



EDITOR'S LETTER — OCTOBER 2026 EDITION

October Editors Letter

By Miki



Ola Hogsback!

October doesn't arrive quietly in Hogsback. Chainsaws, Open Gardens, new businesses, visitors, workshops, hikes and enough activity to make one wonder whether the mountain has had too much coffee.

There's been plenty to celebrate, plenty to question and, as always, a few things we'd perhaps rather not look at. Some interesting history, some new beginnings, some old institutions closing their doors, and a reminder that sometimes the people making the biggest difference aren't the ones making the most noise.

Our local connectivity, for instance, didn't fix itself. Eighteen years of Ratepayers Union history didn't happen by accident. And community responsibility doesn't begin and end with having an opinion on a WhatsApp group.

We've welcomed, questioned, created, contributed, complained and occasionally looked very hard at the birds...Such is village life.

October has reminded me that there's a difference between being busy and actually getting things done. Between talking about community and being part of one. And between enjoying the privilege of living somewhere beautiful and taking responsibility for what happens here.

So, enjoy the actual start of spring, support the good stuff, question the questionable and, please, don't mistake silence for nothing happening. There's always more going on beneath the surface.

Until next month.

Love Ya

Miki

← [Closing Time](#)

By Community. For Community. On Community.

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Happening Hogsback

Hogsback Open Gardens a Blooming Success!



The past two weekends have been a tremendous success, with wonderful feedback from visitors who thoroughly enjoyed our spectacular gardens. Thankfully, the weather also played its part in making the event so special.

The first weekend proved to be a little busier than the second, and it was lovely to see how the various activities and creative offerings throughout the gardens added to the overall experience. The enthusiasm, talent and generosity of everyone involved truly helped bring the event to life.

Without our wonderful garden owners, none of this would have been possible, so a HUGE shout-out and heartfelt thank you to each and every one of them! We are equally grateful to our club members who helped sell tickets, as well as to all those who generously gave their time and energy to make the weekends such a success.

It is this wonderful community spirit that makes Hogsback such a special place.

We would also love to hear from others in the community who have talents, skills or creative ideas that could complement our beautiful gardens. If you would like to get involved, please contact me. We are already looking ahead to next year's Open Gardens, and there may also be opportunities to participate in our final weekend in November.

Once again, a sincere thank you to everyone who contributed, participated and supported us. Your enthusiasm and generosity are greatly appreciated!

Warm regards,

Hayley McLoughlin

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Chairperson

Hogsback Garden Club



From the Forest Floor

By Adi Forestbeing



It's alive!!!

Wherever you wander, you see it! (even the shy ones are out!) Nature is alive and awake, and proud to be! From the Piet my vrou calling to see in which nest his partner is busy laying her egg in, to the abundance of chickweed coming out of every crack.

In our yearly seasonal cicle, our creativity is at its peak too, with the sun giving us more daylight, leading to more time with our thoughts in the light. Which is sometimes not the best thing, as most of us are regularly taunted by these thoughts in a not so good way, and to be stuck in a room all day with loads of people around (and their thoughts) does not help the situation much...

Well what can you do about that?

Most likely not much, if it is your work or living space, but there is one thing you can do, and that is head out to nature, take a little walk in the forest, go sit by a stream, hug a tree, observe nature, from fauna to flora, just observe everything. Nature is showing up in early summer with so much energy, flowers blossoming, new shoots popping out, little babies everywhere, all of it ready to share that energy with its fellow nature beings, us being one of those beings!

Handling those thoughts won't seem so overwhelming and impossible to overcome anymore and it will breathe new life back into you again!

Do this as often as needed, it is truly healing. The science backs it up, so you know it's not just woo hoo stuff, but both! Lol

While you are out there, please pic up any litter you see, the forest will appreciate it and give you a bonus dose of dopamine for your good deed!

Till next time, Stay wild.

Adi Forestbeing

Happening Hogsback



Chainsaw Competition a Roaring Success

The chainsaw competition was an exciting and entertaining event that we hope to make an annual tradition.

A heartfelt thank you goes to everyone who contributed to making the event such a success. From donating planks, logs and poles to constructing the platform and providing the much-needed labour, every contribution was greatly appreciated. We are also grateful to those who generously donated the prize money for the winners.

The competition attracted six competitors, including representatives from STIHL, Schenk Sawmill, AFC and Bold Point, along with several other participants. The event provided plenty of excitement, fun and entertainment for everyone who came out to watch and show their support.

What made the day especially special was seeing how an event like this brings our community together in the nicest possible way. People from different backgrounds, came together as one to share in the excitement, lend their support and enjoy a day filled with laughter, friendly competition and camaraderie. It was a beautiful reminder that our community is strongest when we stand together, celebrate one another and focus on what unites us.

It was also a wonderful opportunity to support our local Red Clay Cafe, as well as the TKY and STIHL stand, which added to the atmosphere and enjoyment of the day.

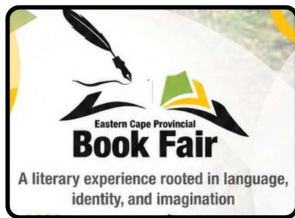
With such a fantastic response and a wonderful sense of togetherness, we look forward to seeing the chainsaws roar again next year!

Hayley McLoughlin



We cannot wait to report back on the Hogsback Wine Escape and all the entertainment, experiences and the markets.

Send us your photo's, favorite moments and weekend highlights.



The Eastern Cape Provincial Book Fair come to town last month. Well supported, busy and great feedback all round. Even the delegates had just one complaint... HBI food lost to KL food... Well done to everyone involved, thank you to the locals who came out, joined the talks and bought books. Now all you have to do is read them!

The Men Behind the Modem Miracle...

By Miki



In the beginning of October we awoke to the kind of disconnect that generally only happens when mountain weather and Eskom disagrees.

The longest standing relationship in Hogsback, was officially on the rocks. No notice, no Dear John letter, no major fight or break-up, Telkom just packed their bags and left. Some of you hop, skipped and jumped through all five stages of grief; packed away your modems and shackled up with someone new, in record time... I'm not judging; I mean there's very few people quite as resilient as Hogsbackians. For some of us... no matter how resilient, Telkom was our ONLY option. If you have no LTE signal on your property, no line of sight to Tor Doone and then no Telkom line; this break-up hit really hard.

When corporate bureaucracy cuts off a mountain village, one rarely expects a knight in shining armour to come wearing a corporate badge. Yet, that is precisely what happened when *The Hogsback Times* sent a formal request for a media statement regarding the abrupt decommissioning of our local exchange and the disconnection of our ADSL accounts.

We asked for regulatory accountability, billing freezes and migration options as well as time frames. Essentially all I wanted was for these corporates to realize the impact and answer for themselves.

What we got instead was Ernst Visagie.

HBT's request for guilt admission, landed squarely on the desk of Ernst at Openserve's Build Centre of Excellence. Our media inquiry could have easily ended up in the standard corporate queue for a canned public relations response. In fact, Zama Ndaba from Telkom acknowledged receipt of our email 8 days after we sent it. No response, just acknowledgement of receipt. The same goes for Icasa. Followed by radio silence.

Ernst bypassed the usual corporate lip service and got straight to work. Within hours of reading about our isolated mountain community, our local businesses, our police station and our elderly residents suddenly left without a lifeline...he made a decision that took us all by surprise (most of all me), he began personally reinstating the exchange to restore our services.

What followed over the course of the week was a masterclass in dedication. While we braced for a Telkom-less future of disconnect, Ernst Visagie and Vusi Maseko was actively auditing service numbers, troubleshooting line configurations and coordinating technical updates on their end. When Paul reconnected to the internet for the first time in weeks, the relief felt across the village was immediate. There was HOPE! Line by line, subscriber by subscriber, Ernst and his team systematically brought our connectivity back from the dead.

Ernst & Vusi didn't just answer a media statement query; they listened to a community in distress and took action when it mattered most. This month, our Honorary Local is Ernst Visagie; for stepping out of the bureaucratic bullshit, for taking ownership and for bringing Hogsback back online. Thank you for reminding us that behind the business of feasible networks, there are still individuals who genuinely care.

... Now my fellow Hogsbackians.... I know, as a community; we have infrastructure-related-trust issues and we're cautious with our excitement and our appreciation. So who knows how long it will last, what the accounts department and field techs will say and what the future of this relationship looks like. So let's just be grateful please... every morning, when you see those green modem lights all on and active, use the ultrasonic capabilities of our old copper lines to send a little gratitude into the world.

From the Mountain Tops

By Adi Forestbeing



A little tale from the trails again...

January was a couple of days in already, and the last group of hikers were back safe and sound. Which meant one thing for me, time to head out onto the trail to clear my head, find calm, and do some maintenance needed on the trail!

This time, the universe gave me a clear sign as the planets were literally aligning on the set night, with new moon also falling on that day! Which cabin would be perfect for this I thought to myself for a split second, Mnyameni it is!

With a name like "place of darkness" there is no better place.

My plan was to set off and hike to Mnyameni via the 2 day loop trail, sleep the night, observe the stars, then hike to Zingcuka the following day, marking the swimming spots and broccoli rock along the way (story on the name another time) and sleep at the Zingcuka hut for the night, and hike back to Hogsback the following day again. Perfect.

I finalized all the needed arrangements and off I went!

While walking to the starting point, my brain started doing what a reliable brain is supposed to do, it started making calculations... I might miss marking the last 2 swimming spots if I head in the right direction, as I was unsure of the total number of swimming spots, how would I know which ones are the last two?!

Instead, made the decision to hike backwards and mark the first two, while hiking to Mnyameni! Problem solved!



My calculations however didn't accurately determine the distance difference I was now making, in 40° weather... Changes made, I hiked towards the Zingcuka ridge along Wolfridge road and up along Hog 1 until I reached the trail, and made my way left, let's go! Taking every moment in, while remarking certain markers and clearing fallen branches, I made my way on the trail.

With Broccoli Rock, the First (well technically the last) swimming spot, and second (second last) swimming spot all marked, I made my way towards the hut, for a magical evening with the stars! Arriving at the hut at around 4pm, a little tired and a whole lot of aches, but happy to be at my destination.

Finally calculating my distance, I realized that I covered a distance of 30km for my first day.

Well ok, that was maybe a bit much, I thought to myself, but a nice hot shower from the donkey boiler will surely soothe all those aches and pains!

I looked around the yard, where is the firewood???!!! The last group of hikers most likely used up the last bit of firewood... OK not good for me, but not the end of the world if I don't have a nice hot shower, a cold wash and rinse it is then, nothing to cry about.

I decided that a little rest should be had, before making myself dinner and experience the awe of the star night show when it eventually gets dark, perfect...

A little turn here, a little turn there, wait why is it dark already? What time is it? 2am! My little rest break turned into a full blown nap! No ways am I getting up and making dinner now, plus those stars where on full show till around 10pm, so I didn't have any show to watch anymore, nevermind, turn around and sleep.

The next morning I packed my bag and decided to just head straight back to Hogsback on the trail I planned on taking first on the previous day, the sun was out in full force and I was not in the mood to cook food, I needed to get home and have a hot shower, turns out that shower was really needed... Making my way to my cross road, I realized that the sun was not out for show that day, it was out to dish out punishment, and my body was not in an ayoba state anymore as the heat stroke slowly started to seep in. No where to go but forward Adi!

Making my way from one water source to the next, soaking my hands and feet in the water and splashing my face, then making my way again, each time reaching closer and closer to wanting to vomit, just keep going Adi, just keep going, I hear Dory's voice in my head.

I made it to Hog 1! 4 purges later however... I need to make a call for assistance I finally admitted. Who to call though, Dylan it is! I popped him a voicenote and asked if he would be able to collect me at the end of the trail, as I knew I was not going to be able to make it on wolfridge road all the way. With no hesitation, he agreed and asked me to let him know when. New hope! My goal is set! I can do this!

I muscled my way down to the top of the thyumi falls, took a big splash and dip and started my decent, informing Dylan that he can make his way, he checked on a beverage order for me, and I chose a coke, this moment calls for a coke. I make my way all the way to the end point, and as I collapse on the ground from sheer exhaustion, Dylan arrives! With an ice cold Coke! One of the best drinks of my life!

Sometimes when you set plans and goals for yourself, it's good to remind yourself of that Miley song, it's the climb, not always about the destination, but the experience in between.

Till next time folks

Adi Forestbeing

Cloud Country Living & Monkey's Radiance

By Miki



Debatable landlord duties and responsibilities clearly couldn't curb the enthusiasm of our most recent retail additions. Monkey Radiance and Clouds Country Living share an opening date, a parking lot and compliments each other on cosmic level too!

Occupying the space where Jikani once did, Janis's **Monkey Radiance** brings an explosion of vibrant hues, eclectic textiles, life in clothing form and eccentric craftwork. It is a treasure trove for visitors seeking distinctive wearables and locals looking to inject uninhibited color into their lives. Meanwhile, Haneke's **Cloud Country Living** offers an understated counterweight – a sanctuary of refined, earthy homeware, curated natural textures, delicious spoils for tongue and skin as well as artisanal elegance. Together, the two dramatically expands the village's retail landscape, offering an invigorating spectrum between joyful bohemian flair and serene, high-end living.

Beyond the retail shelves, both spaces double as working studios rooted in tactile craft. Haneke's work at Cloud Country Living centers on the chemistry of natural dyeing, spinning and hand-weaving. Natural dyeing relies on organic mordants – such as alum or iron – to form molecular bonds between plant-derived pigments (extracted from barks, leaves, roots, and botanical matter) and natural fibers. Animal fibers like sheep's wool and silk, composed of protein structures, absorb these natural pigments with rich depth and lightfast permanence, yielding organic tones that synthetic dyes cannot replicate.

Both proprietors are expanding their spaces into interactive creative hubs. Haneke will be leading hands-on workshops in spinning and traditional loom weaving at Cloud Country Living, guiding participants through raw fiber processing and tactile creation. Next door at Monkey Radiance, Janis will host sessions focused on colorful, uninhibited textile art and experimental craft-making. Whether hunting for memorable local keepsakes or mastering traditional fiber arts, these twin additions bring renewed creative vitality to the village.



Cape Parrot Project – Build it and they will come

Of course, human beings love to surround themselves with things that appeal to their individual preferences – be it décor, garden plants, pets and even people. This is completely normal and the variety of those preferences make this world the interesting place that it is. The question is – are any of us prepared to forgo our own preferences for the greater good? – in the 2020s we have more information than ever before about the impact human beings have on the environment (and on our fellow beings) – does that knowledge ever cause us to modify our choices?

Opportunities with nature

Ironically, we often move to already beautiful places and then set about, with some vigour, to conform them to our own idea of beauty, failing to take into account the plants and the little creatures that make up the ecosystems that support larger bird and animal species. It would be interesting to know how many Hogsbackians are aware that our village was once a grassland – part of a forest-grassland mosaic, supporting grassland specialists that are now under pressure as the grassland biome is South Africa's most threatened.



Hogsback 1949



Hogsback 1964

As we draw on our ever-increasing knowledge of ecosystems and the commensurate relationship between species (think a fly with a long proboscis and a deep-tubed grassland flower), there is the opportunity for us to work with nature to bring something of the indigenous back where it has been lost. In this interesting article, a 40ha vineyard in Australia was restored to native vegetation, drawing back animals including the threatened Regent Parrot – <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-27/vines-to-vegetation-property-restored-endangered-bird-species/107160854>



The Australian Regent Parrot (See linked article)

Nothing's perfect

It may not be possible, or even desirable, to return a landscape to what it was before humans came on the scene, for example, in its restoration work, after undertaking the necessary research and monitoring, the Cape Parrot Project sometimes makes the deliberate choice to restore an area that is too transformed to secondary forest, rather than to grassland. In addition, people grow crops for food, plant trees for shade and plant ornamentals for pleasure. Nonetheless, when working on our land, we would encourage everyone to consider the myriad indigenous plants available to us, or even to consider assisted natural regeneration – taking out invasive alien species and waiting to see what decides to come back. Who knows – we may just discover a species we may have thought lost to us in this part of the world, or even see the return to our gardens of some of the birds and animals – including the Cape Parrot, that have been displaced by transformed ecosystems. We have some ideas for 'planting this, instead of that' – so please let us know if you are interested in more information. Alternatively, here are some books that might be useful – there are sure to be many websites too:

Botha, C. and Botha, J., 1995. *Bring Nature Back to Your Garden*. Durban: Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA).

Bredenkamp, C.L. (ed.), 2019. *A Flora of the Eastern Cape Province*. Strelitzia 41 (Vols 1–3). Pretoria: South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).

Honig, M., 2014. *Indigenous Plant Palettes: An Essential Guide to Plant Selection*. Cape Town: Quivertree Publications.

Pooley, E., Nichols, G. and Hankey, A., 2025. *South African Indigenous Garden Plants: The Gardener's Guide*. Cape Town: Flora & Fauna Publications Trust and Struik Nature.

For more information follow us on the socials:

<https://www.facebook.com/capeparrotproject>

<https://www.instagram.com/capeparrotproject>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK13Mty-w3USNhOs1OEpdQ>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/cape-parrot-project>

Contact: Susan Wishart (Project Manager) susan@wildbirdtrust.com 067 416 7219

LOOK! A Bird! No, it's a paedo...

By Miki

More prevalent than you'd think... Every country, every city, every town... every small rural village contain them... ('Contain' – in constituent parts; not cages... unfortunately). In small, less densely populated places, like Hogsback; we know them, we see them... and whether you know about that person's paedophilic tendencies or not; this community tends to turn and look at the birds instead. Very much like we did during intimate scenes, while watching movies with our parents... admittedly, during movie kisses, I STILL look up at the suddenly stunning ceiling.

The age all question about what we, as humans are capable of comes to mind. I believe that we are all capable of ANYTHING, no matter how immoral. It's a big reason why I don't judge people... because given the right (or wrong) circumstances, I might find myself responding in the exact way I judged someone else for. That belief should have made me less arrogant, not less discerning.

On the subject of adults violating children; I have wasted ages of reflection, years of trying to understand, trying to shift from perspective to perspective, looking from historic, psychological and even cosmic spiritually universal sides... and months of attempting to find justifications FOR pedophiles. Enough energy wasted; slightly ashamed my stupid pure heart even tried understanding this and ENOUGH of listening to people who say things like "...Souls have no age..."

Those words echoed in my mind once they left your mouth... Oh so spiritually enlightened; "souls have now age"!?... The problem is not spirituality; our tendency to use its language to dodge material reality is. The child-shaped vessel that soul occupies... the physical body, brain, development, vulnerability and capacity to consent; does not suddenly change just because you invoked the universe.

Even if I could understand this affliction... understanding is not absolution. A 20years age gap is massive when one person is a child. A child cannot carry the responsibility for an adult's sexual choices. The adult is responsible for laying down and maintaining that boundary. The adult is the one who carries the privilege and the burden to draw the line of appropriacy. A child with no capacity to consent, cannot possibly carry the cruelty of going against it's own nature.

Yes, I said nature; to our biological cellular core, we inherently know to learn from, to take guidance from or to grow from what we perceive as smarter/ wiser/ more experienced or higher than us. Yes, that does not always mean 'older', depending on your frame of reference and the subject matter that interests or benefits you most; it can be anyone. I don't think that inclination ever goes away; it definitely hasn't left me. I still prefer to spend my time with older wiser people.

Just like Don preferred to quiz John before going in for a knee replacement; John had been there, done that and knew more about it than anyone who still has original parts. Don knew how fruitless it would have been to ask Mr Original Parts for advice on the subject. One would hope, however, that Mr Original Parts would have the good sense to admit he wasn't exactly the right person to ask, particularly if Don didn't know any better.

We can return to the birds, the ceiling... the collective habit of looking away. But what happens when the thing we refuse to look at is not an awkward movie scene but a child who needs an adult to notice.

Compassion for human beings does not require tolerance of sexual abuse and that protecting children takes precedence over protecting reputations, friendships and comfortable worldviews.

Hogsback Horror-Scopes

By Miki



Looking back on October and forward to November...

ARIES

You stormed into October like a runaway logging truck, convinced you could solve every local council dispute with raw volume and sheer force of will. You fixed two fences, alienated three neighbors, and spent three days nursing an ankle you twisted while aggressively hiking off-trail.

Slow down before the mountain slows you down for good. Channel that ungodly energy into chopping firewood instead of starting arguments on the village WhatsApp group.

TAURUS

October's mist was just an excuse for you to wrap yourself in three blankets, drink endless tea, and ignore your mounting to-do list. You promised to clean out the gutters, but the hearth was too warm and the couch was too soft.

The damp is coming, and so are the consequences of your procrastination. Get out of bed, put on your boots, and clear those gutters before your living room becomes an indoor water feature.

GEMINI

You held four different opinions on every local debate this month and somehow voiced all of them with equal conviction. You spread three rumors, started two book clubs you won't attend, and forgot where you parked near the market.

Your phone battery will not survive November if you keep monitoring every community chat simultaneously. Pick a side, stick to it for at least forty-eight hours, and learn to keep a secret.

CANCER

You cried twice over the beauty of the autumn leaves, adopted a stray cat you couldn't afford, and took fifty photos of the same misty pine tree. You spent the month feeling deeply attached to people who were just trying to walk past your gate.

Stop taking the weather personally. Protect your home, lock your pantry from your new animal kingdom, and remember that not every casual acquaintance needs a home-cooked meal and an emotional audit.

LEO

October's golden light was meant for you, or so you informed everyone within earshot. You posed near every waterfall, demanded compliments on your new scarf, and acted utterly shocked when people didn't applaud your mere presence at the local pub.

The audience is growing weary. Step out of the spotlight for five minutes and let someone else speak, preferably someone with actual news rather than another update on your personal brand.

VIRGO

You treated October like a full-blown health and safety audit. You pointed out misspelled signs, cataloged illegal dumping, and reorganized your neighbor's recycling bins without asking. Nobody thanked you, which you took as a personal insult.

Give the clipboards a break. The mountain is inherently chaotic, and no amount of color-coded filing systems will stop the monkeys from raiding your fruit trees. Breathe out.

LIBRA

You spent thirty days agonizing over whether to spend the weekend socializing or hiding indoors. You RSVP'd "Maybe" to five events, showed up to none, and then felt left out when you saw the photos online. Indecision is not a personality trait; it's a delay tactic. Make a choice, stick to it, and stop asking six different people what you should wear to the local market.

SCORPIO

You sat in the corner of every room looking intensely mysterious, collecting blackmail material, and knowing far too much about everyone's private business. You said four words all month, but your left eyebrow did heavy lifting.

The shadows are deepening, which suits you fine, but try not to look so sinister at the post office. People are starting to think you're running an underground intelligence ring out of your potting shed.

SAGITTARIUS

You saw a break in the clouds and immediately set off into the forest with half a bottle of water and zero map reading skills. You got lost, called it a "soul journey," and required a neighbor to come find you before dark.

Buy proper hiking shoes and charge your phone before you wander off. Adventure is fine; being the subject of an emergency search party for the third time this year is just embarrassing.

CAPRICORN

You spent October complaining about how nobody around here works hard enough while single-handedly building a stone wall you didn't need. You inspected your woodpile daily and judged everyone else's stack with quiet, bitter superiority.

Your work ethic is exhausting everyone around you. Take an afternoon off, sit by the fire, and try not to audit the village infrastructure in your sleep.

AQUARIUS

You proposed three radical, unworkable schemes to revamp the local economy, involving solar-powered micro-grids and community kombucha brewing. Nobody understood your vision, which you attributed to their lack of enlightenment.

Ground your ideas before you launch another revolution. Finish one mundane project—like fixing your gate latch—before you attempt to redesign the entire social structure of the mountain.

PISCES

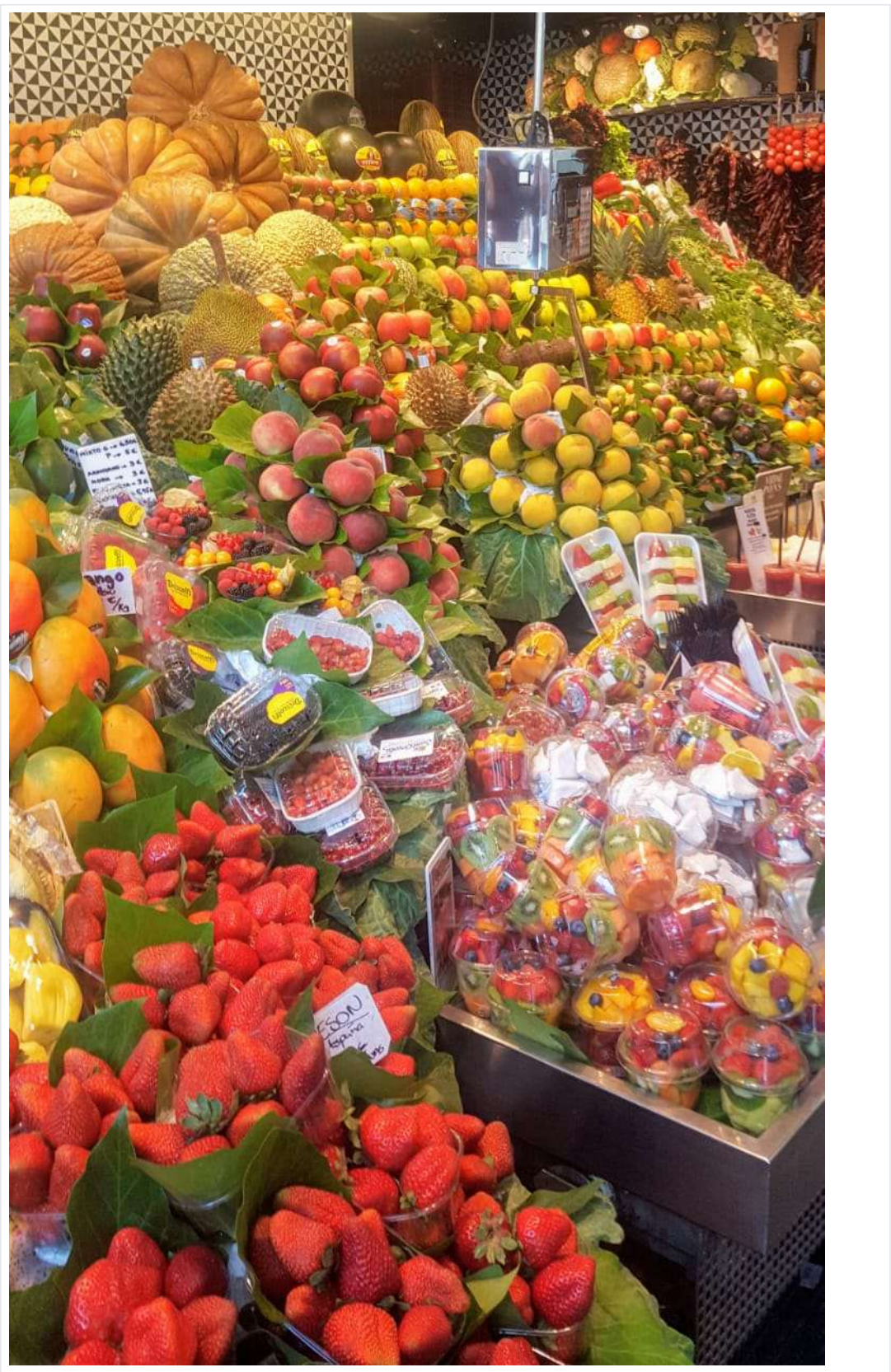
You floated through October on a cloud of intuition, poetry, and complete spatial unawareness. You mistook a damp moss patch for a divine omen and lost your house keys twice in the exact same field.

Reality is calling, and it requires you to pay attention to where you put your things.

Keep your feet on the ground, or at least remember to lock your front door when you wander into the woods to talk to the trees.

Health Matters

By Nicole Steven-Jennings



“Wellness is the complete integration of body, mind, and spirit – the realization that everything we do, think, feel, and believe has an effect on our state of well-being.” – Greg Anderson

Healthy living hasn’t always been a way of life for me. In fact, I had to get really sick to understand how important it is to take care of myself. Years ago I was diagnosed with a chronic autoimmune condition. I went to many different doctors searching for help and guidance but none of them could really give me answers or even tell me the root cause of the symptoms I was experiencing. One doctor suggested an invasive surgery as well as being on medication for the rest of my life. I was twenty-eight years old at the time and I just couldn’t accept the solutions that were being put forward. I became very proactive about taking control of my health. I started doing in depth research in order to understand everything I could about my condition, my body and what things I could do to heal. I learnt about the physiological processes in the body, the different systems and how they function, the different glands and the hormones they produce. I started identifying the organs and systems that were compromised in my body based on the symptoms I was experiencing and that gave me a reference to develop my own health protocol.

The most important thing I learnt along the way is that when we experience dis-ease, it is often because of chronic inflammation in the body. There are many factors which contribute to chronic inflammation such as diet, stress, unresolved emotional trauma as well as poor environmental conditions.

Here are some of the areas I focused on in order to regain my health and get my body back to homeostasis:

Food

"Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." – Hippocrates

Anyone who knows me well, knows how passionate I am about healthy eating. I started incorporating more raw salads, fruit smoothies and green cold pressed juices into my diet. For a period of time I completely eliminated gluten, dairy, sugar and processed foods and focused solely on wholefoods and superfoods.

It was incredible how immediate the effect was. My leaky gut started to subside, I had more energy, my skin started to clear, my brain fog improved and slowly but surely I started feeling like a whole different person. Many people ask why health foods are so expensive when really they should be asking why processed foods are so cheap. If you think being healthy is expensive then what is the cost of being sick?

Stress

"Worry and stress affects the circulation, the heart, the glands, the whole nervous system, and profoundly affects heart action." – Charles W. Mayo, M.D.

We've all heard about the damaging effects of prolonged stress and I was walking proof that stress is one of the main culprits when it comes to inflammation in the body. My body was constantly in fight or flight mode. My cortisol levels were through the roof. I was experiencing extreme anxiety, heart palpitations and my hair was falling out. The two things that helped me manage my stress levels were moving my body and doing breath work on a regular basis. Sounds too good to be true right? But think about it logically. Not only does moving the body release happy hormones but it activates the elimination system which is responsible for removing waste and toxins from the body. Breath work helps oxygenate the body which in turn improves blood flow.

Dealing with trauma

"If you know the art of deep breathing, you have the strength, wisdom and courage of ten tigers." – Chinese adage

None of us are immune to emotional trauma. We have all experienced something either in our childhood and or adult lives that have hurt us deeply. This was by far the hardest part of my healing journey. I participated in breath workshops, I committed to a regular practice and I started working through emotional blockages in my body. I cried...A LOT. It was vital to let go of the hurt and anger that I had been carrying for years. What I learnt was so powerful and that is how to love myself as I am.

Connection

"We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community" – Dorothy Day

If you think that isolating yourself is a good way to deal with this crazy world we live in, then you are sorely mistaken. Real human connection within a community helps us feel seen, valued & accepted. It reduces mental health issues, improves interpersonal relations & strengthens our immune systems. Intentional time spent alone for self-reflection and rest is completely understandable.

"Sorry, there's no magic bullet. You gotta eat healthy and live healthy to be healthy... End of story." – Morgan Spurlock

There is no one size fits all. These are some of the things that helped me on my journey. We don't have to accept the solutions put forward by doctors. We can find out about alternative healing modalities and we can make informed decisions about our health and our approach to medicine. A quote that I always keep at the forefront of my mind is *"prevention is better than cure"*. So breathe, move your body, eat your greens and connect with friends and loved ones. Life is too short to sweat the small stuff. The present moment is all we have.

A Place Between Worlds

By Seeker of Magic



There are moments in Hogsback when the world seems to slip into something else. Strange little happenings that make you question reality, if only for a moment. It is difficult to explain these things in words, because they are not simply sights or sounds. They are experiences that reach somewhere deeper, leaving you wondering whether the world around you is quite what you thought it was.

Sometimes, it begins with the light.

There are sunsets here that truly challenge whether this place is real or not. The entire world turns a deep sepia, burnt orange, as though someone has turned the temperature filter to its highest setting. The sky, the trees, the landscape and everything in between are transformed. Against this extraordinary warmth, the greens of the forest become brighter than ever, creating a contrast so vivid it almost hurts to look at.

Then the light catches the smallest things. Spiderwebs strung between branches, moisture clinging to leaves, tiny droplets resting on plants and trees. Suddenly, everything glints like diamonds. Sparkling reflections appear everywhere, and the world becomes a gleaming sepia bubble of strange. The familiar rhythm of the mountain falls away. Not a whisper. Not a bird calling in the distance. Nothing. It is a silence so complete that you find yourself wondering whether the world has stopped breathing.

And something happens within you, too. Time seems to stop. Your mind quiets, and your soul becomes utterly still, as though it has paused to bear witness to this supreme beauty. Everything finds a perfect balance of peace, stillness and harmony. For a little while, you are simply there, experiencing it.

And just when you think the moment could not become any stranger, the mist arrives.

It can appear from nowhere, swallowing the entire world around you within minutes. Familiar trees disappear into shifting shadows, the landscape becomes warped and unfamiliar, and the forest seems to rearrange itself before your eyes. Yet the mist catches that same strange light. Its moisture glints and sparkles, creating the appearance of a curtain of diamonds drifting through the forest. It feels almost as though a light, magical veil has been cast over the mountain, separating you from the ordinary world beyond it.

There is something about this particular mist that is difficult to explain. It heightens your awareness, yet at the same time, everything within you grows quiet. Your soul becomes still, caught in a moment of such beauty that nothing else seems to matter.

Other moments arrive just as unexpectedly. After days of rain and grey skies, the return of sunlight can make familiar places look entirely changed. A shaft of golden light spills through the forest onto a dusty road along Main Road, transforming an ordinary drive into something dreamlike and surreal.

Sometimes, the light catches just right between the trees, creating the appearance of a bright doorway into the forest, luring you into the wild realms of mystery and adventure. The trees shift strangely in the shadows, appearing almost to walk. Even wild animals sometimes approach far closer than expected, watching you with an intensity that makes you feel as though, for once, you are the one being observed. And for just a moment, you and the animal pause and connect on a different level, before the magic of it passes again, like it never happened.

Perhaps it is the extraordinary interplay of light, weather, moisture and nature. Perhaps it is simply the way our minds respond when the familiar becomes unfamiliar. But there are moments on this mountain when explanations feel inadequate, and the boundary between the world we know and the world we can only imagine seems impossibly thin.

Perhaps that is part of Hogsback’s magic. Not that it takes us into another world, but that, every now and then, it makes this one feel entirely different.

And perhaps we do not need to understand it. Perhaps we need only to stand still, look, listen and allow ourselves to experience the wonder of it all.

For a fleeting moment, we find ourselves somewhere in between.

Let's Whine...

By Miki

HOW TO BECOME PUBLIC PROPERTY BEFORE UNPACKING YOUR TOOTHBRUSH

Hogsback operates on a simple, unspoken barter system: you bring your life to the mountain, and the village takes immediate, uninvited co-ownership of your narrative.

Three new families arrived recently...Naturally, the local intelligence network—which boasts significantly better coverage than Vodacom and infinitely less interest in hard evidence—mobilized before the the moving truck had.

Within forty-eight hours, our unofficial Department of Speculation had processed the entire arrival. No application was required. No facts were necessary. By Tuesday afternoon, the grapevine had established a complete dossier: the state of the furniture, the private financial arrangements with the landlord, the precise level of local generosity exploited, and the exact speed at which the family's character was unraveling. We do not tolerate unanswered questions on this mountain. Where facts fail, we accept theories. Where theories fail, we accept rumors. And if a rumor survives three trips around the Arboretum, it is automatically elevated to local history.

The cycle is as predictable as the mist:

- **The Over-Zealous Adoption:** The village offers the spare bedroom, the lawnmower, and three jars of homemade marmalade.
- **The Forensic Audit:** The village realizes the newcomers have not immediately declared their full life history, tax returns, and intent to join the local garden club.
- **The WhatsApp Sanhedrin:** Voice notes circulate. The probation period is declared failed. The trial is conducted in absentia.

We complain that newcomers fail to integrate, having constructed an integration process that closely resembles a witch trial administered by people who decided on the verdict during morning tea. Accountancy gives way to amateur espionage; discernment collapses into mob hysteria.

To our newest residents: welcome. Protect your privacy, lock your gates, and do not mistake early hospitality for immunity. To the rest of the mountain—the investigators, the moral guardians, the people who know someone who heard something at the shop: perhaps we might allow the moving truck to actually arrive before we form the lynch mob.

The truck isn't the only thing stuck in the mud on the Pass. Common sense vanished into the pine trees years ago.



HORSEPOWER, HUBRIS, AND HASSLE-FREE LIABILITY

The annual chainsaw competition is a magnificent local spectacle. Nothing quite captures the rustic spirit of the mountain like half dozen men inhaling two-stroke fumes, competing for prize money, and convincing themselves that sheer enthusiasm is a functional substitute for personal protective equipment.

It is raw, loud, and undeniably entertaining. It is also an emergency room visit waiting for an itinerary.

South Africa's Occupational Health and Safety Act—along with the remarkably straightforward pages of the Chainsaw Safety and Operating Handbook—suggests that operating heavy machinery requires things like formal risk assessments, protective chaps, and clear lines of responsibility.

The village, however, prefers to rely on a more traditional framework: *It'll probably be fine, and besides, Jeff knows what he's doing.*

This is not an allegation of negligence. Far be it from us to ruin a perfectly good party with facts. It is merely an observation that a “successful event” is measured in applause and empty beer bottles, whereas a “safe event” is measured by the retention of all ten fingers.

Consider, for a moment, the post-incident protocol should a chain throw or a log kick back:

1. **The Silence:** The cheering stops. The two-stroke engines idle.
2. **The Amateurs' Enquiry:** The collective realization sets in that “community spirit” does not cover medical evacuation or third-party disability claims.
3. **The Paperwork Search:** The sudden, frantic quest to identify whose name actually appears on the event permit—assuming, of course, a permit was ever considered necessary in the first place.

Suddenly, the organizers who stood proudly in the official group photograph begin backing slowly into the pine trees like startled duikers. Liability is a cold, lonely island, and it turns out nobody bought a ticket for it.

Here's to the winners, the organizers, and the brave souls who brought high-RPM steel to a crowd of cheering onlookers. May the tradition continue, the crowds return, and next year's safety precautions match the horsepower... Because when the sawdust settles, the only thing that should be severed is the timber.



Ditjies en Datjies

By Miki

Gossip & Drama / Bits & Bobs

- Could Nutwoods finally be SOLD?
- Natasha and Nastasia are two different people
- If you want to go out for dinner on a Monday or a Tuesday, Good Luck!

Hogsback Ratepayers Un-done

After 18 years, the Hogsback Ratepayers Union has ceased to function. Lyn Winn; the active force and proverbial glue behind the HRU shared the news this month. Upon closing their bank account, they have been able to make donations to the Wayne Kent fund, Arboretum and St Patrick's, of R15,000 each.

Lyn also shared a bit of history – "The HRU was formed in 2008 as a result of the 1,000% increase in our rates!!! The municipality were not willing to help us find a solution. We then turned to Bhisho and later National Government. After 6 long years, they finally realized that the solution that the HRU had proposed was possible. That is why you receive a rates rebate. We were also able to assist other towns in SA."

I'd like to thank Jan Delport, the Treasurer since 2018. We had a strong committee to start with but most of the original committee are deceased.

The HRU was also largely instrumental in halting the Hogsback name change and the ridiculous scheme to convert us to water borne sewerage. While we have closed the bank account and no longer have a committee, while still able, I will try to continue to monitor whether there are any detrimental schemes in the pipeline which will affect us.

To the newbies in Hogsback; there's a bit of background for you. My closing advice is; if we are ever faced with a similar situations – don't give up!

– Lyn Winn

Dear Lyn; a great big Hogsback-Hat tip goes out to you, THANK YOU.

Granddad of the Year Nominees

HBT is still looking for the Hogsback oupa with:

- the MOST grandchildren.
- the ELDEST grandchildren and
- the most MEMORABLE oupa.

Send your nominees to submissions@hbtimes.co.za

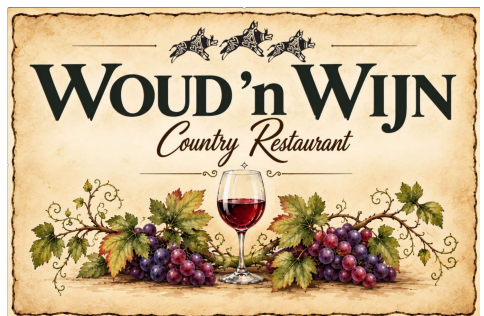
Grandpa Rory flew the furthest; all the way to Canada to play row-row-row-the-boat with his grandson.

Oupas Pieter R & Peter W have been princesses, been pampered, pony-tailed and their nails painted in past years... the joys of granddaughters, right?

This month's nominee is Mike Mullins. Pops was spotted outside Red Clay; on his back!

He did not have a fall, he was not sun-or-dust-bathing...he was – believe it or not – teaching little Alaska, how to throw a proper tantrum. Complete with wailing arms and flailing legs as guests watched in shock and awe.

Who's your favourite oupa in Hogsback?



Congratulations Mark!!!

The Edge Restaurant has its own identity again; go celebrate at **Woud 'n Wijn.**

Thank you all for sending your stories and sharing your experiences. Thank you to our regular columnists, without you, HBT would not be a fair representation of our wonderful community and this magical