

# Booktown Richmond

Presents Bookbedonnerd III

**"The Coolie Odyssey"**

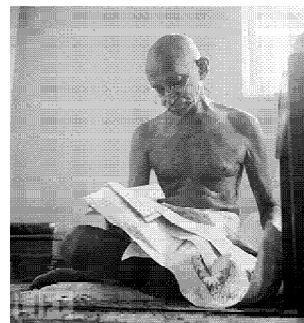
Celebrating 150 years of Indian settlement in South Africa

October 21, 22, & 23. 2010

**Richmond Filums**

October 20, 21, 22, & 23. 2010

See [www.richmondnc.co.za](http://www.richmondnc.co.za)



*"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever." ~ Mahatma Gandhi*

Dear Karoosters All,

## BOOKTOWN RICHMOND MAY 2010 NEWSLETTER

Who was it that coined the phrase 'a magnificent obsession'? Whoever it was, I thank them for offering me a catchphrase that captures what our book festival has become. No matter how little money I have had in my pocket during (and after!!!) the recession, the joys of Booktown Richmond make life's hardships pale into insignificance. To quote from The Eagles:

*There's a different kind of poverty  
That only rich men know  
Worse than malnutrition,  
It starves their very souls*

Yes, Booktown Richmond feeds our souls. What a journey the last 6 months have been. When I announced that the theme for 2010 would be *'The Coolie Odyssey'*, who could ever have dreamed that we'd attract such an illustrious cohort of speakers.

Since our last newsletter, we've had the following speakers join the *Coolie Odyssey*.

Ike's Bookshop, from Durban have indicated that they will be coming to Richmond. Ike Mayet holds a special place in Indian history. He was, I believe the first Indian, if not the first black person, to own a high brow bookshop specializing in Africana. It is the stuff of legend that none other than J.M. Coetzee opened Ike's over 20 years ago. Current owner, and secretary of the South African Book Dealers Association(SABDA), Joanne Rushby will be coming to Richmond to pay tribute to the founder of Ike's.

Our festival has also enthused resident writer Darrel Conolly to such a degree that he has agreed to present a talk on Gandhi. Darrel Conolly is a founder member of Booktown Richmond, having been with us since our opening. Look at our website for the section entitled 'Despatches from a Karoo Dorp' for undoubtedly some of the most creative and entertaining stories of life in a Karoo town. Darrel is the son of acclaimed travel writer Dennis Conolly.

In another scoop for Booktown Richmond, Maureen Isaacson, book editor of the Sunday Independent, will also be making her way to Richmond. It is one of the disappointments of this year's festival that the late Fatima Meer, an icon of the struggle against apartheid, and champion of the poor, could not make it to Booktown Richmond. It is against this background that I have asked Maureen Isaacson to present a talk on a forgotten book of Fatima Meer's- the first biography on Nelson Mandela, *Higher than Hope*.

Judge Chris Nicolson will also be joining the *Coolie Odyssey*. Strange how many people with a legal background become writers? Etienne van Heerden, Fanie Olivier, Albie Sachs are just some of the names from the legal fraternity who have momentarily put down the gavel and taken up the pen. But I know you must be saying: 'Why does that name sound familiar'. Judge Nicholson is of course the man who paved the way for Jacob Zuma to become president of SA. But that is not the reason we have invited him. Judge Nicholson is more importantly the author of a book on the biography of Papwa Sewgolum, a man who occupies a most distinguished place in Indian and golfing folklore in SA. His book *Papwa Sewgolum: From Pariah to Legend* is undoubtedly going to be one of the highlights of the festival, and will serve as a timely reminder of the price some had to pay simply because they were born the wrong colour.

Recently, we also received an e-mail from David and Taffy Shearing. The one thing that Booktown Richmond has shown me is just how many great books there are out there that are self published. *Richmond Road* is a book about the Anglo-Boer War and the skirmishes that took place in and around Richmond. David and Taffy are seasoned historians, also having published books on, amongst others, Gideon Scheepers.

Speaking about seasoned historians, my Dean, for my entire academic career, Donal McCracken is also making a long overdue trip to Richmond. Donal is an Irishman, and he will have to live up to the reputation of that other seminal-Irish raconteur, Patrick Mynhardt, who officially opened our Booktown. After years of giving very focused academic papers, Donal has asked if I could give him the freedom to talk about his many books on conservation. The theme of his talk is therefore *A Green Man*. If you ask me, he must have gotten tired of being a white man in the premier university of African scholarship!!!

Lastly, we are most excited with the confirmation that world renowned photographer, Alf Kumalo, will be joining us in Richmond later in October. But I am more excited about his book that is going to hit the shelves early July. I wish I could tell you what it is about, but I am vowed to secrecy. Needless to say, it will bear the signature of a man who has recorded South Africa through his lens for almost 50 years.

It has also been a good time for old friends of Booktown Richmond. Acclaimed Afrikaans novelist Etienne van Heerden has just won the most prestigious prize in Afrikaans literature, the Hertzog Prize for his novel *30 Nagte in Amsterdam*, which he spoke about in Richmond last year.

We are very honoured to have Kirby van der Merwe speak at this year's festival. He has just won the ATKV prize amongst the Afrikaans media for his article on Booktown Richmond last year. What can I say – Booktown Richmond is an inspiring place!!!

### **And Finally...Surprise, surprise!**

Gail and David Robbins, the couple responsible for the resuscitation of the Apollo Theatre in Victoria West, are coming back to the Karoo – and once again to show films under *Richmond Filums*. (Sic)

This time, at the invitation of the organizers of Booktown Richmond's BookBedonned III Festival, we shall all have the pleasure to see this high octane couple back in their spiritual heartland. Booktown Richmond has enticed The Development Connection (Gail's company committed to 'developing people through culture') to show a programme of films to coincide with the rapidly expanding Richmond event taking place in October 2010.

‘Books and films: that’s an appetising combination,’ says Gail, ‘and we’re really looking forward to meeting some of the many friends we made during our last Karoo sojourn.’

Gail and David owned property in Victoria West from 1995 to 2003. They established the Apollo Development Association and raised nine million Rand for the project over six years. Gail was responsible for the launch of the Apollo Film Festival, the country’s first festival devoted entirely to local product.

‘We’ll be screening South African films once again,’ she says, ‘especially a selection that will appeal to children. But the main theme of our Richmond offering will be Indian films, to coincide with the focus of the BoekBedonnered Festival to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers to work on the Natal sugar plantations in 1860.’

Some of the films to be screened will be supplied by WHAGFILM of the William Humphreys Art Gallery in Kimberley. These are *Before the Rain*, *Monsoon Wedding* And *Heat and Dust*. And the local audiences may enjoy *Slumdog Millionaire* on a bigger screen. WHAGFILM will bring and operate the projection equipment for the festival.

Since leaving the Apollo in 2003, Gail has been active in film festival curation and design. She ran the *Short Film Festival* at the Gariep Festival in Kimberley for several years; and was responsible for regular South African film programmes at the Goethe Institut in Johannesburg and she assisted in creating the *Classic Film Festival* at the same venue. More recently, she has curated the nationally successful *Architect Africa Film Festival* (AAFF), which in 2007 and 2008 presented internationally acclaimed architectural films in the country’s main centres.

Finally, we are delighted to let you know that Harrie Seirtsema of MAP, Modern Art Projects South Africa will be taking part in this year’s BookBedonnerd III with art exhibits, art book displays and talks by well know artists and art writers. The MAP retreat and studios are on Loop Street just across from the town hall and will now mean that the Richmond Festival will keep visitors and locals very busy with things to see and do, and best of all another large stoep on which to sit and enjoy the passing of time over a wonderful cuppa!

Lastly, a special word of thanks to our webmaster Michael Drysdale. He worked tirelessly this last month on our new look website, and the Gandhi letterhead is his creation. I am sure you will agree it looks mighty impressive. In fact, the 21 000 odd

'hits' that our website has received in 9 short months is due largely to the wizardry of Michael. Many thanks, MJ, and our apologies if we drive you crazy some time.

To summarise then, the speakers for this year's festival are:

1. **Ronnie Govender**
2. **Aziz Hassim**
3. **Rian Malan**
4. **Tymon Smith**
5. **Imraan Coovadia**
6. **Ahmed Kathrada**
7. **Denis Beckett**
8. **Johnathan Jansen**
9. **Loftus Marais**
10. **Ingrid Winterbach**
11. **Kirby van de Merwe**
12. **Steward van Wyk**
13. **Joan Hambidge**
14. **Len Raymond**
15. **Diana Ferrus**
16. **Stephan Welz**
17. **Geoff Klass**
18. **Sabata Mokae**
19. **Roger and Pat de la Harpe**
20. **Marianne Palmer**
21. **David & Gail Robbins**
22. **Rosemary Rudd**
23. **Gerald Hoberman**
24. **Angela Read Lloyd**
25. **Chris Marais & Julie du Toit**
26. **Maureen Isaacson**
27. **Darrel Conolly**
28. **Donal McCracken**
29. **Ike's Bookshop**

**30. Judge Chris Nicholson**

**31. David & Taffy Shearing**

**32. Alf Kumalo**

We look forward to seeing you all in Richmond!

Cheers,

Darryl & Peter

