

The New Richmond Reader

Issue 11

April 2018



Your Literary News from the Heart of the
Karoo

There is a bite in the air and certainly winter is just around the corner. Smoke is starting to curl in the air from cottage chimneys and we'll see our breath in the cold morning air. But at least we don't ...or rarely have to shovel snow and worry about blizzards as some long suffer people must in far off countries. Ottawa will get 20 cm of the white stuff this weekend. Thank the Pope Ottawa has the snow and Trudeau. I can't wait to get back to Richmond and get the beloved Aga hot and bothered and cooking a great old pot roast or pork belly in the slow oven and the same time as keeping us warm in the kitchen at least.

The New Richmond Reader dormant for some time...sadly...but is now looking to start sending some ditties into your In Box as and when I get submissions from writers and poets, photographers and travellers.

Since we last communicated much water has passed under the Ongers River bridge. We have seen our country systematically looted by criminals, some of whom were voted in Members of Government and even the President of the Republic is up to his exophthalmic eyeballs in the stink of corruption and outright looting of our desperate economy. He and his inner sanctum of criminals have systematically looted the country and we all suffer the consequences of an inept government, ratings down grades, and a very tough climate in which to work, study and especially have any dealings with the government bureaucracy or its quagmired SOE's. they think that we the people are just stupid enough to pay back the money they

have stolen! I hope that that is not the case. The sooner they are all in jail with the rats and of course Baba there to be friend them the happier we shall all be.

Fortunately though, with the slow grinding of time and justice, which thanks to our courts some of them have already been deposed and charged, in a pretty well organised and peaceful process and as South Africans we must trust in the good offices and the men and women in these offices, that they will prosecute to the full might of the law, and if required, will incarcerate in the darkest dungeon those who have stolen from us and have been rotten and corrupt and ripped off their country. It was good to see Jacob Zuma alone and forlorn in the dock.

He is of course now a desperado and as expected is playing the race and politics card.

Notwithstanding the rough waters, I think that there is a very palpable feeling of positive rebirth in the country.

Land grabs, and areas of lawlessness and politicians radicalizing the people does not help but I believe that the good South Africans holding the vast middle ground will prevail; we always have.

A brand-new government of national unity might just be the ticket.

But back to business!

We had hoped that we were going to be able to hold a Coetzee / Fugard and Independent Publishers Awards in the beautiful Zululand North Coast village of Mtunzini, but the Gods of the financial world were not with us on this occasion so sadly it had to be put on the back burner until ...Inshallah, next year.

This temporary setback was all the more sad as just earlier it was announced that Durban was being appointed a UNESCO World City of Literature. The Mtunzini Book Festival would have been the first event falling under the UNESCO / Durban umbrella. What a pity that the powers that be in the KZN Department of Sports ARTs and Culture could not see their way to supporting a fantastic event in their own Zululand 'hood!

Darryl was the kingmaker in this successful application to UNESCO; see <http://www.litnet.co.za/durban-first-city->

[african-continent-become-unesco-world-city-literature/](#)

However, BookBedonnerd is to be held in Richmond from Wednesday October 24 to Saturday October 27th. It will be our XIth BoekBedonnerd and even at this early stage we know that it will be a fantastic gathering of the clan.

So far, we have the likes of David Robbins, Louis Botha, Louise Heckl, Vernon Head, John Clarke and

Vytjie Mentor on the lineup. We'll keep you posted as we flesh out the programme.



BLASTS FROM THE PAST

LINK TO REPORT FROM LAST YEARS SAIP
AWARDS PICS INCL

https://gallery.mailchimp.com/5fc060d5ccd6f1cb59b127ce6/files/4323f55d-62dc-4c43-84b3-47c9b956df8e/Boekbedonnerd_Report_Dec_2017.pdf

4th Annual Self Publishers Awards and Banquet
Wednesday October 24, 2018
From 10:00am
Banquet from 6:00pm
Booktown Richmond Headquarters (the Old Library)
& Die Supper Klub

Closing date for entries 30 June 2018

*Please email Darryl for details on book submissions
davidd@ukzn.ac.za

Richmond will be hosting a Richmond Outdoors Weekend on the w/e of May 11 to 13th. The link to their web site is <http://richmondoutdoor.co.za/index.html> . There will be lots of action and of course the regular stoep sitting for those so inclined.

Lastly, I don't think that many South African's are huge fans of Australia; we compete like Trojans in every aspect of our existence; on the rugby pitch, the cricket field, our beaches and wild life, our remote areas and suburban sprawls. Some even compare the beauty of our ladies, although I personally don't think there is any room to compare.

Despite the recent and ongoing Australian Cricket scandal, I don't think many of us are shocked; only that they were so dumb as to get caught on high resolution cameras. We all have our suspicions of how this might be endemic to the wonderful sport. A sad event for everyone.

South Africa's Professor of wit has submitted a wonderful

article on this episode from his very personal and incisive perspective, but one we all share.

Ashwin, a regular contributor to the more cerebral proceedings of Booktown Richmond, is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Johannesburg.

It's difficult to afford the Australian cricketers pathos when beneath their mate-iness lies an ugliness – cheating is not a new thing in their game

THE script could not have been written any better. A jockstrap. A furtive hand. Sandpaper. A ball waiting to be abused. It's a transfixing sight: the sinful object tantalisingly glimpsed in one hand as the other stretches the whites open. And then it disappears like kangaroo magic Down Under.

Let me confess my own pedigree. I was barely 13, finding my way with seasoned cricketers. Aloo Maharaj (you could tell by his physique, no relative of Keshav) was a canny captain. We were a less than mediocre team and so Aloo came up with all kinds of tricks to level the playing field. He was brought up as a trickster after all, working his father's stall in the Bottom Market. Throwing potatoes hard on the scale so they showed seven pounds.

Distracting the Aunty while he added his mighty thumb to the weight. Selling a sack of spuds but stacking the bottom with three sheets of newspaper. When Aloo opened the first corner shop in Reservoir Hills that sold sliced bread, he kept three slices back, making a killing on extra loaves. Aloo brought all these accumulated skills of skulduggery to Springfield Grounds in the early 1970s.

He always won the toss. He had a tickey with two heads. We would always bat second. That way we could never be bowled out. Aloo insisted that a batsman feign a runny stomach if things were going badly on the pitch. Sometimes both batsmen at the same time.

As you know, there was only one toilet at Springfield, so the other would have to go in the bush behind the tree as there was no sight screen to screen the sight. And if you

did not have the guts to feign illness, he was wont to send on a Goldtop ginger ale with a dose of castor oil. So, things went. Let's admit it – cricket is a veritable tree of knowledge with abundant, juicy, low-hanging fruit tempting one into plucking advantage in the Newlands or Edens or other of the Lords grounds.

Still, the righteous pontificating of former Australian cricketers commentating on the series in South Africa grates like sandpaper in a jockstrap as one pivots for a Chinese cut. We have Allan Border jumping up and down so he could, for a second, look Michael Holding in the eye, condemning the cheating Aussie trio. Yet witness Border writing of touring India in his autobiography: “We were fascinated by the milling mass of humanity below and we took to dropping rupees to them and watching them scramble. Unkind I guess, but it was irresistible. We went a step further and started pouring water on them as they fought each other for the rupees. We'd fill all available receptacles in the hotel room with water, drop the coins and whoosh.” I'm not sure about you, but I'd sooner have a beer with a ball tamperer than coin-dropper.

On home ground, the Aussie crowd have been simply obnoxious to visiting teams. They hounded Muttiah Muralitharan, screaming no-ball, every ball. As journalist Gideon Haigh pointed out in the early 2000s: “The International Cricket Council regarded the MCG as one of the world's worst venues for interruptions of play, trespassing and unruly behaviour; season 2001-2 saw 30 arrests and 500 ejections.”

Sportsmanship was in short supply. As imperious Natal batsman-turned-Aussie Barry Richards put it: “The only time an Australian walks is when his car runs out of petrol.”

What is it about the Aussie mentality and cricket? It lies deep in the psyche produced by the status of Dominion, which reinforced “like us, not really”. And so the reaction was to be more English as a way to gain acceptance. Hark Sir Frederick Toone, Aussie cricket manager in the late 1920s: “I have from the outset regarded these tours primarily as imperial enterprises, tending to cement friendship between the Mother Country and her Dominions. Players... should not be chosen for their cricket qualities alone.

“They must be men of good character, high principle, easy

of address, and in every personal sense worthy of representing their country in all circumstances, irrespective of their work on the field.”

Oh, how they tried to be accepted, with cricket the passport to Englishness. Aussie Prime Minister John Curtin in 1945 promised that his countrymen “will always fight for those 22 yards. Lords and its traditions belong to Australia just as much to England.” But no matter how much they genuflected, the Aussie was a poor relation. As the great CB Fry sniffed in 1938: “In all this Australian team, there are barely one or two who would be accepted as public school men.”

You see, in Australia, cricket was not a sport but an institution necessary to affirm a nation. But, as merely being on the field among their social betters was not enough to gain acceptance, soundly thrashing them would have to compensate.

Winning on the cricket field thus became what PG Wodehouse would have described as “a social necessity”. And out of the craving to win to assuage other “failings”, cheating was inevitably sanctioned with a nod and a wink. This is not a new thing. The Aussie spin bowler of the 1920s, Arthur Mailey, admitted: “I always carried powdered resin in my pocket, and when the umpire wasn’t looking lifted the seam.”

South Africa was different, though. Here we had given the English a bloody nose; Majuba, Isandlwana and then the humiliation of the Jameson Raid. Listen to the words of a member of the English touring team just after the raid: “Why are we going to this confounded place? Most likely when we get there they (the Boers) will fire at us on the cricket field.”

We (Boer, Zulu and Indian – Gandhi started his campaign here) defeated the English in close combat. Only near genocide under Kitchener won the war for the Poms. The Aussies, on the other hand, were their bootlickers in every war. The only way they could distinguish themselves from the mother country was in a game. To borrow Orwell’s memorable phrase, they saw cricket as war by other means.

And out of this, the boorish, macho, uncouth character in

the slips making silly points was born. They began to believe the movie of an indestructible loner in the Outback. But, as we saw with the saltworks of Warner and Smith, these are no Crocodile Dundees. How quick the caught-out crook nowadays becomes a blabbering sook? How it must rankle that the power in cricket has not passed from Lords to the MCG, but to Delhi.

Aussie cricketers now chase after the rupee that Border was wont to throw away. Australia has become cricket's perpetual colonial bridesmaid. It was noticeable how world cricket gloried in the Aussie team's fall from grace. This is the phenomenon Cricket Australia would do well to reflect upon beyond what just went on in Bancroft's trousers at the ill-fated Cape Town test match.

What is it about the Baggy Greens that wards off pathos? I would venture that, beyond the clichéd congratulations to losing teams blurted out on TV interviews, it is the Aussie lack of humility.

There is an abject incapacity to be self-deprecating or funny about their game. Rather, beneath the mate-iness, an ugliness lurks. The wonderful travel writer Jan Morris reveals "that Australia without its streak of malice would not be Australia at all... I sometimes think that the Australian gift for malignant abuse... is a product of the country's very substance, so bitter, so brooding, so full of grudge."

As to the rationale of sledging, I am with Gideon Haigh here, who argues that it only tests "our ability to dehumanise and desensitise ourselves and each other... I find it strange that cricket should be apologising so consistently for not being like other games, that the idea of having a spirit, and the notion that players should exercise self-control, should be thought of as archaic. I'd like in essence, cricket to have the courage of its difference".

It's going to be hard to bring the Aussie game back into the fold of fair play, I am afraid. Their character is built early.

A wonderful English wicket-keeper of the early 1980s, Bob Taylor, commenting on cricket in Australian schools, related that "the air is thick with bad language, the cheating is on a massive scale and the threatening gestures are rife".

In South Africa, the Hansie Cronje business put the fear of the cricketing gods into any player who so much as looked at a bookkeeper.

Those who subsequently did were universally panned and swiftly banned. Hopefully, the Bancroft affair will be a similar moment for those Aussies wont to dwell a while too intently in the sandpaper aisle at Bunnings Warehouses.

Forever BookBedonnerd.....P