industry.” Led by Jameson they waged a fierce war against doctors diagnosing smallpox until government-appointed doctors confirmed “smallpox, pure and simple.” Sadly by then, however, about 700 people had died. “This was hailed as one of the most diabolical mis-uses of medical knowledge in South Africa,” says Philips.

NEEDED: THE PIED PIPER AND A CURE FOR MANY ILLS

The plague saw scores of rat catchers being sent out in the stricken areas. The public were encouraged to help and some municipalities offered 3d for each dead rat brought in. Sales of traps, poison and rat-proofing items soared. Some say over 250 000 rats were destroyed during the plague years. Epidemiologists did not find this encouraging. They maintained infected fleas simply fled to new hosts. Then came the Spanish flu. Its spread was unbelievable. It is said more people died of the flu than on the battlefields of WWI – globally it is estimated to have killed over 40 million people. In South Africa 50% of the population is said to have contracted the disease in the space of a month. About 300 000 South Africans between the ages of 18 and 40 died in the six week epidemic. The country’s well developed railway system was blamed for “transporting” the disease, which affected more males than females. The Cape was heavily hit, so was the small Karoo town of De Aar – a railway junction. The death of pregnant mothers and their unborn babies meant that far less children than normal registered for school in 1925. Orphanages were enlarged and at least 16 new ones were opened across the country. Grave diggers could not cope. Coffin supply dried up and bodies were buried wrapped in blankets. Almost no records were kept. No one was available to record the deaths. There are stories of ox-wagons groaning through Karoo villages at night to load up the day's dead. These are only some of the health problems that beset the hinterland. Others included leprosy and syphilis. In 1888 Cradock suffered such a serious spread of syphilis that many refused to go to church for fear of contamination. The Oudtshoorn district surgeon said the disease had reached such a peak that it was dangerous to perform common everyday acts like shaking hands and receiving money.

INSPIRED BY THE GREAT KAROO

The Karoo inspired Anna Howarth and allowed her to make a name for herself as a poet and novelist. The daughter of an Anglican clergyman, Anna was born in London in 1854. She lived with her father who, for many years, served as rector of London’s fashionable St. George's parish and chaplain to Queen Victoria. Anna never married. She and her father had a good and happy life until he died in 1894, then family fortunes declined. Anna was then sent to South Africa, partly for health reasons, but mainly because of financial difficulties at home. As 40-year-old spinster she was not sure what to do, so she went to Grahamstown to train as a nurse. While working as a nurse’s aide she developed a close friendship a patient, Selina Kirkman, who was slightly mentally enfeebled as a result of severe concussion. When Selina was discharged Anna

accompanied her to the family's farm near Steytleville and stayed on as her companion. They remained inseparable for almost 30 years until Selena died in Port Elizabeth in 1927. Life on the farm inspired Anna and she began to write. Eventually four novels were published - *Jan: An Afrikander* (1897), an unusual novel for its time, it dealt with racial difficulties in South Africa. Next was *Katrina: A Tale of the Karoo* (1898), a dramatic story of Dutch and English farm and family life, it starts at the time of the great 1859 smallpox epidemic and includes a vivid description of a drought. *Sword and Assegai* followed in 1899. This historic tale tells of the 1820 settlers and the border wars. *Nora Lester*, her last novel, written in 1902 did not succeed. Dr Thelma Gutsche, a relation of the Kirkmans, said: "Generally their South African settings made Anna's works popular, but this one failed because of a glut of South African material at the time. The story has an old-fashioned inheritance plot. It relates the adventures of two boys who meet in an orphanage in England. Both later emigrate to South Africa where one marries Nora Lester's half-sister, but the other falls in love with her. It is a complicated saga of struggle between Boer and English colonists." In 1922 Anna also published an anthology of poems, *Stray Thoughts in Verse*. Those who knew her said she was pro-British, moderate and even-tempered. After Selina's death Anna returned to England in 1935 and died in London in 1943.

WHO LIES IN THE MIDDLE GRAVE?

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Did Jack the Ripper come to South Africa? Some like historian Charles van Onselen think so. His book *The Fox and the Flies*, suggests "Jack" was Joseph Silver, a racketeer and psychopath, known as "King of the Pimps." This man inhabited dark shadowy areas of South African towns and cities, mixing with prostitutes and shady characters and terrorising refined residents. Now, another historian, Brian Kaighin, is again lifting the lid on the Ripper mystery. He suggests Jack may be buried in Ladysmith. Brian's research, which spans a period of 15 years, is available as an ebook entitled *Middleman*. He says: "The Ripper Murders have been analysed in depth for over 120 years, yet no one can explain why the killing stopped. I think my novel, provides the answer. The story is built around a central grave in a small overgrown cemetery, on the outskirts of Ladysmith. It is flanked by graves of British soldiers. Is this "Jack" the man in the mysterious middle grave? Was he buried there during the Anglo-Boer War? *Middleman* moves through murder, intrigue, cover up and abuse of power at the highest level from South Africa to Victorian London." More information from Brian at kaigs@telkomsa.net

THE COLOUR OF RIGHT

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The Colour of Right: A South African Story is the first novel of a fictional trilogy written and self-published by Alexx Zarr. He describes the story as a journey of personal discovery and in this work poses more questions than it answers. The story moves from a vividly-described, typical old South African interrogation scene of 1978 to 2008 while discussing affairs of a struggling and developing nation. Have we learned from the past, he asks, how are the lessons of history affecting the present, and what will their effect be on the future? *The Colour of Right* is a dramatic tale of ideals and ideology. It covers the difficulties of decision making and choices - how they affect individuals, groups and those surrounding around them. "I hope that on the pages readers will see something of themselves, firstly as South Africans and secondly as citizens of the world,"

says Alexx. “I hope my book will stimulate a discourse to help us achieve better outcomes as individuals and for the country in general.”

Life is either a tightrope or a feather bed. Edith Wharton