



Rose's

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ROUND-UP

A privately-published monthly newsletter covering mainly snippets of Karoo history * Copyright: Rose Willis *
Tel No. 051-436-2471 * Cellphone: 082-926-0474 * e.mail: karootour@telkomsa.net * P O Box 28636, Danhof, 9310.
Annual subscription: R70 for 12 copies by e.mail. Bank: Standard – Branch Code 055534 – Account No 143465511

FOR MUCH MORE THAN A MEAL

A new cookery book, to be launched in August, promises to be a valuable addition to any Karoo library. Written by Beaufort West's Sydda Essop, it comprises a rich collection of recipes and stories from the many diverse cultures that make up the Karoo. Sydda interviewed over 70 cooks and healers, varying in age from 20 to 90, to compile this book which contains recipes ranging from the traditional to the more exotic and including a variety of herbal remedies. Basics such as bread, beer, curry and sweets, as well as some easy-to-prepare meals, are mixed with wonderful stories of general Karoo life, challenges and triumphs. In writing these Sydda pays homage to the rich cultural heritage of the Karoo without ignoring politics or poverty. She interviewed descendants of slaves, San and Xhosa people, those who trace their lineage to Dutch, French and British settlers of the area, as well as Greeks, Portuguese, Indians, Jews and even Somalis who have contributed to the heritage of the Great Karoo. Printed by Quivertree, this 250-page beautifully illustrated hardcover book will retail for about R450-00 and be available from most reputable booksellers.

DISCOVER VENISON

There's more to venison than biltong and wors. It's not tough, not does it have to be smothered in red wine, garlic and dried fruit. Venison is fat free and healthy. To prove this Karoo cook and author Annetjie Reynolds and her team are presenting a series of two-day courses on the beautiful farm, Nieufontein. The first, held in May, was fully booked and proclaimed "thoroughly enjoyable." Dates for the rest are July 24\25, August 21\22, September 18\19, as well as during the Richmond Book Fair in October. Cost is R3200 and includes a recipe book, accommodation for two days, meals and wine. The course covers all aspects of meat preparation, plus deboning. Participants get to take their deboned joints home.

BEST OF BOTH BIRD WORLDS

Prince Albert bird watchers enjoy the best of both worlds – mountains and plains. To ensure visitors discover the best spots Karoo birding expert, Japie Claassen, has compiled a guide covering six routes in a radius of 50km around the town. On these birders see some special, unique and even rare birds. The routes cover Kruidfontein, Prince Albert Road, Gamkapoort Dam, Weltevrede, Swartberg Pass, Zeekoegat, Meiringspoort, Klaarstroom and Gamkaskloof, the Hell. The book includes clear road maps and coloured illustrations, a full bird list and suggestions as to where rare species may be seen. It will assist the novice as well as the experienced birder and may be ordered from princealberttourism@intekom.co.za.

THE PLACE TO BE

Peter Myles of Tour Net feels this "says it all" about the Karoo. "There is something in the Karoo that will stop you in your tracks if you decide to linger. Whether you find it barren, harsh and desolate or beautiful and serene, you will never leave the Karoo without your soul being touched. Only when you stop, take an interest, go for a walk and chat to the friendly locals, will you discover the uniqueness of this vast area relatively untouched land. Here hospitality is genuine, time stands still, beauty overwhelms and silence almost deafens. Here the stars seem touchable and here you can hear God think."

HIC! WHAT A SURPRISE, THIS NOT AUSTRALIA

In the late 1800s a young Irishman, Jesse Tibbs, left England for Australia, but never reached there. He had such a “good” time on the voyage that the ship’s captain, tired of his “carousing and boisterous behavior”, put him ashore at Port Elizabeth. When he sobered up a few days later Jesse discovered he was not where he wanted to be and, worse, still, he was penniless. Desperate for a job he signed up to help build the railway line from Port Elizabeth to the Karoo. When the work was finished Jesse was given the task of organizing the grand fireworks show for the opening. But, his “weakness” once again “took hold of him”, said some and the boxes caught light. The *Herald* reported that “the young man who tried to rescue the fireworks stood surrounded by various coloured explosions, looking more like Mephistopheles on a visit to the terrestrial regions than a mere mortal.” In the end, with a mighty effort, Jesse managed to subdue the flames “with courage that came out of a bottle,” said some, but others admired his efforts. He managed to hold down his railway job “with the luck of the Irish” and, in time, saved up enough to have his wife and son, George Jesse, come out to join him. Jesse continued to live a colourful life and was always involved in one scrape or another, writes Bartle Logie, in *Traveller’s Joy*. “He outlived all his compatriots and while he was thrown out of almost every bar in the region, he was known as an honourable man who paid his debts and did not hold a grudge. Despite the shenanigans of his youth, he was well liked and many tipped their hats to him. When he died at the age of 97, he was the oldest pensioner on the S A Railway’s books.

TURMOIL IN A LAND WHERE MYSTERY RULES

Baviaanskloof, in the heart of the Kouga Mountains, has always been immersed in mystery and good stories. Here, in 1799, the Khoi Chief, Klaas Stuurman, offered refuge to “drosters”, escaped slaves and other fugitives and took up the cause of those forced into “apprenticeship”, badly treated and poorly paid.. In time a group, of Khoi and men of mixed ancestry, loosely formed themselves into “The Gamtoos Nation”. They raised an “army” and caused havoc invading and robbing farms. Within three years they were sending raiding parties as far afield as Plettenberg Bay. Then, in August, 1802, in an effort to regain Khoi independence, Stuurman led 700 men, including 300 horsemen and 150 with firearms, against Uniondale field cornet, Tjaart van der Walt. During a skirmish between the Baviaans and Kouga Rivers on August 8, a stray bullet hit Van der Walt and killed him. He was buried where he fell. In an effort to establish peace Governor Francis Dundas granted land to Stuurman and his men. A brief truce followed during which the renegades even returned some stolen cattle, states Liesl Hatting in *Baviaanskloof – A World Apart*. However, in 1809, after Klaas Stuurman was killed in a hunting accident, Uitenhage Magistrate, Jacob Cuyler, rescinded the land grant and unrest flared up again. In 1949 Tjaart van der Walt’s remains were exhumed and reinterred at the Goode Hoop Church. Van der Walt, who was born in the Sutherland, played an important role in Baviaanskloof area. His death was a heavy loss because everyone had hoped his steadfast character, high sense of duty, tact, courage and ability, would bring peace to the area.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

After the Klaas’s death and the rescinding of the land grant, Chief David Stuurman took up the cause of resistance in Baviaanskloof area. Like his father he offered sanctuary to rebels and runaways, says Prof Nigel Worden in an article in the Cape Times in October, 2008. The Xhosas also became his allies. He was arrested twice (in 1809 and in 1819) and sent to Robben Island prison. Both times he escaped and returned to the area to play a pivotal role in the Frontier Wars. The authorities arrested him again in 1823 and decided to banish him. He was the first black South African banished to New South Wales in Australia. Two other struggles ran parallel to the Khoi struggle for freedom. One was the drive to abolish slavery and the other was the struggle for press freedom and freedom of expression. Thomas Pringle, a major role player in both, led an unsuccessful campaign for the release and repatriation of David Stuurman. The London Mission Society later bought the Stuurman lands and established the Hankey Mission Station there.

SCOT LINKS KAROO TO COAST

It was the son of a Scottish stone carter who devised a way to link Graaff-Reinet to the coast by rail. But, John Paterson, initially came to South Africa to teach English. He was recruited by James Rose Innes, and he arrived in this country filled with enthusiasm. By 1841 he had established The Government Free School, but, demanding as this job was, it not challenging, nor exciting enough, for him. So by 1845, together with a friend, John Ross Philip, he started the *Eastern Province Herald*, Port Elizabeth's first newspaper. Even this, however, was not enough, so he became involved with many other entrepreneurial ventures. By 1847, having made enough money to stop teaching, he turned his attention to journalism, politics and the development of a local infrastructure. He became closely involved with the establishment of a local hospital, library and harbor board states Bartle Logie in *Traveller's Joy*, a book which traces the development of the first railway line from Algoa Bay into the eastern Karoo to link places like Uitenhage, Jansenville, Aberdeen, Klipplaats, Baroe, Kendrew, Graaff-Reinet and Middelburg. Paterson proposed linking Graaff-Reinet to the coast by rail in order to move the wool clip more efficiently. He was convinced that railways were the key to future economic viability in South Africa and in 1857, proposed a major rail network for South Africa. He drew up a map showing a network of railway lines across the country. Oddly enough it differs only slightly from those that were eventually created. Sadly Paterson never saw his dreams come true. He was killed in an accident at sea in April, 1880, while en route from Cape Town to England aboard the *American*. The ship foundered off the West African coast. Paterson was taken aboard the *Senegal* with other survivors, but it ran aground off the Grand Canary Island. All but Paterson were saved. He was struck by the propeller when his lifeboat broke up on being launched.

COST DEPRESSED SOME, ELATED OTHERS

In the mid-1800s the *S A Commercial Advertiser* carried an article claiming the cost of a railway system would be too expensive for the Cape. This would cost anything from £25 000 to £40 000 said the report. The news distressed many and most felt that never in their lifetimes would they see such a modern form of transport, but the feeling was not general – transport riders, horse breeders and wagon builders rejoiced. In *Traveller's Joy*, Bartle Logie states that seven years passed before London papers reported a renewed interest in a railroad system for the Cape of Good Hope. Again nothing happened. In 1884 a new company was formed and by the following year, William George Brounger, a young man born in Hackney in 1820, was on his way to South Africa to take up the post of construction engineer. Not only did he have degrees in engineering, he had experience. He had worked with the firm of Fox and Henderson on the London to Birmingham line and his efforts had impressed Sir Charles Fox. So, when Sir Charles was retained by the Cape Town Railway and Dock Company to help plan a railway system, he immediately recommended Brounger be given the task of supervising the building of the 240-mile line across the Hex River Mountains through the Karoo to Beaufort West. It was a job full of challenges, which Brounger, who has been hailed as one of the most outstanding railway engineers of his day, adequately met. Brounger, who also served on the management committee of the Cape Botanical Gardens, died in England in 1901. His son, Richard, took over from him as chief resident engineer of the Cape Government Railways.

FORGOTTEN CABLEWAY

In the 1960s a cableway was erected across the Waterpoort Gorge in Baviaanskloof. Devised by engineer Andries Bezuidenhout, it was built by farmer Winston le Roux to cut the time of transporting livestock from one farm to another from an entire day to a few minutes. The remains of this cableway can be seen at Bergplaas. It consisted of a double cable system adapted to a winch that took its power from an idling tractor. A high-sided cage was used to transport livestock, labourers and produce, such as wheat and potatoes from Bergplaas to Enkeldoorn. The cableway was used until 1970 when the State bought the land.

A WILD AND DANGEROUS PLACE

The Karoo was still a wild place in the 1850s and news was not always reliable. On January 10, 1851, the people of Somerset East were relieved to hear that Bear Moorcroft and his son had not been murdered as they had previously been told. But sadly, they were told, by travellers reaching town that “the Tambookies were still burning everything in the Tarka area”. In a letter to the *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, January 10, 1851, one man wrote: “I have been here now more than a week, endeavouring with Currie to raise a Volunteer Corps to go to their assistance. We hope to start out on the 20th with about 300 burghers and volunteers and 100 black men. A patrol under William Bowker went out the other day to Stockenstrom’s and the Kaga and has not yet returned. The people of Somerset are in great alarm. They keep guard all night and patrol the neighbourhoods by day. Some of them have already sent part of their goods to Graaff-Reinet. The only news that is cheering at the moment is the fact that we have had beautiful rains.”

THE WINDS OF WAR

About a week later the father one of the volunteers wrote: “The bad news of last week has made us anxious to hear from you and from the Frontier in general. Still, no post has arrived. About 40 volunteers, chiefly Englishmen, started off on horseback from Graaff-Reinet today. The Civil Commissioner supplied them with all necessities. Octavius Bowker and William Shaw are also mustering a party of mounted men, again mostly Englishmen, and they will proceed towards Cradock and Somerset. The drought has been grievous, but fortunately some heavy rain fell over the district and a considerable tract of country yesterday. The Sundays River is running strong, but luckily still passable for wagons and horses. Many people from the surrounding farms are going to the war. I will go myself as soon as the sheep are shorn.”

KAROO LINK WITH MOSSAD

Sylvia Raphael’s story reads like a spy novel. She was born in Graaff-Reinet in 1937. Her mother was a Christian and her father a Jew. Technically this made her non-Jewish, but she became devoted to Israel and in 1960 went to Tel Aviv to teach English. Shortly after her arrival she was recruited by the Mossad and sent to Paris for training. Then, under the alias, Patricia Roxborough she rose to become one of the leading female operatives in Israel’s external intelligence agency, the Mossad. She posed as a Canadian photo journalist and became one of the first Mossad agents to penetrate Yasser Arafat’s bases in Jordan and Lebanon in the 1960s. She was closely involved in Israel’s partially successful attempts to track down the PLO terrorists responsible for the deaths of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Her career came to an abrupt end during a mysterious operation which landed her in a Norwegian jail for five years. While in jail she married her defence lawyer, Annaeus Schjodt, and she was adopted by the kibbutz, Ramat Kakovesh. After her release she and Annaeus lived there for a short while but, in 1992 they moved to South Africa where Sylvia died of cancer at the age of 57. After a Christian service and cremation her ashes were buried in a Jewish ritual on her adopted kibbutz in accordance with her wishes.

DON’T MISS THE MUSIC

The place to be on Saturday, July 28, is the tiny Karoo village of New Bethesda. On this day two of the country’s finest guitarists - Steve Newman and Greg Georgiades – will perform a selection of their original compositions in the Old Church Hall in Martin Street. Steve, who is hailed as one of South Africa’s most accomplished acoustic guitarists, has attained unrivalled success as a soloist. Greg is a well-known multi-instrumentalist who plays an acoustic nylon string guitar, oud, bouzouki, ukulele, electric guitar and sarod. To book call 049 841 1642 or 072 742 7113. Tickets cost R100. For more about accommodation, meals and what to do while in the area see <http://www.nieu-bethesda.com>.

The grand essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for. Joseph Addison