

The New Richmond Reader

Issue 80

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Our Literary News from the Heart
of the Karoo

August 2025

40 Loop Street

Richmond

Northern Cape

Dearest Karoosters

Its been some time since the last Reader went out and a lot has happened. The Trump Tariff Wars are in full operation and international trade is in a state of total confusion. Seems like the slightest thing to piss off Donald results in a 25 or 50% increase in tariffs! Our illustrious el Presidente and his clown prince Fuckilule are not helping matters by pronouncing more vehemently than ever that the ANC's policies of BBBBBBEEEEEEE and Expropriation without Compensation are part of "our" DNA...well maybe the ANC's DNA, but according to the South African Institute of Race Relations, they are not in the life blood of the average South African. Just a little Brylcreem dabbed onto Trump's head might go a long way in assuaging him to moderate his stance on South Africa, but no...our idiots in chief go on stage to tell

Trump to mind his own business and piss off from dipping his stick into OUR country. Bad decision. Trump needs to be adored and championed and told what a rock star he is in front of the cameras. Going front and center stage saying what you know he doesn't want to hear is just plain dumb...and we know that the ANC is just Dumb and Dumber!!



Winter in Richmond Michael Drysdale



Michael Drysdale

The war in the Ukraine is never ending and no one seems to be able to get Putin to Back off Barbie. It is a tragedy surpassed only by the genocide taking pace in Gaza and all of Palestine for that matter. You have seen no doubt the memo being circulated, that it is the 80th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima with an aerial photo of a flattened Hiroshima; except that it is an aerial photograph of the Gaza Strip totally flattened. It is a crime against humanity. The population of Israel is enraged seeing images of POWs or hostages, however you may define them, cachectic and starving to death in some tunnel somewhere deep beneath the surface in Gaza, yet these same people are immune to seeing children who have died of starvation in Gaza. I can only pray that they are not seeing the same coverage that we are getting, whether on the BBC or Al Jazeera, and are just plain brainwashed

and ignorant of what is going on just a few miles away. No people can be that inhuman. No one can say that there is no starvation and that there is plenty of food in Gaza.

We are entering Rugby season and building up to the heel of the hunt as the Springboks lube themselves up for some serious contests against the rising Wallabies. I must say from the outset that I never liked the Australians either on the Cricket pitch or Rugby field. They are good but as a South African I just cannot stand them and their arrogance. But when it came to the series against the B & I Lions I did want to see them win because the mainly Pommie loaded Lions are even more arrogant than the Ozzies. If that is possible. We are in for some humdingers on the pitch. And then the All Blacks the Pumas; hold onto your jock straps for a torrid rugby season.

Speaking of which we hosted recently in Richmond the first annual Springbok Blowout in which we paid homage to the Springbok on the Pitch.....Rugby.....Plaasthe Springboks in the wild and the industry which has grown up around them.....and on the Plate.....and the wonderous meat that is Springbok. And it was a Blowout indeed with the like of



Michael Drysdale

Schalk Burger Sr who is really quite a character and in fact well known to Richmond as his wife is a local girl of the Kock family out on the Deelfontein road. We also had Springbok captain for the 70's Hannes Marais who was as sharp as a tack and such a great guy, along with his brother in arms Pierre Springbok who had a repository of rugby knowledge second to none.



Michael Drysdale

Moving right along, we are looking forward to BoekBedonnerd XVIII in a big way and have a lineup of some considerable note which I attach following. Just a mention that accommodation is becoming an issue as Richmond is at the heart of one of the country's centres of renewable energy generation with both solar and wind projects in the Richmond district. Seems that everyone and his uncle are making rooms available for the dozens of contractors who have invaded our sleepy little dorp. So: book early. PLEASE....

As I think I mentioned in the last edition, Richmond was in the finalist short list for dorp of the years on KykNet. Alas we did not win and all the planning for how we would spend the million Rand first prize came to NIX. But the exercise was not in vain as we at least know what we must do to get the village jacked up. Sadly, the Ubuntu Municipality is a festering cancer and not a cent trickles down to Richmond from the powers that be in Victoria West. There is a new sense being a Richmonder in the heart of the Karoo which is a very good thing. Jan Kempdorp won the prize by the way. Good on them and congratulations.

BookBedonnerd-created on the day of singularity

While Peter has been busy rubbing shoulders with our Springbok heroes of yesteryear, I've been plodding away trying to finalise the programme for this year's book festival.

We are truly proud of the galaxy of stars we have assembled for this year's event. In a literary ecosystem in which writers pretty much play musical chairs as they get moved from one book festival to the next, it is refreshing (to me at least) that our book festival features writers that have largely never been seen at another book festival in the country. And I think that is what is needed to keep attracting the bibliophiles to the far flung corner of the Great Karoo. SA

deserves a truly international book festival and I think the only Booktown on the African continent might have cemented its reputation as the leading international book festival in SA.

Below, please find our (almost) final list of speakers for the 2025 Madibaland @ BookBedonnerd Literary Festival.

YOU CAN READ MORE ABOUT EACH AUTHOR ON OUR WEBSITE

www.booktownrichmond.co.za.

- 1. Peter Godwin - Exit Wounds - online**
- 2. Rory Riordan - Athol Fugard's Port Elizabeth Years**
- 3. Lisa Fugard - online. Athol Fugard, My Father**
- 4. Anton Krueger - Poplar Grove**
- 5. Robert Berold - Poetry / Deep South Publishers**
- 6. Mangaliso Buzani - A Naked Bone**
- 7. Malcolm Pearse- Alan Paton and The Comrades Marathon**
- 8. Hein Viljoen - 10 x 10 - Die top tien romans en gedigte in Afrikaans**
- 9. Dietloff van der Berg - Feesmaal**
- 10. Milton Schorr - Addict**
- 11. Peter Ross - Chasing Steeples - online**
- 12. Riana Steyn - Die laaste karretjiegraf - Fugard se enigste Afrikaanse drama**
- 13. Rob Parsons - A Knock at the Door - online**
- 14. Paul Sinton - Hewitt - One Small Step - Founder of the Parkrun - online**
- 15. Chantal Stewart - The Veil of Maya**
- 16. Tom Nancollas - Seashaken Houses: A Lighthouse History - online**
- 17. Kerry Hammerton - Flash Fiction**
- 18. Andile Cele - Braids and Migraines**
- 19. Paul Weinberg - Between the Cracks**
- 20. Jeffrey Archer - End Game - online**
- 21. Malcolm Pearse - All The Hills Are Home**
- 22. Popina Khumanda - The Smallest Ones**
- 23. Tammy Roberts -Southby - Sunshine Simplicity**
- 24. Claerwen Howie - Shadowed Lives**

25. Darryl Earl David - Doggone Days

26. Mike de Jongh - Truly South African Coenraad Buys and his descendants

27. Alex Hamilton - Arting - Artist Autobiography

28. Dorian Haarhoff - Route 77 - A Poememoir

29. Manny Coe- Brother.Do.You.Love.Me - online

I was scratching around looking for Karoo based poem or short short story to include, and in a brief telcon with DD asked if he had anything up his sleeve which I might include. 5 minutes later I received this lovely little ditty in my inbox.

The Great Karoo, a land of ochre and gold,
Where silence reigns, and stories yet untold.
Vast plains stretch out, beneath a burning sun,
A tapestry of beauty, finely spun.
Dry riverbeds, etched on the ancient ground,
Whisper of life, in whispers all around.
Kopjes rise, like ancient sentinels,
Guarding secrets, in their rocky cells.
Stars ignite, in the inky, velvet night,
A cosmic ballet, pure and endless light.
The Milky Way, a river in the sky,
As ancient echoes softly drift and sigh.
A land of contrasts, harsh and yet so grand,
The Great Karoo, forever in my hand.
A place of peace, where spirit can take flight,
Bathed in the sun, and bathed in starry light.

Pretty lovely....but he came back to me in a tick to say....AI generated!!! This is really frightening. I asked Paige one of my receptionists and also school teacher how she detects AI from what her students have written themselves. She said “semi colons”; students don’t know what a semi colon is!!

But this is definitely not AI generated and something which is at the hear of the Karoo some century and a quarter ago. One can never tire of Rudyard Kipling.



BRIDGE-GUARD IN THE KARROO

*Sudden the desert changes,
The raw glare softens and clings,
Till the aching Oudtshoorn ranges
Stand up like the thrones of Kings—*

*Ramparts of slaughter and peril—
Blazing, amazing, aglow—
'Twixt the sky-line's belting beryl
And the wine-dark flats below.*

*Royal the pageant closes,
Lit by the last of the sun—
Opal and ash-of-roses,
Cinnamon, umber, and dun.*

*The twilight swallows the thicket,
The starlight reveals the ridge.*

*The whistle shrills to the picket—
We are changing guard on the bridge.*

*(Few, forgotten and lonely,
Where the empty metals shine—
No, not combatants—only
Details guarding the line.)*

*We slip through the broken panel
Of fence by the ganger's shed;
We drop to the waterless channel
And the lean track overhead;*

*We stumble on refuse of rations,
The beef and the biscuit-tins;
We take our appointed stations,
And the endless night begins.*

*We hear the Hottentot herders
As the sheep click past to the fold—
And the click of the restless girders
As the steel contracts in the cold—*

*Voices of jackals calling
And, loud in the hush between,
A morsel of dry earth falling
From the flanks of the scarred ravine.*

*And the solemn firmament marches,
And the hosts of heaven rise
Framed through the iron arches—
Banded and barred by the ties,*

*Till we feel the far track humming,
 And we see her headlight plain,
 And we gather and wait her coming—
 The wonderful north-bound train.*

*(Few, forgotten and lonely,
 Where the white car-windows shine—
 No, not combatants—only
 Details guarding the line.)*

*Quick, ere the gift escape us!
 Out of the darkness we reach
 For a handful of week-old papers
 And a mouthful of human speech.*

*And the monstrous heaven rejoices,
 And the earth allows again,
 Meetings, greetings, and voices
 Of women talking with men.*

*So we return to our places,
 As out on the bridge she rolls;
 And the darkness covers our faces,
 And the darkness re-enters our souls.*

*More than a little lonely
 Where the lessening tail-lights shine.
 No—not combatants—only
 Details guarding the line!*

Karoo Silence

I wish I could throw the wisdom of these stones at you
 their surfaces burnt in the unrelenting Karoo sun,
 a furnace of ageless, forgotten intensity filled with
 ripples;
 heatwaves playing the symphony of voiceless music.
 The music one can only hear once you appreciate silence.

I wish I could bathe you in the intensity of the sunset,
 immerse you in the canvas of colour splashed over hills
 silently standing guard, clothed in resplendence of almost night.
 Hulks of granite slowly eroding as the wind licks at their feet.

I wish I could ride with you on the plumes of wind
 the image of horses galloping across these ancient plains,
 shifting sand displayed in the majesty of a country so harsh
 that we could never survive without intimate knowledge
 of all that surrounds us, so deceptively safe.

I wish I could show you my heart,
 hiding here and begging for the peace of this place.
 Tanzanite

Next week we are off to the big C and a return to the homeland. Being an immigrant is never easy and we are a land full of them; it is a constant in our soul, the loyalty and love of two countries. Its just a good thing that a rugby game between South Africa and Canada would be just about as serious as an ice hockey game, so I would never have to show my loyalty on my chest.

Spring is definitely in the air and seeing trees in bud and some of the early season flowers is just too splendid.

BookBedonnerd is just around the corner so please book your accommodation.... NOW!!

A Richmond Community Development Foundation Project

Totally BookBedonnerd and Fundamentally Fugarded

