

Village Life

JOURNAL OF THE CAPE OVERBERG

NO 7 ■ AUG/SEPT 2004 ■ R6,00 INCL VAT

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Tesselaar's tangled tale



Mr Clemens Reynolds (84), a descendant of Jan Frederik Bredenkamp, one of the "servant" heirs of Johannes Jacobus Tesselaar. Photo: Maré Mouton

Johannes Jacobus Tesselaar, the son of a lowly cook's mate, became the first land baron in the Overberg after Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel. And, although he officially died childless, he probably fathered both a "White" and a "Coloured" family line. He left a progeny and legacy which to this day are being untangled in court and by various researchers.

BY ANNALIZE MOUTON

Teslaarsdal, nestled against the northern slopes of the Klein River Mountains, hardly looks like the setting for so much intrigue, but a mystery writer may feel as much at home here as filmmaker Fellini. There is no actual village, simply houses and small farms strung out amongst pastures and trees. Many of the inhabitants are related, whatever the colour of their skin.

Its name was changed from Hartebeesrivier to Teslaarsdal by the post office to rule out confusion between this and another Hartebeesrivier. In the early 1900's it got two churches and a primary school. Except for goods brought by itinerant traders, everything else had to be brought from Caledon by horse cart or wagon. Nowadays, there are two small shops.

The story of Teslaarsdal started in 1832 when the farm Hartebeesrivier and movables were left by Aaltje van der Heyde, the widow of Tesselaar, to nine servants and their descendants. Amongst them were Barend and Jan Frederik Bredenkamp, twins, whose parents, according to the baptismal certificate, were Jan Frederik Bredenkamp and Maria (Heysenberg), "bastard unbaptized Hottentottin", the daughter of Antonie Heysenberg and Helena of the Cape. The other beneficiaries were Joggom Koert, Gert and Jan Gertse and the Heysenbergs, Alida, Christina, Elizabeth and Aletta. To this day, the offspring of these people maintain that they

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The whales have arrived along the Overberg coastline, to mate, calf and delight locals and visitors. Even for experienced whale watchers, seeing them close up remains an awe-inspiring experience. But there are other amazing creatures in our seas – read about two of them on page 11.

New status for fynbos region

Parts of the Cape Floral Region – the "hottest biodiversity hot spot on Earth" – have been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Three areas in the Overberg are included in this listing. We take a look at the floral riches surrounding us, and what the new status means – pages 6 & 7.

Read about a man who has gone to great lengths to research and document the history of his farm and surrounding area outside Riviersonderend – page 3.

The last of Gansbaai's own brand of fishing boat has been taken off the water. Read about the history of the "Gansbaai canoe" – page 4.

Elim celebrated its 180th anniversary, and also re-dedicated its monument to the emancipation of slaves – page 5.

■ Our website has proved to be extremely popular – in June 5 700 visits were logged – and the numbers are rising all the time. Very few of these hits were referrals by search engines. The site contains our archive and background information, as well as some material not published in print. www.villagelife.co.za



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ISSN 1810-5580 No 7

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