



GRASSHOPPER COUNTRY

The Great Brak River Museum News Letter

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Great Brak River

March 2007

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Compiled by Ina Stoffberg

Editor Rene' de Kock

Dear Friends

In the middle of the nineteenth century when buffalo, leopard, elephants and many variety of buck abounded, it was very difficult to cross over the Great Brak River. In 1843 it was decided to build a tolled causeway over the river. Richard Searle and his family were sent from Cape Town to supervise the building of the bridge. The GBR museum contains memorabilia of the many families that helped build Great Brak River. A small display of Khoi culture is also on display. Arrange to see the 1924 Hydro Electric Power Station, which is back in operation and which provided electricity to the saw mill and shoe factory. Our resident government engineer is available for guided tours on request.

This month we have several very interesting bits of news and some of the items in the pipe line will have to wait until next month.

I am sure you are not aware that the Great Brak River Train Station will be 100 years old in September. In the good old days the station garden often would take first prize for its wonderful display of plants and flowers. As a child I can remember walking on the many paths through the gardens. During the Royal visit in 1947, the Royal family stayed on the train at the station.

The George to Knysna railway is still out of action but the Outeniqua Choo Tjoe is going to operate from month end from the Transnet Heritage Museum George, to the Diaz Museum, Mossel Bay. I hope they will stop at Great Brak River station.

To celebrate the hundred year anniversary, the "Trans Karoo" restaurant will be holding a heritage day function around the 23rd 24th September.

Chris Spies one of our great local artists has very kindly offered one of two of his latest paintings to be auctioned for funds for the museum. Chris's popularity has grown to the extent that not one of his previous paintings has remained unsold. Whilst we can show you a copy of the paintings, details of the auction will be available next month.

The museum will be starting a permanent display of paintings by local Great Brak River artists. Should you have a painting, past or present, by one of our local painters available for permanent display, would you please contact the museum.

Child Welfare will shortly be making good use of the Amy Searle hall behind the museum when they enlarge the preschool children's crèche.

Some more good news is that a substantial grant has been received from the Department of Arts and Culture from the 'Investing in Culture Programme' to establish the [Great Brak River Crafts Workshop](#).

The project objectives are:

- 1) to bring onboard the local indigenous people
- 2) to build a culture of togetherness
- 3) To create employment
- 4) To build a local craft culture and industry
- 5) To enhance tourism to Great Brak River

Initially craft classes will be organized to test and determine the skill of our local young unemployed indigenous crafters. These special crafts classes will start soon and could lead to possible future employment. There are still several issues to be resolved.

HAVE YOU VISITED
ANY OF OUR LOCAL
RESTAURANTS?

Trans Karoo

1 Morrison Road,
Great Brak River.
Variety restaurant.
[Phone 044-620-4163](tel:044-620-4163)

Stonehill

in Little Brak River for
exceptional dining.
[Phone 044-696-6501](tel:044-696-6501)

Whispering Waves

in Beach Boulevard.
Dias Beach
Small & intimate.
[Phone 044-692-8600](tel:044-692-8600)

De Katte

De Dekke extension, off
the R 102,
Great Brak River.
Coffee Shop and light
meals.
[Phone 044-620-2230](tel:044-620-2230)

Pepper Tree

Long Street,
Great Brak River.
Coffee Shop and light
meals.
[Phone 044-620-3081](tel:044-620-3081)

Odditea Garden

Old George Road,
Little Brak River.
Tea Garden and light meals.
[Phone 082-829-8587](tel:082-829-8587)

Grootbrak in die Nuus

'n Filmspan van die SABC TV 2 program PASELLA wat op Sondagmiddag 4.30 uitgesaai word, was vroeg in Februarie hier in Grootbrak om opnames te maak vir uitsending op die program 18 Maart.

Ons sê baie dankie aan alle inwoners wat bydraes gemaak het tot die filmspan se suksesvolle verblyf hier by ons en onthou om te kyk op 18 Maart.

We were disappointed with Pasella's rendering of the Point Houses at Mossel Bay. They missed a great opportunity. Great Brak River is due to be shown on Sunday 18th March on TV2 at 4.30 p.m.

THIS MONTH'S EVENTS

International Quilt Day Exhibition 17th March from 9.00 a.m. to 17.00 p.m. at De Oude Pastorie Guest House, Voortrekker Street, Swellendam. Contact Lois on 023-614-3155.

Hope's Hands on Crafts Workshop will this month be held on Tuesday 20th February at 9.30 a.m. in the museum. The class will be doing "a Silk Ribbon Embroidery picture"
Contact Hope at 044-620-5124 or 083-378-1232.

Future Events

The **18th of May** is International Museum day. Remember our very successful show two years ago; this year's biannual craft exhibition will be at the museum from **15th to 19th May 2007**. We are looking for local arts and crafts. Contact Hope at 044-620-5124. The museum tea garden will be open and the session will start off on the Tuesday with the normal "Hands on Workshop".

Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd June is **keencrafts** with Craftwise at the CSIR Pretoria. This is a must visit fun outing with low cost workshops if you are interested in crafts. More details available on www.keenoncrafts.co.za

Ighali 2007 will be held on the 29th August to 2nd September in George. Go to www.ighali.co.za for more details.

2009 is om die draai

Grootbrak is in 2009 150 jaar oud. [Charles in Pamela Searle en hul kinders het in 1859 in Grootbrak aangeland en die tolhuis bewoon vir die eerste paar jaar.]

Ons beplan 'n groot herdenkingsfees en wil graag u idees hoor. Ons verwelkom u voorstelle en deelname.

Kontakpersoon: Ina 044 620- 3338

Exciting News



Two of Chris Spies's paintings will go on auction in the near future in a bid to raise funds for the Great Brak River museum. The monies resulting from the highest bid on one of the two paintings will be donated to the Great Brak River museum funds. Chris is one of Great Brak River's leading artists and his studio is open every day for a quiet visit and a cup of tea. Do visit and help a good cause. Full details to follow.

CHRIS SPIES ART
2 MOSSIENST
GREAT BRAK RIVER
6525
SOUTH AFRICA
(044) 620 3346 W
(044) 620 3710 A/H
E-mail: chrisspiesart@hotmail.com

CHRIS SPIES

SA Tourism Snippets

- The most widely accepted definition of a tourist (utilised by the World Tourism Organisation and all its members) is someone who travels away from home for more than one day and less than one year.
www.thedti.gov.co.za

- Durban City expects to draw R100 million annually from the three year contract to host the A1 Grand Prix.

Business report 24.01.06

- Die beplanning van 'n Kabelkar na die Cradockpiek, hoogste in die Outeniquaberge, is al reeds ver gevorder. Dit is die breinkind van 'n inwoner van *Grootbrak*, *Mnr Claude Pretorius*, wat gesout is in die beplanning van kabelspore en reeds dié by Hartebeespoortdam en Pretoria dieretuin op sy kerfstok het.



THE ORIGINAL GREAT BRAK RIVER TOLL HOUSE AT THE CHARLES STREET BRIDGE BEFORE DEMOLITION. SEARLE MEMORIAL CHURCH IS IN THE BACKGROUND. A WATER COLOR BY W. MCPHERSON. (GBR MUSEUM)

Funnies for March

- Happiness is not so much in having as sharing. We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.
Norman MacEwan
- Do everything in life once and the fun things twice.
Anonymous
- Let your mind be as the horizon, forever expanding and rising.
Anonymous



DRIVING OVER THE CAUSEWAY WITH THE GREAT BRAK RIVER IN FLOOD.

THE CURATOR'S CORNER

Further details are available at the museum.

THE GREAT BRAK RIVER SCHOOL HOUSE



In February 2007 the "Old School House", which now houses the Museum and Information Office, was 105 years old.

During an official visit in September 1855, Dr Robert Gray, the first Anglican bishop of Cape Town and a great champion of education, had the following to say about the settlement at Great Brak River, lying between Mossel Bay and George: "There is something like a small village growing up here . . . it is a good situation for a school."

Great Brak River 1902. "Old School House in Left Hand Corner"

Soon after this the government voted £30 for the establishing of a school for coloured children, but formal education only began in 1862, in the old tollhouse next to the river. However, this school, was closed at the end of March 1863.

In 1902 the Searle's company built a new primary school on the Mossel Bay side of the river, at the foot of Prospect Hill, on land originally portion of the farm "WOLWEDANS". Sixty-four children moved into the new building and still having insufficient space, the grade school children were accommodated in the Searle Memorial Church Hall.

The building is constructed using mainly local materials typical of that time; un-baked clay bricks bonded together with a mud mortar paste and plastered with a lime based sealing mortar. The roof is corrugated iron sheeting imported from England and supported with a wooden structure and planked ceiling. The corrugated iron sheeting has subsequently been replaced but the roofing timbers are still sound and have stood the test of time.



The building was soon too small and an extension wing had to be added as early as 1914 as there were now nearly 120 pupils. Subsequently several modifications have been made to the exterior including removing the wooden decorative work and the front windows have been replaced. Several inside walls have also been removed probably at a much later date as all classrooms were small and a door was cut into the east wall for access to the Welfare office now part of the museum. The small storeroom now used by the Museum was once the headmaster's office.

First Day at the "Old School House" 1902.....

On 19 February 1930 a new, larger school building was opened following which the house was subdivided and was hired out to several families working for the Searle's shoe factory. At one time it may have belonged to a Mr Gert Claassen, an uncle of Elrona Strydom (Nee Boshoff) of the Strand. Alfred Boshoff, Elrona's father was also a pupil at the school. Shirley du Plessis (Nee Gericke) who hails from Cape Town parents also lived in the house.

In September 1993 the Great Brak River council decided to purchase the "old school building" to house the museum as the previous buildings in use (Penrose House) had become very damp. Mrs Vossie Nunes who was the curatrix of the Museum and who was also instrumental in the acquisition of the building, then spent a very hard year moving the contents to the "school house". In October 1994, the museum reopened to the public. Vossie Nunes after serving the museum and the community for more than a decade, retired for the second time in September 1999. Vossie still lives in Great Brak River.

The Great Brak River to Glentana Accommodation Portfolio

gbrtourism@intekom.co.za

We have many more accommodation providers; e-mail or telephone the Great Brak River Information office at the above address or click on one of the following email addresses:-

ESTABLISHMENT	ACCOMMODATION TYPE	E-MAIL ADDRESS	AREA
AMBIENCE	4 Star Guest House	jcsteyn@mweb.co.za	Outeniqua Strand
AT GOLFERS BAY	Guest House	stay@golfersbay.co.za	Tergniet
BOTLIERSKOP	4 Star Game Farm	botlierskop@mweb.co.za	Little Brak River
CALLASEKAIA	Self Catering	pogi@mweb.co.za	Great Brak River
CARPE DIEM	Accom. Seeker	paulag@mweb.co.za	Great Brak River
CORRIEVALE	Self Catering	corrievale@mweb.co.za	Great Brak River
EVERGREEN	Self Catering	evergreeng@telkomsa.co.za	Great Brak River
KIA-ORA	Guest House	kiaora@kia-ora.co.za	The Heights, GBR



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