

The New Richmond Reader

Issue 86

July 2026

Our Literary News from the Heart
of the Karoo



July / August 2026

Booktown Richmond

The Great Karoo

Northern Cape

Dearest Karoosters,

Greetings Karoosters,

It is fantastic to be back home in Booktown Richmond, where, despite the bitterly cold weather, the village has been kept alight with a lot...well for a wee dorp in the middle of the Groot Karoo, activity although it has been in fits and starts

There has been some pretty good traffic through town despite gasoline and diesel being as expensive as Cognac or an old Kanonkop Pinotage. School holidays and the Springbok Blowout are always putting bums into beds.

Some couple years ago when Photographer Louis Botha was in Richmond ...as he will be again later in the year, he asked me to see whether I might be able to set up and interview with him with Aunti Moira van den Heever who had lived here

entire life in Richmond, and in fact as a farm girl stayed at the Richmond Supper Klub, which in the ou dar was a dormitory for girls, when they went to school in Richmond in what is presently the Richmond Saddlehorse Museum. How things have changed.

When, many years ago we bought the old derelict house that is now the Supper Klub and I was in the attic of the sheds in the back, and Auntie Moira was there, I found a large framed picture of a dour old lady, lying face down in the middle of the floor. I showed the picture, which now hangs in the small library dining room of the Supper Klub (in a place of great honour), to Auntie Moira and she immediately exclaimed that that was the “first wife”, whom the husband kicked out to be replaced by the “second wife”, who saw to it that the first wife was relegated to the floor of the attic for a century never to see the light of day. Well she is getting the last laugh I guess?

Anyway, I took Louis over to see Auntie Moira in the old folks home and he was instructed to bring along with him a good....no an excellent bottle of Brandewyn. Which he did. We did introductions and Moira was in great form. Louis wanted to interview people anywhere in the Karoo who were “old” and who could recall the past. She did very vividly.

The following is a lovely little post interview write up from Louis which he filed away and just plain forgot to send to me...what a splendid recollection.

An afternoon with Moira

In a lifetime we meet many people along the way, but only some of them leave us with lasting impressions.

On my last visit to Richmond for attending Boekbedonnerd, in October 2020, I have asked my friend Peter Baker, owner of Supper Club and co-organiser of Boekbedonnerd, if he perhaps knew an elderly man or woman in Richmond I could visit for stories about the town, how it was then, and compared to today. Peter took me to the Old Age Home in Richmond and introduced me to Moira van den Heever, who was 94 years at the time. We visited her in her room and after I was introduced and explained the reason for my request she there and then accepted an invitation to meet with me the following day. I told Moira I was doing research for another photo book on the Karoo, and that I was interested in the stories of people who were born and bred in the Karoo.

On my arrival the next day at 16:00, the time of our appointment, Moira was waiting for me in her wheelchair, on the stoep of the Home. Her hair was nicely done, she wore makeup and jewelry, and she was smartly dressed. Her deep blue eyes were alert and full of life. I greeted her with a bump of the elbow (as it was during Covid restrictions) and took a seat on a bench next to her wheelchair and we began to talk about the good old days, and how different things were today.

Moira began by telling me that her maiden name was Du Toit and that she was born in Richmond on 26th June 1927. She grew up on the family farm Kouwenburg together with her two younger brothers Boetie and John. When it was time to go to school Moira stayed with her Aunt Cressy in a house opposite the Church, the one that later on became the Supper Club. Moira and her two brothers were a sporty trio and played tennis and cricket. After school Moira trained at the Wellington Nursing College and went to work in Uppington. That is where she met her husband Charl van den Heever, during a dance at the Show. Charl began to farm on Oufontein, about 10 miles outside of Richmond. He made name for himself as a breeder and trainer of American Saddle Horses. He became the President of the American Saddle Horse Breeders Association and judged horses on many, many shows. Moira spent some of her honeymoon on a pavilion in Bloemfontein during such a show when Charl had to judge. Moira was instrumental in the founding of the Museum in Richmond, the only horse museum in South Africa and one of only two in the world. This museum is privately run and completely self-sufficient from any municipal grants or funding, and is a must visit when going through Richmond or staying over. Moira was always a beautiful woman and won the title of Queen of the Show during a dance at such an occasion. Moira and Charl had two children, a daughter Erna and a son Anton.

Moira and Charl developed Oufontein into an oasis in the Karoo. The garden was so beautiful that many a function and wedding were held there. The shearing-shed was changed into a wedding venue during the winter months. Moira shared fond memories of their time living on the farm. They had many friends. Charl couldn't read music but liked to entertain their friends with his talent and unique style when playing the piano. The two of them played tennis and Moira also played golf in later years, when the golf course still had oil putting surfaces "greens". Moira's sporting

genes carried through to her two grand-daughters Michelle and Moira, with Michelle playing tennis for the Western Province. Moira was a very creative person, she made mohair jerseys, tapestries and wool carpets, she enjoyed decorating their home and loved preparing special meals. Her personal recipe book was precious, and unfortunately got lost. Moira was an active reader and had an excellent general knowledge about everything. She was a reformer and an anchor in her community. A woman of character, someone getting straight to the point.

Moira said she was longing back to the days when the roads in Richmond were not tarred, and when the farmers and their families came to town on weekends for playing tennis, golf and to socialize. And on Sundays they went to church. Moira and Charl moved into town again when their son Anton took over the farming at Oufontein. She was 78 at the time. After Charl passed away Moira went to live near her daughter Erna and two grand-daughters in the Serenitas Retirement Village in the Strand for a few years, but returned to Richmond as it was the place where she had the most memories and where she wanted to spend her golden years. She said she was beginning to feel lonely, as she outlived all her friends. She also lost her son 7 years ago.

Moira told me that Richmond is not the same anymore. In the last twenty-five years the standard of the schools dropped, and municipal services deteriorated. These unfortunate changes caused many farmers to send their children away to larger schools in bigger towns or cities. The result of it is that farmers nowadays go away on weekends to visit their children and then spend their money elsewhere, all contributing towards a continuous downward spiral.

Every now and then some humor came through Moira's story telling. She told me that Charl, after falling ill, enquired from Spyker, a farm worker, about the healing effects of the daggabossie. Spyker took a long look at Charl and said that once one gets to his age one shall not get healed again.

Another story of hers was that her husband Charl didn't like committees at all. He said that if Moses had a committee the Israelis would still have been lost in the desert.

I was enriched by my visit to Moira, and I was very sad when Peter phoned me with the news that she passed away on 11th May 2021, at the age of 94.

We lost a Grande Dame!

Authored by Louis Botha (with input from Erna, Moira's only daughter)

June 2021



Auntie Moira...Grande Dame of Richemont

Darryl and Angie have been hard at work putting together a fantastic Multi-Coloured Dream Coat list of speakers, which can be found on the following link:

<https://booktownrichmond.co.za/authors-2026/>

A preliminary BookBedonnerd programme should be out by the end of the month.

As you can see, we are in for a humdinger BookBedonnerd Blowout weekend in the Karoo. As local elections are scheduled for a few days after the dust has blown everyone home from Richmond, we shall have a few current affairs commentaries on just where we are going as a country, and whether it is really where we want to be going.

For all the wonderful things we all see happening every day, the fantastic people and accomplishments which we are ALL so proud of....weren't we all just popping with pride when our Bafana² soccer boys had us all in the air with happiness and glee? Next WC we will be even better because we can.

And the Bokke? If there was a unifying Nation Builder (anyone recall the founder of this phrase??? Aggrey Klaaste. Editor of the Sowetan in the ou dar. South Africa would be a far better and greater place if he was still alive and pounding away furiously on his dirty old type writer all two fingers going like the speed of a sewing machine) more in tune with the life blood of South Africa than these boys and their BOK LEADER? And Rassie says some of the injured doubtfuls are now playing fit. Wow. But never underestimate those bloody All Blacks. Just look at the audience and it is a mirror image of South African society. If this team of players can unify a nation, why is there not someone in the main stream who can do the same? Aggrey Klaaste might have been the man were he still alive. If you see the sheer love and adoration these Springbok boys have for each other, a genuine love and affection and pulling together we can do the same thing for this country of ours.

But then we have these bloody corrupt and rotten politicians (we all know them very well) screwing us over at every opportunity at every level.



It really is time to have a grand shake up at election time! Nuff said.

We have just doneor are in the process of completing a road trip from Johannesburg up through the Kruger and into Zimbabwe and a fantastic camping expedition in Gonarezhou



Hayden Baker



Hayden Baker

and then back through Joey the Free State, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and now in the Western Cape.

What a trip and thrill to see so much of our spectacular country; the bush the mountains and rivers, the birds and game and the people. Our coast line is nothing short of awesome.

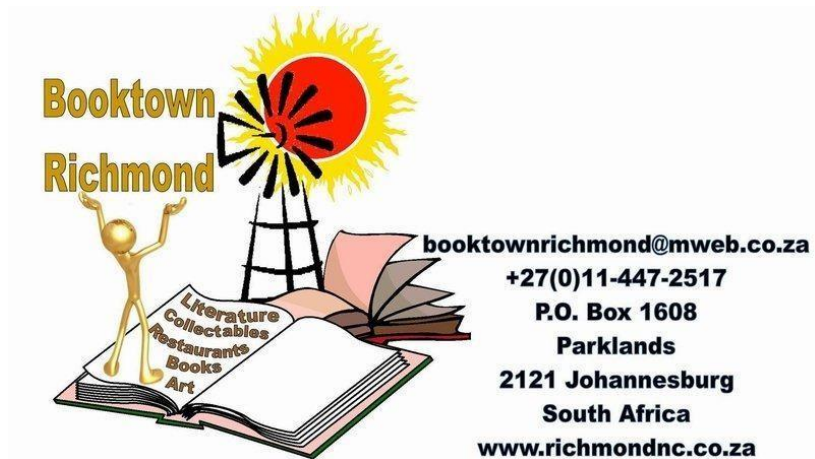
On a more practical front it also demonstrated very clearly just how this country and the one to our north have fallen into complete rack and ruin. Except for the Western Cape which is clean, functional, and maintained. We drove by the massive slum which is Mitchell's Plain. But it is a slum which is FAR less of a shit hole than the endless spreading shanty towns spreading everywhere in the country, none with water, sewerage (both of which flow on the streets and not in pipes underground...new ANC advanced techno I guess) or any services. Nothing. Downtown Johannesburg and even it once lush Northern Suburbs have fallen into a black hole of decay and rot. Broken power lines, clean drinking water running down every road on one side and raw sewerage on the other. Helen Zilla paddled a canoe down them! The ANC and its sycophants are holding it onto power just for the sake of power, drinking champagne and eating canapés singing f**k the poor ...and the rich...we are here forever.

Inshallah these miscreants can be permanently removed never to be seen again.

It is so lovely to be in the fairest Cape again where things work are clean and my car is not pounded by road craters (potholes are the small things which only a bicycle or scooter has a problem with). There are road police very evident during heavy traffic, taxis tend to be more roadworthy and there is light!

I see there is a Cape Independent Party. Bad for SA, because if the Cape does free itself from the African Continent then the rest of us to the Limpopo are well and truly screwed. We are a country and a bloody great one...lets just make it that way.

Below please an almost final draft one of probably a couple more to follow in the next weeks and months. The Normal. People forget, rush weddings, funerals happen, and bypasses take place. So, it may shift a bit.... but you get the idea.



Don't Frack with Our Karoo™

Booktown Richmond's 20th Anniversary

BookBedonnerd XIX

October 29, 30, 31 2026

A Richmond Community Development Foundation Project

PROGRAMME 2026

THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER

09:00 **Hannah Kent,**
Always Home, Always Homesick & Burial Rites

09:30 **Jann Bader,**
My Pictures in Life : A Photographic Autobiography

10:00 **Ian Smit,**
Grenslose vers

Robert Caldwell,
More Notes to a Favourite Aunt From a Very Small Island

10:30 **Anthony Ackerman**
Maverick Writers

11:00 *HIGH TEA AT DIE SUPPER KLUB...*

11:30. **Leslie Osler,**
The Story of the Hantam Community Education Trust.

11:50 **Cate Otto,**
On Ghostwriting and Paper Sculptures

12:10 **Stephen Symons,**
Starlorn

12:30 **Melanie Moolman**
Amper Daar - Die Nico Moolman gedenklesing

13:00 *LUNCH*

14:30 **Naomi Morgan,**
Die ander dogter / vertaling van Annie Ernaux & Waiting for Godot -die veelbekroonde vertaling.

15:00 **Fanie Olivier,**
Die mooiste Afrikaanse gedigte van die laaste eeu

15:30 **Becky Cerling,**
Forbidden Orphanage Outside the Forbidden City

16:00 **Nicole Engelbrecht,**
Bare Bones - Cold Cases.

16:30 *WINE TASTING @ BTR HQ*

16:45 **Paul Weinberg,**
Cine documentary

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FRIDAY 30 OCTOBER

09:00 **Zbyszek Mischczak,**
Anchors Down in Africa.

09:20 **Dietloff van der Berg,**
Apofatiese Lens

09:40 **Darryl Earl David,**
Scribbler

10:00 **Angie Butler,**
The Shadow of Elsewhere - A story of friendship and the long road home

10:30 **Rob Hersov,**
Speaking Truth to the Powerful

11:00 *HIGH TEA AT DIE SUPPER KLUB...*

11:30 **Nicholas Boggs,**
Baldwin- A Love Story

12:00 **Tom Dreyer,**
Brief op veertig-duisend voet

12:30 **Etienne van Heerden,**
Diereriem

13:00 **LUNCH**

14:30 **Deon Meyer,**
Scorpio

15:00 **Gail Gilbride**
An Unsuitable Girl

15:20 **Antony Osler,**
Zen- philosopher of the Karoo

15:40 **Tracy Going,**
The Power of Writing and Storytelling

16:00 **Suzette Mayr,**
The Sleeping Car Porter

16:30 **WINE TASTING @ BTR HQ**

16:45 **Roger Lucey,**
How to build a home in the mountains

SATURDAY 31 OCTOBER

09:00 **Chris Marais & Julienne du Toit,**
Klein Karoo Magic

09:20 **Neeltjie Swanepoel,**
Outotanatografiese lewenskrywing in Antjie Krog se Plunder

9:40 **Shamila Ramsookbhai,**
Eat, Pray, Die

10:00 **Sheryl & Sandy James,**
Unbridling

10:30 **Caity Venniker,**
Unleashed

11:00 – **HIGH TEA AT DIE SUPPER KLUB...**

11:30 **Clinton du Plessis,**
Toonsettings van sy mooiste gedigte

11:50 **Louis Botha,**
Karoo

12:10 **Lahoucine Aammari,**
British Travel Writers in Morocco..

12:30 **Kathy du Toit,**
19th Century Richmond: An Epistolary Approach
Ashwin Desai,
Belonging

13:15 **LUNCH**

- 14:30 **Jonathan Slaght,**
Tigers Between Empires - The Journey to Save the Siberian Tiger
- 15:00 **Manni Coe,**
Little Ruins
- 15:30 **Jake Hoddinott,**
Migrations Beneath a Baobab
- 16:00 **Brahim Benmbark,**
Desert Imaginations
- 16:20 **Hennie Greeff,**
Gatkruiper / Tunnel Rat
- 16:40 **Tim Cohen,**
Leon Louw - A Legacy of Solutions
- 17:00 **CLOSING / AND THANK YOU EVERONE**

ITS PARTY TIME IN BOOKTOWN RICHMOND

