

Village Life

JOURNAL OF THE CAPE OVERBERG

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Join Lady Anne for a fish braai

It was simple, but delicious. Lady Anne Barnard was served dinner of fish soup and fish grilled on an open fire at the mouth of the Breede River in 1798. We have recreated that meal, and share the recipes, the first in a series on *The Overberg Table* – page 11.

In response to many requests from readers, we shall be offering photography workshops, starting soon – page 2.

Not only horses, sheep, cattle and fynbos flourish in the Overberg. The region is also set to become the Next Big Thing in South African wine – page 3.

Who lived at Rateljivier after the violent death of Jacoba Alida van Breda? We continue our history of the historic Strandveld farm – pages 4 & 5.

The Black Oystercatcher is threatened with extinction. People can help it to survive by simply keeping their dogs on a leash on the beach – page 6.

There may be an alien in your garden; one with a long, sticky tongue that can change its colour. A DNA researcher introduces us to the dwarf chameleons of the Western Cape – page 7.

Our first article on the early Khoikhoi inhabitants of the Overberg chronicles the first encounters between them and Dutch travellers – page 8.

We discover the claw marks of a leopard on the trunk of a Black Stinkwood tree – not in the Outeniqua, but outside Gansbaai – thanks to an initiative of the Agulhas Plain Tourism Forum – page 10.

■ Activity on our website keeps on growing. It contains over 40 pages of background information, unpublished material, summaries of our archives and useful links, with more to be added. Visit www.villagelife.co.za

■ Our print order has grown from 1 200 copies a year ago, to 5 000. Many people buy back copies, and we are now offering the first nine issues (100 pages) in a bound volume – page 9.



Nauprins Pan's Promenade, resident stallion at Prinskraal, listens carefully to what Julien Lekay has to say. She has been working with him for only a year, and is the only person who now handles him. Photo: Annalize Mouton

The Overberg is in their bones

The Overberg is one of the premier areas for raising horses. It also produces the finest wool quality; merino sheep from here are of the best in the country. Milk production is also very good with butterfat content being extremely high. What makes this particular area so very good? Horse breeder MARION NAUDÉ of Prinskraal explains.

There is a balance of calcium, phosphates and other minerals present in the soil, which is unique when combined with the temperate climate and wide open spaces. This was recognised many years ago at the time the first settlers started to make a bit of money and horses could be looked at as sporting animals and not just as working animals. Most of the old farms in the Bredasdorp district have stables which were designed and fashioned out of ships' timbers from the many wrecks along the coast. These stables were used to house some very

impressive horses and Bredasdorp boasted its own race course during the 1800s. This was later eclipsed by the big courses in Cape Town but at least two winners of the Metropolitan Handicap in Kenilworth were bred in this area.

Why then did the racing industry move to the Breede River Valley, where it still remains? Probably because the local brackish water was seen to be of low quality. What a mistake that was!

How on earth did the local farmers manage to breed such good working horses and

mules with strong bones and feet on "inferior" water? The answer is that they did. Those breeders who remained, after World War II turned to the small but lucrative sport horse market. There are numerous saddle horse studs in the area; even more Welsh pony studs, a few Arab studs and at least three warmblood studs that were started in the last few years. The water, which was deemed to be unfit, has turned out to be one of our biggest assets.

As a child, my father, who grew up with horses, regaled us with tales of his illegal racing across Fish Hoek beach on the long ride to Smitswinkel Bay for fishing expeditions and of missions as a four-year-old, sent off to buy 10 lbs of sugar, bareback, on a 17 hand high carriage horse with withers like a razor

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