



Under the Baobab

Editor: Michel Zwaan

From the banks of the Olifants

Bush greetings from Grietjie.

Unfortunately there has not been any rain since the last edition and although the bush is still lush, the shades of yellow and brown are returning.

Our Warden Mr Gerrie van Zyl is unfortunately still away in Pretoria receiving treatment and we wish him a speedy recovery and hope that he will be back on Grietjie soon. Thanks again to Mr Koos Nel for standing in for Gerrie.

Temporary Gate: The notice period required for the deregistration of the road has now lapsed. The attorneys have confirmed that RAL (Road Agency Limpopo) has received one objection to the proposed deregistration. Under normal circumstances the Board of RAL would give us the opportunity to respond and present our case (solid due to impending Protected Area declaration) against the objection. However, at present there is no RAL Board! None of the former constituted Board members remain.

We have been informed that there is a "shortlist" of people that will be nominated to the Board, but they cannot give us a timeframe for these appointments to be completed! Besides continually enquiring as to the progress of this appointment process, there is little else we can do except wait it out. Once the new Board is appointed we will then get our opportunity to present our case. In short, the Limpopo government is in a mess.

With Gerrie being away we have had volunteers step in to complete the water tank stand and the other items required to make the temporary gate functional. The attorneys will advise us on when exactly we can start using the temporary gate, as they are getting written approval the one person left at RAL handling all these issues until the board is appointed. They do however feel that this will be soon, as the temporary gate has nothing to do with the deregistration and with the servitude agreement in place, we should be able to continue as planned.

The sub-committee for the new gate will still proceed with the plans for the new gate and the first meeting will be on the 15 March.

Protected Area (PA): The consultants handling the PA application for Balule, have send a written response to LEDET with the regard to the objection they received from CARE for the Grietjie properties. Their response highlighted the applicable sections of the Protected Area act that apply to their objection. They will also attend a meeting with LEDET on the 12th of March where this will be explained. LEDET will then have to decide on whether the objection has a base or not. If not (which is the expectation) the process can continue. However there will be continued delays until this process is completed.

Unfortunately, as things go with LEDET, they have now put the ENTIRE Balule application on hold because of CARE and not only the Grietjie properties. This has infuriated the other regions that have nothing to do with Grietjie. These regions will go the legal route if LEDET do not comply with the regulated process, as there is no reason to put the rest of the Balule properties on hold, but in the meantime it has created a royal mess which we and our partners are dealing with.

Security: The Gate system is progressing well. You will shortly start receiving various mails from the system. Besides the gathering of certain required information, your responses will be used to customise the kind of reports you would like to receive from the system on a monthly basis. Contractors will also be required to register on the system together with all of the staff they intend to bring into the reserve. I would like to extend a big thank you to Mr Andrew Sutcliffe for driving this entire process.

Staff Pension Fund: There has been a nice uptake in the numbers on the staff pension fund lately, and more people are expressing as interest in putting their staff on the fund. This will help the members of the fund greatly as the numbers increase.

I sincerely hope to have better news on all these issues in next month's edition. Just know that I am doing what I can to get them resolved as speedily as possible so we can resume the journey we embarked on over a year and half ago.

Until next time,

From the banks of the Olifants.



Phobias and The Bush - who says they don't go together? (Part I)

Anyone who has ever known me will know of my phobia of spiders, my nervousness of small insects and basically any insect type creature with more than 2 legs, yes, that means most crawlers. You can therefore imagine the utter shock within my family and friend circle when I announced, back in 2003, that I was embarking on a Voluntary Overseas Services (VSO) assignment for 2 years in Africa! This is where one literally puts a complete hold on their day-to-day life and existence to embark on a volunteer programme, earning a stipend (a small living allowance), and sharing whatever your area of professional expertise is. In my case, I was selected for my Business and Management skills in order to make strategic, operational and capacity building programmes with Public and Private Sector, to develop community interventions and deliver sustainable positive impact within South Africa.

As part of my preparation, I decided to do something about my fear, so, I attended a series of discussion groups conducted at Bristol Zoo Arachnophobia Course, where experts at the Zoo help people with extreme arachnophobia to overcome their fear of spiders through a combination of discussion, relaxation, hypnotherapy and education (learning about spiders). I can bear witness to the fact that I went from a hysterical screaming banshee, to a very relaxed, and comfortable 'with spiders' person. At the end of the course, I was one of the many participants on the course who were eagerly waiting to hold, yes, you heard me 'eagerly awaiting' and 'to hold', a Tarantula. It is a memory I still hold today. My first surprise, aside from having one in my hand, was how furry and soft it was, in fact, it was beautiful. They are fascinating creatures and I remember the education process of the course replacing my absolute and irrational fear, with complete respect for the intriguing and complex biology of the arachnid. My journey to and from that course, which was conducted over a few sessions, involved me travelling some 3 hours and a stay with relatives, as I lived a way away. Believe me, it was worth every mile journeyed.

For me, it was an essential part of my preparation to move over to Africa for a period of time. My daily existence prior to that was having to live within a quick telephone dash of someone who would be able to simply drop everything just to respond to a regular hysterical phone call from a gibbering me as I screamed down the phone that I was about to be dragged out of the house, by my ankles, from the biggest, blackest, 8-legged beast I had ever seen my entire life, *and*, it was wearing Doc Martens! Yes, my preparation for my 'African' experience was life-saving. Most of my anticipation was in fear of the creepy, crawly things. Actually, it completely overwhelmed my thoughts of the mental preparation of some of the real issues. Fortunately, the VSO organisation provided a very comprehensive training and preparation process over a period of months to ensure everyone is physically and mentally prepared for the environment they were about to enter and the complex, diverse and challenging issues of working, living and coping in regions of dire poverty, deprivation, exploitation and in some cases civil unrest.

Preparation complete, I can honestly say, nothing and I mean absolutely nothing prepared me for all the other aspects of my experience. My destination remained undisclosed until the final weeks of my pending exit. My assignment was to work in the field of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. This was my dream assignment, I considered myself so completely blessed to be given such an opportunity. This is because as a Black person born in the UK in the 1960's and cutting my professional 'teeth' in the UK in the Insurance & Finance Industry and later in the field of Media, Publishing and Senior Executive Management; I had a keen interest in cultural and race related issues facing the diaspora of Black people throughout the world, from slavery to modern days. I had clear memories of the apartheid era of South Africa from all the media coverage we received in the UK and the extent of pure propaganda of both sides of the issues. Anyway, that is a completely different story for another time. Additionally, my relief was that they were not sending me to a 'rain forest' area as my imagination kept drifting off to that scene from Casablanca where Humphrey Bogart was hauling the 'African Queen' through leech dense waters in tropical heat, and he was covered in leeches!

(to be continued in Part II - Maxine Smith #10 Grietjie)



Wayne's world



Property caretaker Grietjie; @ Ease and Secured

Packages;

Safety; Property check.
 Easy start
 Easy start and more
 Solid closed
 House cleaning
 Staff transport.

Info;

@ Ease and Secure; Property caretaker Grietjie.

Jan Caspers,
 Grietjie security and **A.P.U.**
 Tel; 071- 63 64 323.
 E-mail; johanniscaspers@gmail.com

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 other Petrol and
 Diesel Vehicles on
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 0836961805**



**Since being a resident
 on Grietjie, I realized
 how difficult it can be
 when your vehicle
 breaks down and
 Repairs are needed. I
 would like to offer my
 mechanical skills and
 experience to assist
 residents of Grietjie if
 help is needed.**



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