



**GRASSHOPPER COUNTRY**  
**The Great Brak River**  
**Museum News Letter**  
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 Great Brak River

**February 2010**  
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 Editor Rene' de Kock

*Dear Museum Friends*

*Issue 2 of 2010*

The yearend highlight was the visit by the Searle, Franklin and other founding families to celebrate the 150 year birthday of the village of Great Brak River. On Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 58 family members visited the museum for a celebration tea.

Since December we have added more than 30 new readers and we welcome them to our little news letter on what is happening in the museum and the village.

We wish to thank the Department of Culture and Sport for including our monthly newsletter on their web site. This can be viewed at [http://www.capegateway.gov.za/Text/2010/1/gbr\\_museum\\_news\\_letter\\_january\\_1-2010\\_final.pdf](http://www.capegateway.gov.za/Text/2010/1/gbr_museum_news_letter_january_1-2010_final.pdf) One real advantage is that the museum (and Great Brak River) is now appearing on various search engines when requesting any data that may appear as a news letter subject.

Many of our readers are also interested in what has been happening in the village of Great Brak River and should you have anything of interest please drop us a line. We will try and include it, space permitting.



**HOUSE VILLAIN**

Whilst the museum is primarily interested in the past much of the museums involvement is with education, the built environment and what is happening around us.

The museum is very active with the protection of our heritage and this is not only about our old buildings but what is happening to our present landscape and the erosion of the beautiful Garden Route. This month we would like to show you a very modern house which is notable for its almost complete self reliance.

**The Museum is open from Monday – Friday between 9 am and 4 pm. and on Saturdays between 9.30 am and 12 Noon**

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry reports that during the third week in December 2009, our **Wolwedans** dam is **35.20%** full. The bottom 12% layer is presently not suitable for purification.



**Great Brak River's Wolwedans dam wall. The only other very small dam of importance in the Wolwedans catchment area is the Ernst Robertson dam which due to the light rain is 83.40% full.**

**Despite the large demand, the Museum still has a number of pre-owned books at R3.00 each**

This past year was one of sharp contrasts. We have had a very successful year of events dedicated to the village's 150 year birthday. Not so successful was our failure to preserve the historic home of the Helms which was demolished by the developer of the "Groenkloof Retirement Home" who has little feelings for the past.

Next was and still is the drought which was probably the worst in 132 years. Some of you may want to reread the stories of the very wet and very dry years in our past 200 year history. It is well documented and unfortunately our news letter write-ups are much abridged.

*I would like to make a correction in that the municipality did not obtain an interdict re not to use the Wolwedans dam water to open the river mouth. It was decided on a consensus vote.*

During December/January, we sold most of the remaining hard cover copies of "The Story of Great Brak River" and the value of the books should now start to increase. I recently saw an original 1975 edition going for R 225.00. What a bargain as most sell for over R 1000.00

We deliberately left out the family tree in the reprint of the Story of Great Brak River as it was becoming somewhat clumsy to view. This has now been written up by Peter Searle on an internet heritage program which also includes much of the younger generation.

Another highlight was an invitation to tea with Margret Franklin at their original holiday home on the island. Margret Franklin now in her 80's was visiting Great Brak River for the 150 year birthday. This house is held in great esteem as it contains a rare to South Africa but good example of the original "wattle and dorb" construction.

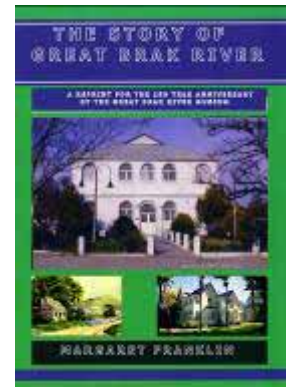
Holes are dug, wooden posts put in and then entwined with willow \*\* (or hazel) branches about 25 mm in diameter between the posts; then smear the gaps in the branches with dorb, a mixture of clay, straw and dung which makes the building wind proof and water tight.



**From Left to Right, Elizabeth Franklin, ?? and David Franklin. In front Hope de Kock, Nisde Mc Robert and Margret Franklin.**

David Franklin very kindly presented the museum with his grandfather's binoculars which were confiscated during the Boer war.

\*\*Willows belong mainly to the arctic and north temperate zones, and the Weeping Willow proper seems to be a native of extra-tropical Asia, from Japan and China to Armenia and the banks of the Euphrates, and of Egypt and North Africa; but pendulous varieties of other species are also known in cultivation.



We have perhaps a dozen hard cover copies of the reprint of Margret Franklins book "**The Story of Great Brak River**". The book costs R250 in hard cover or R170.00 with soft cover plus R35.00 if you require the copy by post. This is a must have reference book on the history of the village.



**Hopes "Hands On" crafts workshop in February to raise funds for the museum will be held at the Great Brak River Museum at 9.30 am on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup>.**

Please call Hope de Kock on 044 6205124 or 083 378 1232 for full details.



## Holiday Snaps

During the December holidays our many visitors enjoyed visiting the village of Great Brak River and participating in the many local walks.

The following are but a few of the hikes/walks to do

Nearing the end of the Wolwedans dam walking trail and climbing the final back breaking steps to the top.

Contact the info office for a route map.



Looking back from near the top of the Wolwedans dam wall with the almost dry river bed that needs traversing to reach the base of the stairs.

The Great Brak River Wolwedans dam in drought conditions with the water level the lowest since it was initially filled.



**Below  
Mussels  
galore on  
the  
Glentana  
Wreck  
which is  
reachable  
only at  
low tide.**



**The remains of the wreck  
sometimes fully covered  
with sand is more than one  
hundred and eight year old  
and is in remarkably good  
condition.**

**During a storm and under  
tow, the Durban Floating  
Dock broke free of its  
moorings and became  
stranded on a reef where  
she struck broadside on  
between two large rocks.  
These are some four  
kilometres from the village  
of Glentana near Great Brak  
River**

**An unusual  
visitor to the  
Great Brak  
River estuary  
where the  
mouth has been  
closed for many  
months.**





## History in the Making

**IT IS NOT OFTEN THAT ONE CAN EXPERIENCE HISTORY ENFOLDING BUT THIS OCCURRED AT THE CHANGE OF THE YEAR 2009/2010 WHEN GREAT BRAK RIVER CELEBRATED ITS 150 YEAR BIRTHDAY.**

### SEARLE DESCENDANTS VISIT TO CELEBRATE THE 150 YEARS OF EXISTENCE OF THE GREAT BRAK RIVER VILLAGE.

The Searle Family descendants gathered over the 2010 New Year weekend.

The occasion was to celebrate the 150 years of the existence of the Great Brak River Village. Ninety members of the family arrived from England, the U.S.A., Australia and South Africa.

Going back in time, their forefathers, Charles senior and Pamela with their four older children, Anne, Charles junior, Amelia and Fanny, arrived at the Great Brak River on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1859. Charles senior and his family had arrived in South Africa from England in February 1859 where his brother Richard had the contract for the toll at the entrance to the Montagu Pass. Whilst temporarily acting toll keeper, Charles then tendered to become the toll keeper at Great Brak River and was successful, in being awarded the toll keeper initially for two years.

After the tender had expired Charles senior and Pamela started a small shop. Charles also started making "velschoene" to sell to the passing travelers. Fresh water was a great problem and water had to be carried by donkey cart and later by boat from above the ebb and flow of the Great Brak River. In 1874 Charles senior and his son Charles junior had a furrow dug on the George side of the river above the salt water line to bring fresh water to the village.

In 1875 the corn mill was established and later a wool-washery. In 1884 Charles senior retired and the three sons, Charles junior, William and Thomas went into partnership. In 1886 a shoe factory was established and in 1887 a tannery.

The Great Brak River tannery had electricity in 1904 which was initially supplied by a water turbine and generator positioned in the 1874 water furrow. Whilst this was mainly for the tannery, the shoe factory relied on a Crossley gas engine and a D.C. generator.

William had suggested digging a water furrow from the upper reaches of the Great Brak River such that the water could drive a hydro electric power station to supply power to the village.

In 1916 the nineteen km water furrow had been completed from the nearby source near Friemersheim. The building of the power station was delayed due to World War One and the hydro power station was only completed in 1924. William did not see his dream come to fruition as he passed away in 1923.

Both Charles senior and Charles junior represented their ward on the Divisional Council George for 50 years. The Searle's also supported the building of the railway line. In 1898 Charles junior became a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Cape and later became a Senator in the Union Government.

Thomas was a lay preacher and in 1896 became the Grand Chief Templar of the Western South. After his brother Charles had passed away in 1918, he was active in educational matters. Thomas joined Charles in the Legislative Assembly. He was also the Member of Parliament for Queenstown.

#### **Six members of the 4<sup>th</sup> generation at the Dinner.**

**Mrs Dot Eagar of  
Great Brak River  
Mrs Margaret Franklin of  
America  
Mr Stuart Franklin of  
Cape Town  
Mrs Pat Franklin of  
Cape Town  
Mrs Yvonne Searle of  
Australia  
Mr Alan Searle of  
Australia**



As part of the 150 year celebration, a cocktail party had been arranged in the Searle Memorial Church hall on Old Year's evening. On New Year's day 2010, the younger and fitter group of 29 hiked up the Willie Searle furrow. After a visit to the Searle's Family graveyard on Saturday morning the Museum hosted a tea for 58 of the family members. A family dinner was arranged for the Saturday evening. Finally a Church Service was held at the Searle Memorial Church on the Sunday morning.



**Some members of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> generations**

- Steven Franklin**
- Gillian Franklin**
- Tony Mills**
- Elizabeth Mills**
- Maeve Franklin**
- David Franklin**
- Sarah Franklin**

**The Family Tree**

**Peter Searle with his wife Gundula Searle and their son, Tom Searle in front of the Family Tree of all the descendants of Charles and Pamela Searle.**



**Searle Family Cemetery.**

**Peter Searle addressing the family during a visit to the Family Cemetery in Great Brak River**





### **Water Furrow Hike.**

**Twenty nine of the more energetic family members about to start on a hike along the Willie Searle water furrow where constructed was completed in 1916 and which drove the Hydro Electric power station and provided Great Brak River with electricity from 1924.**



## **Association Chairman's Chatter**

### **Robert Smith**

Tel 044 620 4952

E-mail [gbrmass@gmail.com](mailto:gbrmass@gmail.com)

Peter Searle has traced 250 direct descendants of the Searle's and 90 of them made their way to Great Brak River from America, Australia, England and South Africa at the end of December. Part of his program was a visit to our Museum. We had a busy day on Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January when we hosted the Searle family reunion at our Museum. We served tea and muffins to 58 people and it was enjoyed by all.

The group also explored our Museum and a large number of them joined our Association.

We have now started our refurbishment at the Museum and our first refurbished room will be the new "kitchen display". We are looking forward to this display being completed, the first of many! The next area to be refurbished will be the reception/office/tourism area. As mentioned in the last newsletter this is quite a long term refurbishment as it will be driven by available funding.

The Mossel Bay Municipality is presently obtaining quotations for external maintenance work and some repair work to the internal timber work. We really are looking forward to this work commencing.

We are advertising in the local press for second hand books to be donated to us which we will then be selling to the public as a fundraiser. If any of our readers have books that they would like to donate to us then please contact the museum office (telephone number 044 620 3338).

Although we are a small rural museum we constantly receive positive reviews from members of the public who visit us and this is most encouraging for the committee.

As a reminder, our vision is to make the Great Brak River Museum a "must visit museum" and to be the best of its size in the Western Cape.

During the next few months we'll be placing some of the remaining photographs we received for last year's photo competition.

Gareth Marsh entered 3 photos all titled 'Lightning over Great Brak 1- 3'

Photo number 2 – the winning photograph was placed last year. To the right is number 3.



**Heritage Program Calendar for 2009 - 10**  
**Prepared by the Museum Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> January**

Month & provisional date	Description	Supported by	Contact person
083-448-1966	Program Organiser	Museum	Rene' de Kock
6 <sup>th</sup> February	<b>First of a weekly pre-owned book sale on the front lawn of the museum. Both English and Afrikaans books available at R3.00 each.</b>	9.30 am to 12.00 noon for museum funds	The museum 044-620-3338
27 <sup>th</sup> February 2010	<b>2010 SOCCER</b> The 2010 "Blow up Soccer Pitch" will be in Great Brak River.	Museum	Rene' de Kock 083-448-1966
27 <sup>th</sup> February 2010	Tea Party and crossing the river closing ceremony	Museum	Mrs Nisde McRobert 044-620-3783

For more details on **what's on** in our area email Junita van Wyk with a request for their news letter:  
[shalom7@absamail.co.za](mailto:shalom7@absamail.co.za)



# SA Tourism Snippets

## CAPE TOWN & JO'BURG GAINING POPULARITY

Both Cape Town and Johannesburg have been named as new entries in Skyscanner's Top 50 destinations for UK travelers.

Both cities' sudden popularity is ascribed to the country's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in June and July. The site also offers tips on how travelers can use indirect flights to find cheaper rates to visit during the tournament.

Johannesburg was placed at 21st position, while Cape Town came in at 33rd.

## LOOKING FOR QUIRKY WESTERN CAPE PRODUCTS

*Southern African Tourism Update* is in the process of compiling a route planner for Cape Town Routes Unlimited, the marketing body of the Western Cape, and we're looking for quirky, fun and outrageous products in the province.

Based on CTRU's Beyond the 90 Minutes campaign, the route planner will focus on developing both culture and heritage routes as well as gourmet routes.

If you would like to be a part of this exciting new project, please email your company name and contact details as well as a short description of your product to [editor@tourismupdate.co.za](mailto:editor@tourismupdate.co.za).

## GROOTE SCHUUR HOSPITAL'S TRANSPLANT MUSEUM

Often forgotten on the list of interesting and unusual attractions to visit when listing museums, monuments and galleries is the worthwhile Transplant Museum in Groote Schuur Hospital.

Open weekdays: 09.00am - 14.00 hrs Information is obtainable from Tel. 021-404 5232

## CAPE POINT FUNICULAR CLOSES FOR UPGRADE

The popular Flying Dutchman funicular at Cape Point is to be replaced by a comfortable, modern and efficient funicular during the first quarter of this year.

The current funicular is the only commercial operation of its kind in Africa has been ferrying tourists up a steep incline from the bottom station to the old lighthouse for the past 13 years.

Although the funicular service will be suspended for three months, tourists will not be inconvenienced, thanks to a temporary bus service that has been put in place.

The existing funicular ceased operation on January 18. A new, improved Flying Dutchman will reopen for business on April 24, ahead of an expected influx of tourists arriving in Cape Town for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

FROM : TOURISM UPDATE

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

✚ In human life there is constant change of fortune; and it is unreasonable to expect an exemption from the common fate. Life itself decays, and all things are changing daily. – Plutarch

✚ Let no one come to you without leaving better and happier. - Mother Teresa

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The train station in Maputo with its giant copper dome was designed and built in the early 1900's by the same Eiffel who designed the famous Parisian tower.
- Maun, Botswana  
In the Hindu tradition the word Maun means a period of silence of speech.
- Loskop, in the Transvaal, was the name of a lone hill in the veld that has subsequently been submerged under the dam water. The peak can sometimes be seen when the water level drops markedly.

## DODD & VAN RENSBURG FAMILIES KAN U HELP?

Hieronder verskyn 2 fotos van hierdie families.

Op die troufoto verskyn *William Thomas Dodd & Agatha Hendrika van Rensburg*. Haar oupa was meester Bloemkolk-eertydese onderwyser van C J Langenhoven. Die bruidegom se ouers staan langs die bruid.

Op die tweede foto wat vermoedelik langs die ou Blanco pad geneem is staan: Heel regs: Willia, Thomas John Dodd  
Man agter links : Nico van Rensburg  
Ouma & Oupa van Rensburg in die middle  
Nico se vrou, Dina, staan 2 de regs agter.

**INDIEN ENIGIEMAND ENIGE  
INLIGTING OOR VAN DIE ANDER  
PERSONE OP DIE FOTOS HET,  
KONTAK ASB DIE MUSEUM.**



RHYMES WITH ORANGE

BY HILARY B. PRICE





## THE GREAT BRAK RIVER CRAFT WORKSHOP.

During January 2010 the craft workshop under the auspices of the museum will start its next program.

We are looking for unemployed underprivileged persons who have completed school, who are under the age of 35 years and who have an aptitude for craft production (sewing, drawing, design, bead work, painting or marketing etc.). The museum will provide training on up to two days of each week. The object of the program is to start your own business and self sustaining manufacturing concern.

Please join us at the museum on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2009 for an aptitude and induction course. Work will mainly be completed at home however materials and full assistance will be provided.

Please bring an example of any work done and a copy of your I D document.

Learners will be funded during the initial training and for all satisfactory completed work done.

In Januarie 2010 sal die werkswinkel met die ondersteuning van die Museum sy volgende program loots.

Ons is op soek na werklose persone van onder 35 jaar wat hul skoolopleiding voltooi het en wat 'n aanleg het vir die maak van kunshandwerk (teken, ontwerp, kralewerk, naaldwerk, verfwerk of bemarking ens.) Die museum sal twee dae per week opleiding verskaf met die doel om studente sodoende op te lei om hul eie volhoubare vervaardigings-ensakeondernemings op die been te bring.

Kom sluit gerus by ons aan op 12 en 14 Januarie 2010 by die museum vir 'n aanleg-en bekendstellingskursus. Werk sal hoofsaaklik tuis voltooi word maar materiale en volledige ondersteuning sal verskaf word.

Bring asseblief 'n voorbeeld van enige werk deur jou gedoen asook 'n afskrif van jou ID dokument.

Studente sal vergoed word tydens opleiding asook vir alle bevredigende voltooide werk.

Please phone Hope on 083-378-1232 for further information.

## OUR NATURE CORNER

Having already done the page setting I could not include Sally Adam's additional flower photos taken at the end of 2009 on the George Peak (elev 1337m).

Sally writes: There were a lot of these floppy white flowers in a small area. I was surprised to learn that it is a *Harveya* (a root parasite), *H. capensis*. **The genus is known as "inkflowers" because the plants turn black on drying and were used by early colonists as a source of writing ink.**



Another orchid - *Ceratandra globosa*, widespread from the Cape Peninsula (Table Mountain) to the Cederberg. It reaches its easternmost point on the mountains near Port Elizabeth and is known at altitudes from 130 to 2000 metres on the Groot Swartberg Mountains. *Ceratandra globosa* is capable of automatic self-fertilisation or auto-pollination in the absence of suitable pollinators



A couple of us enjoyed a trip up the second highest mountain in Africa (Mt Kenya), in January. The hike starts at about 3000m in dense forest and bamboo forest, which peters out to fynbos after about



3300m and then into a type of alpine vegetation with a difference. Instead of stunted struggling plants one finds giant alpine species, like this Giant Senecio, which can reach 7m in height. In the mornings they'd be quite stiff with ice. The dead leaves cover a hollow stem -

the air inside the stem is warmed by the sun and the dead leaves provide insulation. The growing tip of the stem is hidden beneath protective leaves. In places there were almost forests of senecios, and I spotted a couple of Malachite Sunbirds feeding on them at 4000m.

My favourite plant was this Giant Lobelia, *Lobelia telekii*. They varied from the tall and slim to the short and thickset, like woolly soldiers guarding the mountain.







## HOUSE VILLAIN

Overlooking the vale and out to sea, this very modern earthy house in Great Brak River is built on a small development and features a European approach aiming for architectural integration with natural protection and restoration of the site and the implementation of eco technologies. The French owner of

“LES NATURELLES” has sought to avoid connections to Eskom and Telkom but is easily reached by cell phone and wireless internet.



The property, the first of seven, is sited on a 17 hectare hill overlooking Great Brak River with the Bay of Mossel Bay in the background.

Pierre worked with BSM Brian Stokes (architect FANCOURT ) George, and personally worked on all interior details. The decor is made of local undressed stones, natural wood and paint created from local soils. The wood interior features, poplar and purple heart, have been designed and created by a local team of artisans. Wide imposing decks feature on two sides of the house offering majestic views of Great Brak River.

**The imposing staircase to the second floor fashioned from poplar wood. Alongside are the natural stone walls reaching six meters to the ceiling.**

I believe this project is bringing a totally new approach to our regional architecture and development projects. Rezoning, establishment of a “foot print” initiative with architectural guide lines focusing on landscape integration and nature protection.

Electricity and lighting are provided by solar panels linked to a battery storage and inverter system which is intern backed up by a 220 volt gas driven generator. The lighting consists of numerous liquid crystal displays (LCD) which is twice as efficient



as compact fluorescent lamps. Another benefit is the life which can exceed 50 000 hours or at least 10 years when used for fourteen hours a day.



**Upstairs, one sees the continuation of the natural stone walls and the earthy paint finish which is a mixture of one of three coloured earths found on the development and cement.**

Hot water both for normal household use and the under floor heating are provided by a split system comprising the solar collecting tubes and the insulated storage cylinders or geezers with a back up gas heater to increase the water temperature when required.

**The photograph of the downstairs kitchen highlights the unusual LCD lighting which is also visible at floor level. The poplar wood paneling has been hand crafted to expose its natural character. These walls are painted with a yellow coloured earth and cement mix.**

Unfortunately space is not available to show the many remaining exciting features which make this house both suitable for entertainment and



everyday living without being ostentatious



Having an extensive roof area, collected rain water

is channeled to three 5000 liter tanks situated below the house.

**A view of the guest suit entrance with ceiling panels to match the purple heart wooding and walls painted using the third coloured earth found on site.**



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