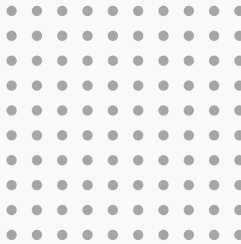


The Hogsback Times



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A HUGE BIG FAT THANK YOU
TO YOU ALL!

FOR PARTICIPATING, FOR
CONTRIBUTING &
FOR READING!

If you have any questions or
would like to submit a
story/letter/article please
email miki@hbtimes.co.za.
Cut off is 23rd every month!

Dear HB Community,

This first page is always the last page I write.

Partly because I'm still waiting for late submissions. Partly because I'm usually still trying to squeeze 1,500 words into a space designed for 500. But mostly because I never really know what this issue is about until I've wandered through all of your stories first.

Every month starts looking like a pile of unrelated articles. A dead log in the forest. A debate about WhatsApp admins. A Tolkien mystery. A neighbourly disagreement. A lost dog. A local business. A mountain storm. Then somewhere along the way, a theme quietly emerges.

This month, for me, that theme is perspective, gratitude and life's wonderful sense of humour.

I am appreciative of paradox...of our differences, and our opposing opinions. I am thankful that life gives us so many opportunities to stop and see things from another perspective. I am still loving this role, and I still thoroughly enjoy weaving and wandering through these pages with you.

Carol Nieth sent me a beautiful little quote by Edward Wallis Hoch, and I feel it perfectly summarizes not only this month's issue, but life in our unique community:

"There is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us, that it ill behooves any of us to talk about the rest of us."

So whether you are ducking the mist, repairing a cracked rim from a Main Road pothole, or sharing an extension cord with the neighbor you were arguing with yesterday...thank you for keeping this place beautifully wild.

Love

Miki
(Sorry I'm late. If this cough doesn't kill me, see you next month.)

By Community. For Community. On Community.

NEWS, UPDATES & FEEDBACK

For Local Residents Only

THE HBT HAS LET SOMEONE DOWN. AND WANT TO BE UPFRONT AND OPEN ABOUT IT. SHE'S NOT WRONG

Dear Miki,

I need to ask an uncomfortable question.

Why is it easier to find out what somebody's cousin's dog did in Hogsback than it is to find out what the committees, associations, forums, trusts, societies, task teams, working groups, and alphabet-soup organisations are actually doing with our support?

The main reason I subscribed to your glorified village gossip rag was not for the scandals, the opinions, the philosophical navel-gazing, or the monthly blood sport that passes for community debate. I subscribed because I thought it might finally tell me what the various organisations that receive our money, donations, volunteer hours, goodwill, attendance, fundraising support, and endless patience are actually doing.

So far, apart from the occasional update from CPF, Roads, and one or two others, the silence has been deafening.

Do you not ask the right questions?

Do they not answer?

Do they not know what they're doing?

Or is reporting back to the people who support them considered an optional extra?

I don't expect a 40-page annual report. I don't need pie charts, mission statements, strategic frameworks, or inspirational quotes about community spirit. I just want to know:

- What did you do?
- What are you doing now?
- What are you planning next?
- What challenges are you facing?
- How can the community help?

That's it.

If an organisation can ask for donations, membership fees, sponsorships, volunteers, public support, public trust, and community participation, then surely it can manage four paragraphs once a month.

The strange thing is that every committee meeting seems to generate rumours, debates, complaints, and theories. Yet somehow no actual information escapes into the wild.

Nature abhors a vacuum. Communities do too. When organisations don't communicate, people fill in the blanks themselves. That's when speculation starts breeding faster than rabbits behind the pub.

Perhaps the solution is simple.

Any organisation that wants the community's support should occasionally tell the community what it's been up to.

Radical idea, I know.

Yours in hopeful frustration,

A Paying Subscriber Who Would Like Some Actual News

MAY I SAY

Dear Subscriber who wants to remain anonymous.

Thank you for allowing me to publish your email. You raise a fair point.

The HBT provides every committee, society, association and organisation with an opportunity to submit updates. Reminders are sent, deadlines are published and the invitation is always open... in fact I need them!)

That said, perhaps relying solely on voluntary submissions is not enough. I am not particularly interested in becoming anyone's mother, secretary, or professional nag. I already feel resentful when I have to remind grown-ups about a cut-off date.

If any reader would like to act as a community correspondent, accountability hound, amateur investigative journalist or simply someone willing to ask, "What have you been up to lately?" on behalf of the community, I would welcome the assistance.

After all, community news should not depend solely on who remembers to send an email before the 23rd.

Regards,
Miki

CALL TO ACTION

If you attend an event (or anything really) in Hogsback, be it soccer, bowls, live music, workshops, wine tasting, car boot sale, market etc

Please feel free to write something about it. An 'Event reporter Journo' piece or just a quick email to submissions@hbtimes.co.za

By Community. For Community. On Community.

NEWS, UPDATES & FEEDBACK

For Local Residents Only

MOST RECEINT UPDATE FROM HTO

Dear Community.

Thank you to everyone who responded to the call for nominations for Board Members and Task Team Coordinators. After consultation, we have decided to postpone the actual elections to after this year's Christmas in July to allow all of us to focus on making it a success.

The following nominations have been received (and accepted). Additional nominations can still be accepted. Please let us know.

Chairperson: Siya Gxothiwe

Deputy Chairperson: No nomination

Secretary: Janice Adlam

Treasurer: Joanne Campbell

Additional Members/Task Team Coordinators: Francois Rautenbach, Ruby Hales, Bella Khashe, Mornay Van Vuuren

Both Miki and Fiona will be standing down as Board Members.

MAILBOX MOVEMENTS

Hi all,
not sure if this has been mentioned here yet or not, but there is a large pile of mail at Spar.

I've already seen a few familiar names in the pile and tried to contact some people personally to let them know, but I didn't have much time to sort through everything.

Please, if you go through the pile and notice a familiar name, be so kind as to let that person know about it as well.

(Placed on WhatsApp by a community member – just incase you missed it.)

CALL TO ACTION

HOGSBACK COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER DAY

Cape Parrot has generously offered 18 staff members for a Make a Difference Day to help clear invasive alien vegetation in the Arboretum on Friday, 5 June.

 We urgently need community volunteers to join us. The more hands we have, the greater the impact we can make in a single day.

 Main focus:

- * Cotoneaster removal
- * Chinese Maple removal
- * Other invasive alien vegetation threatening our indigenous environment

 Please bring, if available:

- * Tree pullers
- * Spades
- * Picks
- * Gloves

 If you can make a gardener available for the day, this would be a tremendous help and greatly appreciated.

 Date: Friday, 5 June

 Venue: Hogsback Arboretum

 Time: 08:30

 A management plan and work allocations for the day will be posted by Wednesday next week.

 Please reply on a PM to me (this group is very large and I don't want to miss anyone's comms) if you can assist and indicate what tools you can bring. (Haylee +27 82 326 3495)

Together we can make a significant difference to the Arboretum and help protect Hogsback's unique natural environment.

FROM THE FOREST FLOOR

For Local Residents Only

FORESTBEING FINDS...

Almost all Life needs 2 things, oxygen and water... the forest provides the oxygen we need to breathe, that's why it feels refreshing while walking in the forest as most plants in the forest provides oxygen during the day for us to breathe.

Yet without water, neither us nor the plants feeding us oxygen, can survive! For centuries water has been regarded as sacred in many cultures with the earliest signs of humans regarding water as sacred dating back to the Paleolithic and Mesolithic eras. Anthropologists trace this to artifacts like small, submerged offering basins, carved "cup-and-ring" rocks near streams, and ritual deposits found near springs, indicating reverence up to 10,000 to 40,000 years ago.

In Xhosa cosmology, water (amanzi) is not merely a physical resource but a sacred, living force that embodies ancestral wisdom. Rivers, oceans, and sacred springs are revered as portals to the spiritual realm, essential for physical healing, spiritual purification, and communion with the ancestors. In my own heritage, Germanic tribes viewed water as a sacred, liminal threshold to the spiritual realm, connecting daily survival directly to the divine. Rivers, bogs, and springs were all treated as gateways to the underworld, functioning as places of healing, ritual sacrifice, and sites for making offerings to the gods.

While cultures may differ like day and night, one thing is for sure, water is sacred to humankind, unfortunately we tend to forget that sometimes, and we pollute the rivers and streams, forgetting that our live comes, and is sustained by water. So next time you walk past a stream and you notice litter in the water, show the respect our ancestors was showing to the water, and remove the litter. One small step from us, make a world of difference in all our lives.

Till next time, stay wild.
Adi Forestbeing

DEAD WOOD ISN'T DEAD

A few weeks ago I found myself staring at a rotting log. Not a majestic yellowwood. Not a rare orchid. Just a soggy, moss-covered chunk of wood quietly decomposing beside a path.

In most gardens, it would have been removed years ago. Too untidy, too rotten or too dead. Except it wasn't dead at all. In fact, it may have been one of the busiest places in the forest.

The moment a tree falls in Hogsback, an entire community moves in. Fungi arrive first. Tiny threads spread through the wood, breaking down tough fibres that few other organisms can digest. Mosses creep across the surface. Beetles tunnel inside. Millipedes munch their way through decaying matter. Microbes multiply by the millions.

What looks like death is actually recycling. The forest wastes nothing. Every fallen branch becomes food and every rotting stump becomes shelter. Every decomposing log slowly transforms back into soil.

Scientists call these nurse logs because they literally nurture the next generation. Seeds land on them. Ferns root in them. Mosses carpet them. Sometimes entire young trees begin life on the remains of an older one. A forest's version of inheritance.

This is especially important in Hogsback's indigenous forests, where cool temperatures and abundant moisture create ideal conditions for decomposition. The fallen giants become miniature ecosystems, holding water, storing nutrients and providing homes for countless creatures we rarely notice.

The irony is that humans often see decay as failure. The forest sees it as progress. A fallen tree has not reached the end of its usefulness. It has merely changed jobs.

Perhaps that's why I love old forests so much. They don't hide their cycles. Growth and decay sit side by side. Life feeds on death. Endings become beginnings. The rotting log beside the path wasn't a corpse. It was a maternity ward, a restaurant, an apartment block, a water reservoir, a future forest in disguise.

So the next time you see a fallen branch slowly disappearing beneath moss and mushrooms, take a closer look. You may be standing above one of the busiest neighbourhoods in Hogsback.

Forest Floor Note: Unless a fallen log poses a safety risk, consider leaving it where it lies. What looks untidy to us often provides food, shelter and habitat for dozens of species beneath the forest canopy.

Flora the Explora

THE TOLKIEN TOKEN WE TETHERED TO

How the RAF Put Hogsback on the Map of Middle-earth

For years, we've dined out on the myth of a Tolkien-Nanny, hailing from Hogsback. Convincingly telling Tolkien enthusiasts that her stories of the Inkanyamba (the Great Flying Snake of the waterfalls) inspired Lord of the Rings. His primary household staff in Bloemfontein were Sotho/Tswana and no records show any staff traveling to the UK with the family in 1895.

J.R.R Tolkien was born Jan 1892, in Bloemfontein, Orange Free State. His only childhood holiday in 1894 was to the Western Cape, over 800km from the Amathole Mountains. In April 1895, his mother, Mabel Tolkien, took him and his brother to England. His brother, Hilary, was the youngest. And they never returned to our shores. Thus, the theory of infant memories cannot possibly be true.

No Hogsback local would ever maliciously lie or deceive the Tolkien aficionados, we believed it as much as you did, but...

It is time to retire these legends. I've researched birth and travel records, military and air force transcripts and we finally uncovered the truth. The RAF archives are far more compelling than the folklore: Hogsback didn't inspire The Hobbit; it helped build The Lord of the Rings.



The real link is J.R.R.'s son; Christopher Tolkien. While it is impossible for Hogsback to have inspired The Hobbit (published in 1937), it is highly probable it shaped The Lord of the Rings. In 1944, while his father was grappling with the deadly mid-section of the trilogy, Christopher was stationed just 110km away at 47 Air School in Queenstown. As a navigator-in-training, Christopher wasn't just looking at the ground; he was mapping it. From his cockpit, he viewed the Amathole escarpment from a bird's-eye perspective, watching the mist roll over the three Hogs and the ancient yellowwood canopies. Although we could not find definitive proof of his boots on our soil; he was stationed at Queenstown as well as Grahamstown during his training. With several 48 hours 'passes/sign outs'; it is very probable that he may have spent some down time here in Hogsback. J.R.R. Tolkien was famously visual but isolated in wartime Oxford...Every week, Christopher sent letters by air-mail, back home. Tolkien's own correspondence confirms these were his "only window to the world." While writing the lush, waterfall-heavy landscapes of Ithilien and the rugged "Wilds of Middle-Earth," Tolkien was reading his son's fresh, precise descriptions of the Eastern Cape's beauty:

"I am now writing the story of the Ring... it is a great help to have your letters." — J.R.R. Tolkien to Christopher (Letter #89, Nov 1944)

"Your long and delightful letter arrived today... It is a great comfort to me... I can see the landscape in your descriptions." — J.R.R. Tolkien to Christopher (Letter #91, Jan 1945)

It wasn't a blurry childhood memory that shaped Gondor... it was the precision of a RAF pilot's letters, from our own backyard to Tolkien's pages.

The final piece of the puzzle is Hobbiton-on-Hogsback. Founded in May 1945 by the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (the same organization Christopher's colleagues served alongside) it was officially named in 1947. And definitely did not inspire The Hobbit (1937); but the connection is hard to overlook.

Ultimately... J.R.R Tolkien gave us the words, but Christopher, and the Amathole mountains, gave him the scenery.

Tiny Parasites, Big Problems

Why Worm Control Matters in Dogs, Cats and Especially Young Puppies & Kittens

There is something deeply comforting about seeing a healthy puppy or kitten growing up in the mountains – bright eyes, healthy coats and endless curiosity. But hidden beneath that playful energy, one of the most common health problems in rural animals can quietly take hold: internal parasites. Worm infestations are extremely common in both dogs and cats, particularly in young animals. In rural areas like Hogsback, where pets roam freely, hunt rodents, mix with livestock areas and spend time outdoors, exposure to parasites is almost unavoidable. Left untreated, worms can lead to diarrhoea, poor growth, weight loss, anaemia, weakness and, in severe cases, death in puppies and kittens. Some parasites may also affect human health if hygiene and parasite control are neglected.

The Most Common Worms in Dogs and Cats

Several intestinal parasites commonly affect pets in our area:

Roundworms are especially common in puppies and kittens. Young animals can become infected before birth, through their mother’s milk or from contaminated soil and faeces. Many adult animals carry dormant larvae in their tissues even when no adult worms are present.

Hookworms are small but dangerous blood-feeding worms that attach to the lining of the intestine. Heavy infestations can cause severe blood loss, weakness and anaemia, especially in young animals. Hookworm problems often worsen when animals are stressed, malnourished or already sick.

Whipworms live in the large intestine and may cause chronic diarrhoea, weight loss and digestive upset. These parasites can be difficult to detect because eggs are not always present in every stool sample.

Tapeworms are commonly spread by fleas, lice and rodents. Dogs and cats become infected when swallowing infected fleas during grooming or when catching prey animals such as mice. Owners often notice small white tapeworm segments around the tail or in bedding before any other symptoms appear.

Veterinary texts also note that fleas, beetles, cockroaches, rodents and other pests may act as intermediate hosts for certain worms. This means parasite control is not only about deworming – flea control and general sanitation are equally important.

Why Puppies and Kittens Are More Vulnerable

Young animals are particularly at risk because their immune systems are still developing. Puppies and kittens can accumulate large worm burdens very quickly. Heavy infestations may lead to: Bloating stomachs, Weakness, Poor appetite, Slow growth, Digestive problems, Dehydration and Anaemia.

Stress also plays a major role. Moving homes, poor nutrition, overcrowding, cold weather, infections or sudden weaning can allow dormant parasites to multiply rapidly. In many rural homes, puppies and kittens are born outdoors or in shared spaces with older animals, making early deworming especially important.

Signs Owners Should Watch For

Many animals with worms may appear normal at first, so early signs are easy to miss. Keep an eye out for: Diarrhoea, Blood in the stool, Vomiting, Weight loss, Pot belly despite poor condition, Weakness or lethargy, Poor coat quality, Scooting or licking around the tail, Pale gums and/or Poor appetite.

Importantly, animals do not always pass visible worms or eggs in their stool. A pet may still carry a significant parasite burden even when nothing obvious can be seen. Recurring worm problems can also point to larger management issues such as poor sanitation, heavy flea infestations, overcrowding or nutritional stress.

A Practical Approach to Deworming in Rural Areas

Living in a rural community means veterinary services are not always immediately available, so preventative care becomes especially important. Routine deworming is one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect the health of dogs and cats. Young puppies and kittens generally require more frequent deworming than adults because they are exposed early in life and have little natural resistance. No single dewormer treats every parasite equally well, and different products target different worms. Choosing the correct treatment depends on: The age of the animal, Body weight, General health condition, The type of worms suspected and Whether fleas are also present.

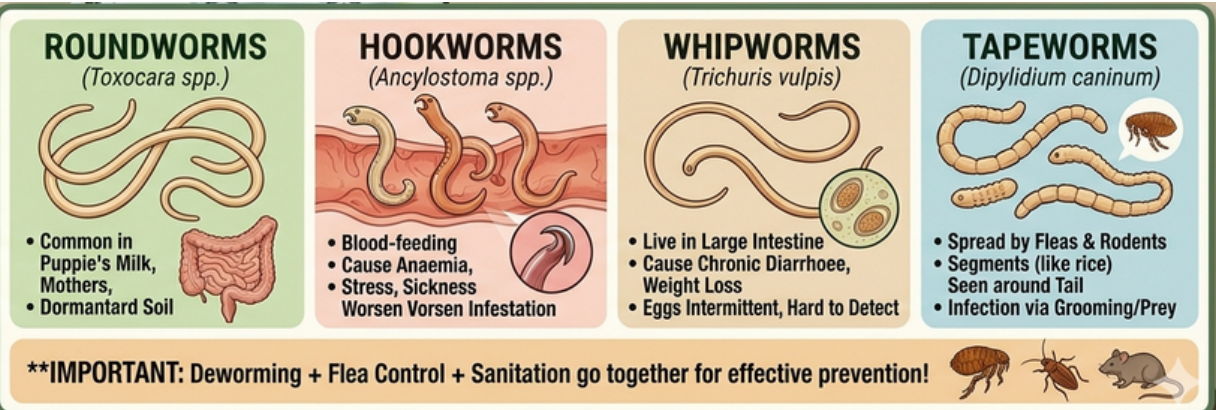
Using the wrong product – or underdosing – often leads to persistent infestations.

Healthy Animals Start from the Inside

Good parasite control is one of the foundations of healthy pets. Combined with decent nutrition, clean sleeping areas and flea control, regular deworming can dramatically improve the wellbeing of dogs and cats in rural communities.

At our local vet shop (Dogsback Vet shop), we keep a wide range of deworming products for puppies, kittens, adult dogs and cats, as well as flea-control treatments and general animal health support. Our veterinary doctor can also help guide owners toward the most suitable option for their animals and living conditions.

A healthy puppy chasing chickens across a Hogsback garden, or a well-fed farm cat stretched out in the afternoon sun, often starts with something very simple: keeping parasites under control.



Disclaimer: I will not be editing and removing offensive language or statements. If I chose to publish your vent or letter, it is because you are not the only one upset about the subject matter. Do not read if you are triggered easily.

WhatsApp Group Admin Intervention: Gift or Curse?

Crying about how hard your job is, does not quite hit the same when you volunteered to be an admin. The Stanford prison experiment comes to mind when I think of what the world of WhatsApp Admins have become... Okay, maybe that comment was a bit mean, especially considering that my personal Admin-aversion is not really the argument. Mine is a critique of the profound socio-psychological damage caused by digital sanitation. In the haste to sanitize public discourse, ‘keep the peace’ & the ‘peaceful people present’; WhatsApp administrators have effectively welded the communal pressure valve shut. We have collectively bartered dynamic, self-regulating conflict for a stagnant, superficial civility...seemingly unaware that unreleased pressure does not dissipate; it putrefies. What was once a sharp, fleeting friction over WhatsApp, is now forced inward, mutating into a slow-killing internal infection.

Spaces for emotional and psychological discharge have always been a vital element in society: the Colosseum, boxing rings, parliaments, comedy roasts, satire and public debate. Civilizations understood that when avenues for release are systematically blocked, the collective nervous system hardens. The focus here cannot just be on what is being said; the critical point is that the release itself is crucial. Expression acts as circulation and emotional airflow. Ten years ago, people vented publicly on our WhatsApp groups. They complained, snapped, overreacted, argued, teased each other, embarrassed themselves and moved on. It wasn’t always elegant, but the emotional pressure had somewhere to go. The system could breathe. Unresolved, raw expression is often healthier than suppressed civility.

As a therapist, I’ve spent years watching what happens to bodies that cannot release tension. What is not processed gets stored, and what is not released becomes stagnant. Communities are no different. The consequences of this psychological stagnation are already visible. Almost two years ago, while massaging a guest, she said something that genuinely hit me where it hurts...I love Hogsback!

“We used to love coming here. You all felt like one big family. Everywhere we went we only heard great things about where to go next.” She then told me how one local business owner had vindictively spoken about another local business to her. I was shocked. Every small town has politics and frustrations, but there used to be an unspoken understanding: we don’t all have to like each other, but no guest needs to know that. This is the pathology of the closed release valve. When a community loses its ability to release openly, trapped psychic steam leaks sideways into shops, markets, business interactions and private conversations. Locals have unknowingly turned paying guests into proxy therapists, offloading forestry disputes, baboon wars, personal issues and village bitterness onto outsiders who came here to escape their own heaviness, not to absorb ours.

Instead of venting publicly, getting it out and moving on, people now carry these bitter pills internally. Heavy things get heavier the longer they are carried. By the time the grievance finally surfaces, it is no longer a passing frustration but an entity of its own; dense, personal and infectious. Because people no longer feel safe speaking openly, the negativity spreads quietly through whispers, side conversations and covert alliances.

The tragedy is that the conditioning may already be too deep. Many residents now associate honest WhatsApp expression with backlash, ridicule, correction or social exile.

Admins sought to protect the collective from temporary discomfort, but in doing so, we may have damaged our psychological robustness. By outsourcing emotional regulation to admins, we did not create peace. We simply traded a few loud, fleeting arguments for a quiet, slow-killing poison. Once a community becomes afraid of its own expression, silence no longer feels peaceful. It feels clinical and 'no drama here's becomes an outright lie.

We love to have a dig at our admins and blame them for the shift. No more late night, drunken dramas on our ‘village radio stations’, we, the opposition, miss the ‘entertainment’ right?

But if we’re honest, with each other, and ourselves; would they have been assigned or taken on the role if people understood that: Offence cannot be given, it is only taken. Had the handful of emotionally fragile and reactive, been given tools instead of justifications; we may not have needed to become a bunch of adults needing to be managed by a bunch of adults. ...

Closing Thoughts

Perhaps what this debate ultimately reveals is that the issue was never really about WhatsApp groups or their increasingly demonised Admins. At its core, this is a conversation about human nature, community psychology, and what happens when modern village life becomes compressed into text bubbles, unfiltered reactions, emotional fatigue and perceived favouritism.

The discussions around Hogsback’s group admins have stirred unusually strong emotions because both sides are speaking to something real. Some residents feel increasingly silenced, cautious and emotionally bottled up. Others feel exhausted by constant conflict, online hostility and the impossible task of trying to keep shared digital spaces functional.

A community without containment eventually becomes unlivable. A community without release slowly becomes emotionally barren.

What follows, then, is not a battle between villains and victims, but two deeply different, and strangely complementary, attempts to answer the same difficult question:

How do you keep a small town connected without either exploding from chaos... or suffocating from silence? Somewhere between the digital colosseum and the sterile clinic, perhaps there is still a healthier middle ground waiting to be found.

Staying true to, now almost 8 years of conformity... Let’s allow the Admins to have the last word. *

Welcome to the Open-Air Asylum

An open letter to the amateur lawyers and armchair prophets of Hogsback

By Jono

Many people think the admin team is a shadow cabal of power-tripping dictators censoring free speech. We hear it often. People claim they are scared to post a basic question about shop hours because of our tyrannical iron fist. Let's be real for a second. Managing the digital plumbing for this village isn't an exercise in ideology. It is just a daily, exhausting attempt to stop a bunch of eccentric, strong-willed people from completely short-circuiting each other's sanity. The biggest reason for the madness is that people simply refuse to understand a basic concept: think of our community WhatsApp setup like a house. Different rooms have completely different functions. You don't take a shower in the kitchen, and you don't sleep in the pantry. But every single week, someone tries to brush their teeth in the oven, bake a cake in the shower, and then threatens to sue the admin team when their toothbrush melts.

The Rooms: Learn the Floor Plan
These groups are not a universal broadcast channel for whatever random thought pops into your head at 11pm. They are specialised tools built for survival, and you need to look at the floor plan.

The Emergency Group (Panic Room): This is the fire alarm. It has exactly one purpose: life, limb, or immediate crisis. No chatting is permitted. Period. Most locals are expected to have high-volume alarm tones set for this so a midnight notification wakes them up to grab a fire extinguisher, or a medical kit. You can talk in here ONLY if you are actively responding to an ongoing emergency. The absolute second that specific emergency is over, the discussion is finished. It needs to move immediately to the chat group, or a temporary coordination group to handle the logistics. If you pull the fire alarm at 2am just to ask if anyone wants tea, people mute the group, and then everyone sleeps through a real disaster.

Info and Advertising (Notice Board): This is the clean business billboard on the front gate. The rules are simple: no banter and a maximum of one ad per day. This is the room where your daily commercial posts belong.

Whatsup in Hogsback (Living Room): This is the main town square, the local pub lounge. This is the locals' chat group where you can actually talk, debate, and let off steam. Because it is the chat place, commercial ads are limited to once a week. This is where you post your weekly specials.

Here is the main issue we run into: a lot of people do not want to join the main chat group because they say the living room gets too noisy. That is completely fine. Stay out of it. But just because you choose to stay out of the lounge does not mean you get to start cooking your dinner in the toilet. You do not get to use the Emergency or Advertising groups for your daily banter just because you want a quiet phone. The rules don't bend just because you don't want to live in the main room.

Where the Line is Drawn: Issues vs. Personal Attacks

Where does community news end and an infraction begin? Let us look at bad driving on our dirt roads. If you post, "Please watch your speed, the dust is bad and we have kids and animals around," that is a perfectly fine alert. No admin will ever touch it.

But the second you start naming specific neighbours, launching unverified accusations, and screaming at each other, you have turned the notice board into a digital colosseum. If we leave it up, hundreds of locals have to sit through a toxic grudge match in their own homes. If we delete it, the offender throws a tantrum, slides into our private messages, and accuses us of acting like dictators.

The constitution guarantees free speech, but it does not give you a right to throw an unverified fit inside a curated community room. If you walk into a neighbour's lounge and start shouting insults at their guests, you get kicked out. That isn't a human rights violation, it's just basic housekeeping.

Inside the Asylum Supervisors Admin Room
Before anyone gets offended and starts drafting a complaint, using the word asylum isn't derogatory here. Anyone who has lived on this mountain for more than ten minutes knows we are essentially the world's largest, most beautiful open-air asylum. The only difference between us and a regular institution is that our inmates have better views, stronger opinions on baboons, and access to smartphones.

Nobody is paying us in gold bullion to manage grown adults' egos at midnight on a Saturday. We are human volunteers holding the brooms, trying to keep the village grid from blowing up. What you might see is a deleted post. What you don't see is the utter madness that lands in our direct messages right after. In fact, it has gotten so ridiculous that we now actively leave total rubbish standing just to save our own sanity. If someone accidentally drops a one-second blank voice note, or posts their shopping list in the wrong group, our immediate instinct used to be to clean it up. But the second a post vanishes, the conspiracy theorists wake up. People who never saw the original mistake immediately assume we are silencing political dissidents, and our DMs flood with angry questions demanding to know why we are censoring people. It is actually less exhausting to leave an obvious, harmless piece of junk cluttering the feed than it is to deal with the wave of paranoid messages from the internet detectives who think they just witnessed a human rights violation. Contrary to the village gossip, we don't just permanently ban people because they had a bad day or made a one-off mistake. In my entire history with these groups, we have only permanently banned about five people total. When someone repeatedly or sufficiently crosses the line, the standard move is just a two-week timeout to let them cool off. It is the digital equivalent of sitting in the corner to chill out. Unfortunately, they usually don't chill out. Instead of taking the two weeks to relax and reflect, they immediately escalate things behind the scenes and start a full-blown war in our private messages.

VOICES, VENTS & VISION

Continued from page 8...

For Local Residents Only

Hall of Shame

Some of the archetypes we have built up over the years because a select few simply cannot handle basic boundaries:

The Free-Speech Dictator: A massive public fight was brewing between two residents on the chat, and an admin stepped in to stop the personal attacks. This bystander took it as a personal insult to his civil liberties, operating under the delusion that freedom of speech means you can publicly abuse anyone you want. He launched into a tirade calling the admin team "Hitler" and screaming about our dictatorial regime. The second he was given a timeout to stop the bleeding, he jumped straight into our private messages to send middle finger emojis and aggressive messages.

The Drunk Shakespeare: This is the classic long-term resident menace who firmly believes she can say whatever she wants, whenever she wants, usually after she has had a few too many drinks. Her style turns into a rambling, late-night theatrical monologue. For ages, she insisted on clogging up the highly sensitive Emergency channel with off-topic prose at all hours. The moment the admin reins changed hands and a hard boundary was set, her late-night show was cancelled and she was gone. Ain't nobody got time for that.

The Consumer Crusader: This character got removed from the forum for launching vicious personal attacks and unverified claims about other locals businesses. Instead of taking the hint, he flooded our private messages. He accused the village of running an oppressive toxic regime, and threatened a massive public exposé. When we stood our ground, he aggressively demanded the full legal names of the volunteer admins to sue us, eventually forcing us to issue a formal anti-harassment notice just to stop the daily bombardment.

The Prophet of Doom: After having an off-topic post deleted, this resident went full biblical in the private messages, explicitly warning us that "a fire from God will destroy everything you have." When she got blocked on WhatsApp for making literal arson threats under the guise of divine intervention, she tracked down private Facebook accounts, before attempting to launch a public smear campaign claiming the admin team is killing the town and blocking everyone.

The Reality Check

The loudest argument for no rules is always made by the people who've never had to sit through an unmoderated group. The quiet ones, the ones who just wanted to know if the trading store was open on Sunday, they don't argue back. They just leave. And when enough of them leave, you don't have a pressure valve, you have an echo chamber with a bad attitude and nobody left to hear it. A village that's lost its quiet majority is worse off than one that occasionally frustrates its loudest voices.

A WhatsApp house without walls and rules doesn't release community pressure. It just magnifies toxicity until the normal, quiet people pack their bags and leave the building entirely. Leaving the doors wide open doesn't lead to self-regulation. It leads to middle fingers, groundless lawsuits, and promises of holy fire.

If you are part of the 95% of locals who use these groups properly to find a lost dog, share local news, or report an actual emergency, you have absolutely nothing to worry about. The floor plan is there to protect you. But if you cannot tell the difference between a public notice board and a pub brawl, take a breath before you hit send. Look at the room you are standing in, and make sure you aren't trying to cook dinner in the toilet.

HOGWASH



Oom Hogsback

Disclaimer: I will not be editing and removing offensive language or statements. If I chose to publish your vent or letter, it is because you are not the only one upset about the subject matter. Do not read if you are triggered easily.

THE MERCY OF THE MOUNTAIN

There is a strange and humbling truth to life upon a mountain. No matter how long you live here, no matter how much you prepare, build, fix or fight, eventually you come to understand one thing very clearly: you are not in control here. You are at the mercy of the mountain.

People from the outside often see only the beauty. The forests wrapped in mist. The waterfalls roaring after rain. The ancient trees standing like silent guardians over the valleys below. They see the magic, the mystery, the wild freedom of it all. And yes, those things are real. Terribly real. But what many do not see is the cost of living inside such raw beauty. The mountain gives, but she also takes.

Up here, weather is not merely weather. It is a force. A living thing. Winds arrive like angry spirits tearing through the valleys with enough power to snap trees like matchsticks. Rain pounds against rooftops for days without mercy. Thick mist swallows roads whole until you cannot see more than a few metres ahead. Thunder shakes the walls at night while old homes creak beneath the pressure of another storm pushing against them.

And then there are the winters. The cold settles deep into your bones and refuses to leave. Dampness crawls into blankets, walls and skin alike. Power lines fail. Water pumps stop working. The lights vanish without warning and suddenly an entire community sits in darkness, listening to the mountain rage outside while candles flicker quietly in small windows hidden amongst the trees. Signal disappears. Roads wash away. Trees fall across paths that were already difficult to travel on even in good weather. Sometimes help cannot reach you quickly. Sometimes you simply endure and wait.

Many who live here do so with very little. Old homes barely holding against another season. Rusted roofs. Small fires struggling against bitter cold. Limited resources. Yet despite this, people remain. Somehow they remain. Because there is something about this mountain that grips the soul in a way cities never could.

Living here strips away illusion. The mountain does not care about status, wealth or pride. Storms do not discriminate. Wind humbles everyone equally. And in that harshness, strangely enough, there is honesty. A brutal honesty that reminds you just how small you truly are beneath the weight of nature. There are nights where you wonder if the next storm will finally bring a tree down onto your roof. Nights where every cracking branch outside sends your heart racing. Nights where the wind sounds less like weather and more like the mountain herself speaking in some ancient language of warning and power.

And yet, when dawn finally comes, there is often a strange silence afterwards. Mist drifting softly through the forest once more. Sunlight breaking through the clouds as if nothing happened at all. Birds returning cautiously to the trees. The mountain sparing you once again.

That is the mercy of the mountain. Not safety. Not comfort. Mercy.

Because life here is not gentle. It demands resilience. It demands patience. It demands respect. Those who stay learn quickly that survival is not about conquering nature, but learning to live alongside her moods and tempers. You adapt. You prepare. You listen. And somehow, through all the hardship, people still fall deeply in love with this place.

Perhaps it is because the mountain makes you feel alive in a world that has become far too disconnected from the raw realities of existence. Up here, you feel every storm. Every silence. Every hardship. Every victory. Nothing is artificial. Nothing is hidden.

The mountain reminds us that we are fragile creatures living beneath forces far greater than ourselves.

And maybe that is why so many of us never leave.

Because despite the danger, despite the fear, despite the endless challenges, there is something sacred about standing beneath towering trees while cold mist moves through the valleys and knowing that for one more day, the mountain has shown mercy.

by Seeker of Magic

You may have noticed a new sign in the main road...
You may have heard the whispers and partook in speculation...
Well here it is, straight from the horse's mouth..

Hello to our wonderful Hogsback community,

We're incredibly excited to finally be nearing the opening of THE HOG & DRAGON BISTRO – we are all hard at work pushing to open around 15 June, pending final restorations and finishing touches. We will definitely keep everyone updated closer to our opening on the WhatsApp groups.

It's been an amazing journey already, and we're so grateful for the wonderful people helping bring our dream to life:

- Andries, who has done an amazing job with our signage
- Shaun, who has been doing incredible carpentry work and restoration
- Seth, who has been an absolute gem in every aspect of getting The Hog & Dragon ready
- Chipi, who will be leading our kitchen as our talented Chef – we're absolutely thrilled to have him onboard and excited for what he'll bring to The Hog & Dragon

We'd also like to give a huge heartfelt thank you to the Hogsback community. From day one, so many people have welcomed us warmly to the mountain, offered assistance, advice, support, helping hands, and encouragement along the way. It truly means more to us than words can say, and we're incredibly grateful to everyone who has already played a part in helping bring The Hog & Dragon to life.

We're looking forward to creating a warm, welcoming space where locals, travellers, friends, and families can gather around good food, delicious drinks, warm fires, and a little bit of magic. 🍷🔥🌿

We can't wait to open our doors, welcome you in, and meet you all soon.

With love,
 Ruby & Leon
 The Hog & Dragon Bistro

HOGSBACK CHRISTMAS IN JULY

Anyone can suggest a program item they would like to host or run.

Cut off date for new events, workshop and program item requests is :
 21 June 2026

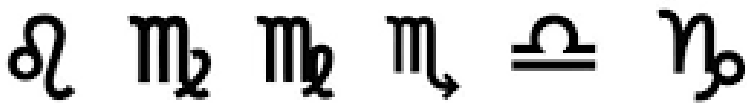
Final day to submit your final detailed event & specials:
 7 July 2026





Hogsback Horror-Scopes

June Hogsback Horror-scope (Solstice Edition)



As June brings the winter solstice, Hogsback transitions from autumn damp into the deep, sub-zero freeze. This month, the survival of village residents depends less on their planetary alignments and more on their mechanical preparedness, woodpile volume and psychological tolerance for prolonged power and network outages.

Aries

An honest conversation at home may finally restore peace. This is especially useful if you've spent the last three weeks arguing about whose goats are eating whose vegetables, or whether that chainsaw really needed to start at 6am.

Taurus

One carefully chosen sentence can solve a surprisingly difficult situation today. Ideally something more effective than, "Ag, shame man," which has been Hogsback's conflict resolution strategy since 1883.

Gemini

Your finances, side hustle, and daily plans begin making sense again. Whether that means finally selling your artisanal mushroom tinctures or simply finding where you left your wallet remains unclear.

Cancer

You can express your needs gently without disappearing into the background. Remember: passive-aggressive Facebook posts about "certain people" do not count as communication.

Leo

A quiet realization restores your confidence. You may discover that nobody was actually judging you at the market; they were simply trying to remember whether they'd met you before, which in Hogsback is genuinely difficult.

Virgo

Reliable, supportive people make your workload feel lighter. Fortunately, Hogsback contains at least four of them. Unfortunately, they're all currently on retreat, at a festival, or "off-grid for a bit."

Libra

Speaking clearly and standing your ground improves standards around you. This may involve a committee, a community project, or a meeting that somehow requires four meetings beforehand.

Scorpio

A grand vision begins taking shape once you focus on practical details. Turns out "transforming the village" still requires someone to bring extension cords and remember the biscuits.

Sagittarius

An honest emotional confession clears up a complicated relationship issue. The challenge will be figuring out which relationship issue, as there are currently seventeen active misunderstandings circulating through the village grapevine.

Capricorn

Showing a softer side opens doors. People may be startled at first. Continue slowly and avoid sudden movements.

Aquarius

Improving your daily routine benefits your nervous system. Consider limiting yourself to only three WhatsApp groups, two conspiracy theories, and one existential crisis before breakfast.

Pisces

Joy arrives through something wonderfully simple today. A sunbeam through the forest, a perfect cup of coffee, a Cape Parrot sighting, or discovering that the drama everyone was discussing wasn't actually about you.

Overall Mountain Forecast:
Morning mist. Afternoon uncertainty. A 70% chance of unsolicited advice. Strong possibility of seeing someone you've been avoiding at the one place you absolutely had to go.

The Survival Strategies (By Element)

The Fire Signs (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius)

- The Risk: Burnout—literally and figuratively. You'll over-stoke the fire and run out of wood by July.
- Survival Steps:
 - Regulate: Invest in a thermometer. If it's above 20°C inside, stop adding logs.
 - Safety: Clean your chimney now. Your "blaze of glory" shouldn't involve the fire department.
 - Containment: Buy a fire screen. Your enthusiasm for sparks is a hazard to your carpets.

The Earth Signs (Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn)

- The Risk: Isolation and obsession. You'll spend so much time "preparing" and "stocking" that you'll forget to talk to humans.
- Survival Steps:
 - Check the Pipes: Wrap outdoor copper pipes in lagging or old blankets before the first -5°C night.
 - Inventory: Use those spreadsheet skills to track gas bottle levels. Don't let the "Empty" click happen at 2 AM.
 - Movement: Force yourself to walk to the village shop once a day to prevent total hibernation.

The Air Signs (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius)

- The Risk: Mental "Cabin Fever." The mist will settle in, the Wi-Fi will drop, and you will lose your mind.
- Survival Steps:
 - Analog Backup: Stock up on physical books or board games for when the lines go down.
 - Seal the Gaps: Use "sausage dog" draft excluders for every door. Heat loss is your primary enemy.
 - Communication: Keep a battery-powered radio tuned to local frequencies for weather and security alerts.

The Water Signs (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces)

- The Risk: Damp and despair. You'll absorb the humidity until you (and your bedding) are permanently soggy.
- Survival Steps:
 - Moisture Control: Run a dehumidifier or keep "moisture muncher" crystals in the back of your cupboards.
 - Sunlight Harvesting: If the sun comes out for 10 minutes, open every curtain and window.
 - Dry Tech: Ensure you have a plan for drying laundry that doesn't involve hanging it over a paraffin heater (Fire hazard!).

“GOOD FENCES MAKE GOOD NEIGHBOURS”

Robert Frost famously wrote that “Good fences make good neighbours,” though one suspects he never tried applying that philosophy on a misty mountain where pine trees fall sideways, baboons ignore property law and half the village shares extension cords, gas bottles and Wi-Fi during supply & demand failures.

Because here in Hogsback, nature itself has very little respect for title deeds. A 40-year-old pine does not pause during a gale to consult municipal boundary maps before collapsing majestically across three gardens, two fences and somebody’s precious herb spiral. Black wattle spreads with the confidence of colonial expansion. Rivers reroute themselves annually. Mudslides treat retaining walls as polite suggestions.

Nature, it turns out, is a bit of an anarchist. And yet somehow, after every great storm, the truly fascinating destruction begins...the human response. Within minutes of the first tree falling, otherwise gentle residents transform into border negotiators at a failed peace summit.

You’ll see them standing on opposite sides of a fallen trunk with arms folded, tape measures in hand, attempting advanced mathematical diplomacy... like; “Well technically, 63% of the tree landed on your side.” “Yes, but the root ball originated from your property.” “Yes, but the canopy overhung my driveway first.”

“Yes, but your drainage weakened the soil structure.” and chat GPT gets called upon to explain SA laws and define ‘Acts of God’.



At this point, everyone involved is usually one sentence away from producing laminated evidence and legal briefs written in charcoal. The words ‘Insurance’ and ‘Responsibility’ suddenly gets thrown around with the seriousness of a High Court proceeding. Who pays for the chainsaw petrol? Who removes the stump? Who keeps the firewood? Whose insurance covers emotionally aggressive eucalyptus behaviour? Entire friendships have nearly collapsed over branches.

And perhaps this is why Hogsback remains such a strange and beautiful place. Because despite all this absurdity, despite the territorial rooster disputes, damp burn piles and overreaching monkey attracting fruit trees, people here somehow still end up taking care of one another.

“When we first built our house years ago, we had no water. Every day meant carrying two 5-litre bottles uphill from the stream below the plot like exhausted medieval peasants. Eventually the neighbour’s maid took pity on us and secretly started filling our 20-litre containers from their tap. One afternoon the neighbours casually asked where we were getting water from. Unfortunately, the honest part of me answered first. “From you.” ... A silence fell over the mountain so profound even the birds seemed uncomfortable. I quickly added, “...and the stream.” But it was too late. The very next week our Wendy house mysteriously acquired gutters and suddenly every bucket, drum and crate we owned was harvesting rainwater like we were preparing for the apocalypse.”

Then there are the saintly neighbours. Every village has at least one. The sort of person who emerges from the mist during an Eskom outage carrying soup, candles, jumper cables and somehow a fully charged power bank. The kind who arrives silently in gumboots to tow your car from the mud before disappearing back into the fog like some kind of rural Batman.

And of course, every village also has that neighbour. The one who complains about smoke, laughter, parking, chainsaws, frogs and once – allegedly – “aggressive moonlight.” The one who treats shared boundaries like Cold War frontlines. The one whose emotional range hovers somewhere between expired mayonnaise and damp socks. Yet strangely, even these people become woven into the mythology of the mountain.

Because living in Hogsback teaches something unexpected: community is not built from perfect people. It is built from surviving one another long enough to become stories. Stories about wattles reproducing faster than municipal planning. Stories about roosters screaming at 4am with the urgency of liquor license investigators. Stories about vicious werewolf dangers next door, who’s owners cannot be bothered to fence them in. Stories about pretending to carry firewood when the competent neighbour walks past, just so you appear to be a functioning adult.

And stories about the glorious silence that follows when certain neighbours finally move off the mountain and peace returns to the valley.

In the end, perhaps Frost was only half right. Good fences may make good neighbours. But in Hogsback, broken fences, fallen trees, borrowed extension leads, shared chainsaws, water crises and mutual suffering probably make better ones.

Especially once enough time has passed for the story to become funny.

Speedy Snippets

- No, The Touraco towers have not been sold, YET. But please keep buying Laurent's stuff, so he can keep sorting.
 - The HB Cycling ~~cougers~~ crew has gained two new enthusiastic members.
 - No, Vincent did not leave Karen in Africa, she will be home this week.
 - New King's Lodge manager, Cindy, is doing great and adapting to mountain life. If you haven't popped in to meet her yet, go say hello!
 - Rumor has it that we'll see some snow on at least one random Thursday this winter.
 - Christmas in July planning is definitely underway, albeit in 'stealth mode.
 - Rodger is getting his new uniform this week, relax.
 - We braved the fire and asked Virginia to share her story, her truth and catch us all up. No response yet.
- (Update: Still no response)
- Read about the Bread Wars, don't miss it! (Thank you Nicole)

HOGSBACK BREAD WARS REACHED CEASE FIRE

Our village Baker aka Dianne agreed to do a mid-week bake for The Local with offerings of sourdough bread and baked treats. Little did she know what she was getting herself into. As soon as word spread, which is lightning fast in this village, so the bread rush began. People started arriving in anticipation of Dianne's bread delivery. There were arguments, bread tug of war, threats were made and baguettes became deadly weapons. One cheeky customer even tried to wave down Dianne as she was driving on the road, all in the name of a loaf of bread.

With an additional bake day, we can now say with a sigh of relief that bread wars are over. Order has been restored. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our bakers for our daily bread

HOGSBACK SECRETS – The Truth Stayed Hidden

Here are the answers to last month's head-scratching questions.

Who played SA Schools under-21 and men's Hockey for South Africa in 1980, wears a size 14 shoe, and was also a provincial skateboarder?

Mike "Is-it-Snowing-Yet?" Mullins

Who was a debt collector in a previous life and a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu practitioner?

Cheridene "Under-the-Radar" Boucher

Who used to be a carpenter and granite & marble counter installer, and was responsible for all the restroom counters at Jacob Zuma's Nkandla stadium?

Adi "Life-is-Full-of-Joy-and-Shrooms" Meintjes

Who claims to be a saxophonist but even their long-time partner has never heard them play?

Mornay "What's-My-Next-Project?" van Vuuren

Which longtime resident of Bold Point (born in Hogsback) has visited these 7 countries in the last few years: Eswatini, Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi, Botswana, Zambia, and Mauritius?

Siya "Globetrotter" Madondile

Here are the next 5 questions to tickle your brain cells. I've officially given up on expecting any answers, but let's see how many you think you know the answers to...

- Who was caught smoking in Std 9 and had her chances of prefectship scuppered because the nuns rigged the voting results (she claims)?
- Who cosplayed as a Pirate (in the Caribbean city of Nassau) in 2005 just for fun and now appears in 100s of family photograph albums throughout the world?
- Who co-founded the online global coal market in London in the early 2000s, and also had a hand in developing the EU carbon credits market?
- Which three Hogsbackers completed their high school teaching diplomas together at UCT in 1978?
- Which renowned raconteur made this statement when asked to contribute a secret to this list: "I have 1 special skill learned over the years in Hogsback. I can listen, ignore and forget all at the same time"?

by Fiona Wallace

Oom Hogsback, back at it again; handing out quiet joy like it's rationed. And those sharp little smiles that land because... well, you know exactly why.

MINISTER ANNOUNCES HOGSBACK RENAMING TO ALIGN WITH LOCAL SOUNDSCAPES

HOGSBACK: Following the recent rebranding of East London to KuGompo City, the Department of Sports, Arts, and Culture has dropped a bombshell on the mountain. In a move to "decolonize the map while acknowledging local reality," Hogsback is officially being renamed **Ku-K-Thunk**.

The department spokesperson, reached via a very crackly WhatsApp call, explained that the new name follows the logic of the KuGompo change.

"If KuGompo represents the sound of waves hitting a rock," the spokesperson said, "then our research shows that the most iconic and frequent sound in Hogsback is the specific metallic noise a Toyota Fortuner makes when its front axle meets a Main Road Pothole."

THE TRUE INDIGENOUS SOUND

A committee of linguistic experts spent three days in the village. They reportedly debated several options before settling on Ku-K-Thunk. Other rejected proposals included:

- * **uMoya-Generator:** The hum of 100 generators kicking in at 6:00 PM.
- * **iSamango-Gompo:** The specific sound of a 12kg monkey landing on a corrugated iron roof at 4:00 AM.
- * **Kwa-No-Transformer:** Specifically for the residents of Plaatjieskraal.

"We wanted a name that resonated," said Dr. Phil O'Dendron, a local consultant. "And nothing resonates quite like the sound of a rim cracking at 40 kilometers per hour in the fog."

LOCAL OUTRAGE (AS PER USUAL)

As expected, the Hogsback Community WhatsApp group reached a record breaking 4,200 messages in under an hour. While 10% of the messages were about the name change, the other 90% were people asking if anyone had a spare 12V fuse or if the "white cow with the attitude" was still blocking the pass.

"It is a disgrace," said one long term resident while frantically typing on her phone. "I have already printed my business cards for The Mist-ical Dragon Sanctuary. Now what? I can not exactly call it The Ku-K-Thunk Dragon Sanctuary. It sounds like the dragon has a respiratory infection."

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The DPW has confirmed that new road signs will be installed as soon as they find a signpost that has not been swallowed by a wattle tree. In the meantime, the department suggests that locals just "make the sound" when giving directions to tourists.

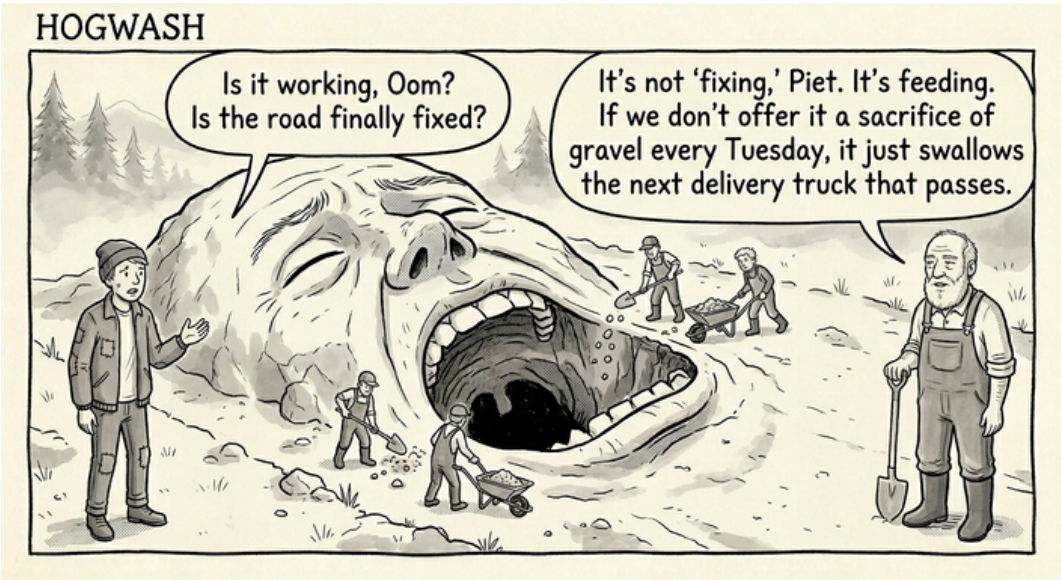
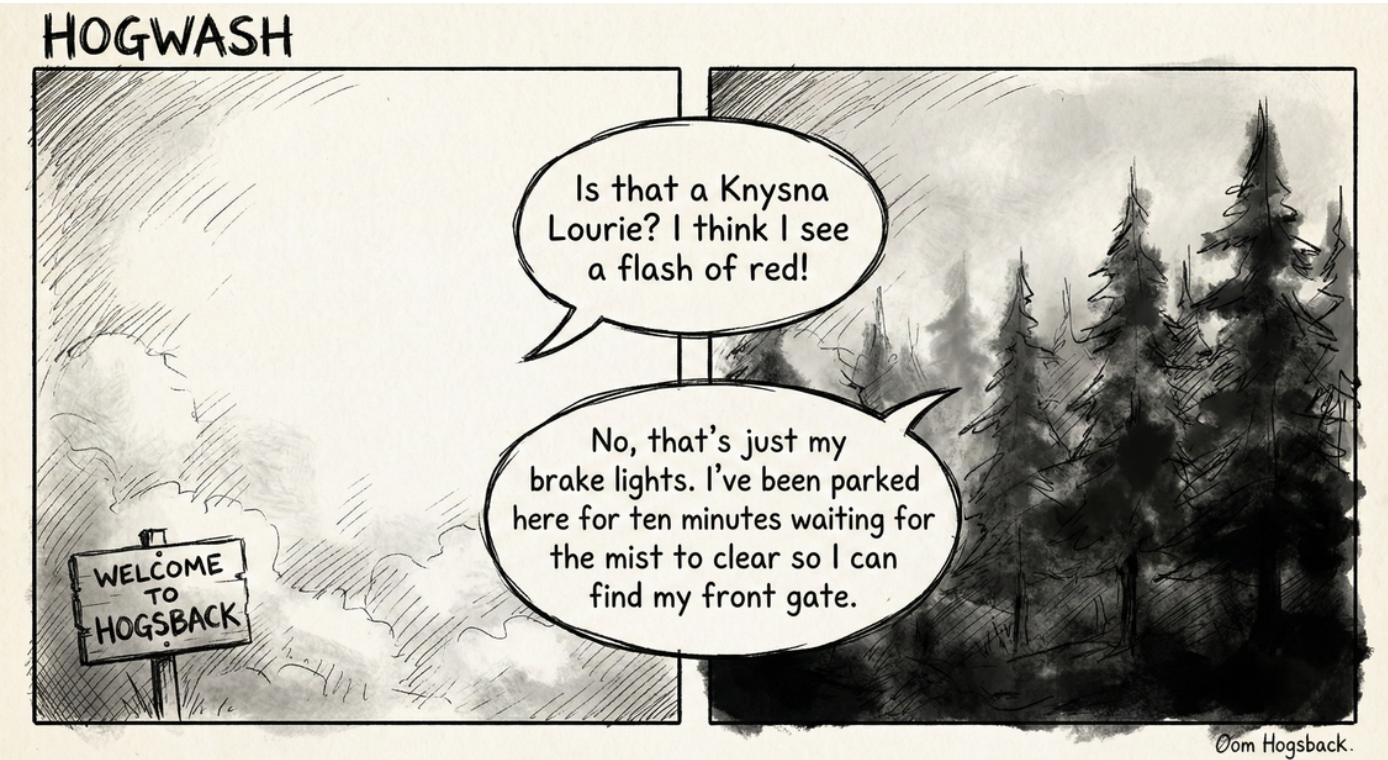
"Just tell them to drive past the tavern and turn left at the first loud K-Thunk," the spokesperson advised. "They can not miss it. Literally."



HOGWASH & WHINES

For Local Residents Only

Oom Hogsback, back at it again; handing out quiet joy like it's rationed. And those sharp little smiles that land because... well, you know exactly why.



Just because I haven't been nagging and reminding you to report potholes, to complete the road survey or to send emails; does not mean I've given up or stopped.

Here's your reminder and my plea, again:

Pothole reporting App: [Click Here](#)

Road Impact Survey: [Click Here](#)

A big thank you to those who submit their parts regularly, on time and without me asking.
A quick thank you to those who have stayed committed and continue to fill their spaces with the content we've come to love.
And a capital THANK YOU to those that read, give feedback, start conversations and participate in community.

If you have any questions or would like to submit a story/letter/article please email miki@hbtimes.co.za. Cut off is 23rd every month!