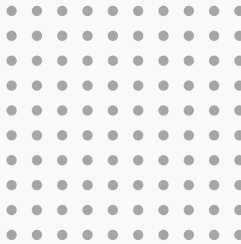


The Hogsback Times



IN THIS ISSUE

JUNE 2026

NEWS & FEEDBACK

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FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOPS**

ECHOES & LEGENDS

MAMMAL MEMOIRS

VENTS, VOICES & VISION

IN THE AIR

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GOSSIP & DRAMA

HOGWASH

CLOSING TIME

**CAN YOU BELIEVE WE'RE HALF
WAY THROUGH OUR JOURNEY
ALREADY! SIXTH ISSUE, WOW.
THANK YOU READERS, NEWS
MAKERS, MORAL SHAKERS.
THANK YOU GIVERS AND
THANK YOU TAKERS.
PARADOX A MUST - I LOVE IT!**

*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

I hate to admit it, but I am a little less okay than normal. I am behind with my own life and so many things within it. Can't decide whether I am going through an internal dark winter or if I'm tired or just hungry. Usually... with a shake of my funny bone, I can snap out of this ... "weëmoed".

But, I've emptied my funny bone in the Christmas in July campaign - all credit goes to you guys! A community full of hermits, recluses and socially awkward people, lends itself to some joshing.

I shared that because... imagine me, writing about life & death, reflection & memories and aging with dignity; and then receiving Billy and Gigi's article on euthanasia. i couldn't help but laugh, it was funny in the moment. And somehow divinely orchestrated. We don't discuss themes and subject matter beforehand, somehow it just aligns. I love it.

I love that life isn't really divided into "happy" and "sad" chapters. It's all mixed together, one family welcomes a new baby while another says goodbye to someone they love. One neighbour celebrates a promotion while another receives difficult news. One dog comes home, another doesn't.

Life has an odd sense of humour. Just when we think we've figured it out...the plot changes. Perhaps that's why I enjoy putting this newspaper together. Every month begins looking like complete chaos. A pothole, a complaint, a celebration, someone angry, someone grateful, a mystery and a memory... Individually they don't seem connected.

Then, somewhere between too many coffees and not enough sleep, they begin speaking to each other. They become a story, our story.

Looking back over these first six months, we've laughed, argued, mourned, celebrated, debated, survived power cuts, potholes, viruses, Facebook, committee meetings and at least seventeen weather forecasts that all confidently predicted something entirely different. And somehow...we're still here.

Still showing up, still helping, still caring, still making this peculiar little village one of the most fascinating places I know.

Maybe that's what reflection is really for...Not to dwell on yesterday, not to fear tomorrow but just to notice today. Incredibly ordinary moments quietly become extraordinary memories. Thank you for letting me wander through your stories each month. Now go hug your people, cuddle your dog, phone your mother (if you're lucky enough to still have her), touch grass & forgive someone.

*Love,
Miki*

By Community. For Community. On Community.

NEWS, UPDATES & FEEDBACK

For Local Residents Only

MOST RECENT UPDATE FROM HTO

Dear Community.

As mentioned in May, the HTO decided to pause elections for the new Board and Task Team, until August. We decided to join forces, bury battle axes, forget frustrations, make some time and work together to make this Christmas in July as Christmassy as it can get!

As always, no matter how much or what, we do; without YOU. If you think you're the right person for a specific requirement, please make contact.

Francois may need some help with prizes of Winter Quest logistics.

Fiona would welcome all your help getting the Christmas in July and Winter Quest social media posts to go viral. Like and share them all as widely as possible, and add comments and responses. Join the Hogsback Events and Activities group to stay completely up-to-date. (<https://web.facebook.com/groups/hogsbackevents>)

Nonkubela would like someone who could be on stand-by for the Info Center when she's booked.

We can't actually print what Miki needs helps with; someone with muscles and flexible morals...essentially she needs an aider and abettor.

(I'm actually quite needy, I also need bunting hangers, photographers and actors. But will add to my nagging reminders on the WhatsApp group during the month.)

We would also just like to take this opportunity to thank you for each like and share so far, thank you for every mention and being an amazing community! Thank you to all who stepped up and listed program items. You are appreciated and we are doing our utmost to ensure well supported and booked out events/tours/workshops/shows/markets/food etc

Just in case you've been under a rock, while living on top of one; Hogsback's Christmas in July is 24 - 26 July 2026.

HTO HERE AFTER

Elections and Voting for new committee, Task Team and Board Members of the Hogsback Tourism Organisation; will commence in August.

CPF NOTICE

Hi Hogsback Community

There have been some concerns and questions about the March and March deadline on the 30 th June and the xenophobic narrative pushed by some fringe elements on RSA society

Hogsback SAPS together with other sectors of our cluster are at full strength from now until early July to serve and protect our communities. Crime Intelligence places us as a very low risk area and combined with the level of preparation SAPS and our local leadership has put in place I'm confident we have nothing to worry about.

Yours in Community Safety

Mark Andersen

CPF Chair

DELIBERATE DUPLICATE

If you know someone who runs or serves on one of the many Hogsback communi-missions; better yet; if you contribute financially...

Please share the next page with them. You don't need to read it, you read it last month. I don't think they did.

NEWS, UPDATES & FEEDBACK

For Local Residents Only

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.**

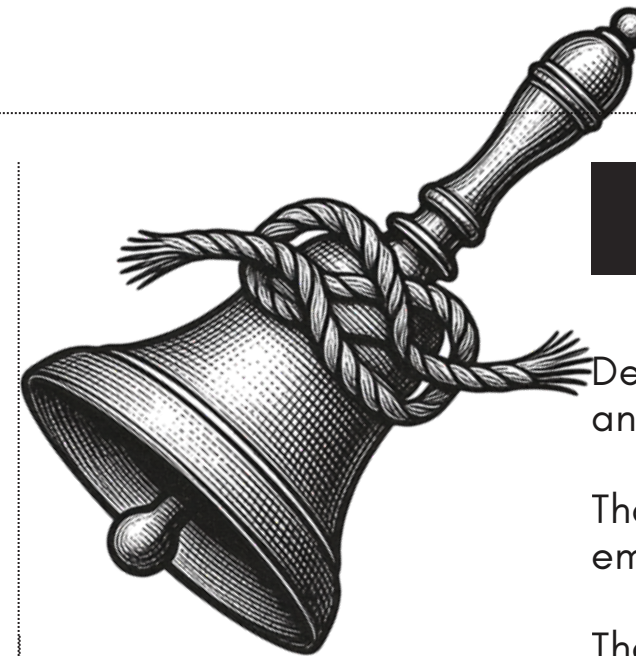
The strange thing is that every committee meeting seems to generate rumours, debates, complaints, and theories. Yet somehow no actual information escapes into the wild.

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



FORESTBEING FINDS...

For Local Residents Only

FROM THE FOREST FLOOR

Well we made it half way! As the winter solstice quietly moves by, marking the shortest day and longest night of the year, the forest moves through a profound quiet and deep sense of hibernation. While some of the trees appear bare, they are conserving energy, preparing for the gradual return of the light and the eventual cycle of spring renewal.

Chappie wrapper fact for the day:

Trees drop their leaves to prevent moisture loss and endure freezing temperatures, safely storing energy in their roots. However some trees stay green year-round, which historically led ancient cultures to view coniferous trees as symbols of endurance, immortality, and eternal life!

During the day, find a time for yourself and head into the closest forest and go lay down on the forest floor

(a practice known as Shinrin-Yoku apparently) this is a great way to reduce stress and reset.

In ancient traditions, communities would gather in forests and around bonfires during the solstice to celebrate the return of the sun and decorate with evergreen boughs to honor the resilience of nature.

While the forest floor looks magical with all the fallen leaves (breeding and sleeping grounds for the magical glow worms and fireflies) notice how pure it looks without trash along with it!

Take only pictures, leave only footprints

Stay wild.
Adi Forestbeing



FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOPS

Tails from the trails.

Welcome to my new section, where I will share some of the experiences I've had alone in the forest or while guiding souls through the mountains on our magical trails! Learn from them, find the humor in them (there will definitely be ALOT of humor) and join me on another wonderful ride!

Our first tail comes from a while back, when I was just a little boy, living in the Amathole mountains on the Stutterheim side. My grandfather worked for the forestry in the Fort Cunningham forests (where the ghosts of a young couple and their child still haunts the highway at night, but that's a story for another day)

Now almost every Sunday, we would go and visit my mom's parents, in Fort Cunningham, after church of course.

After lunch, my grand father would sometimes take us grandchildren (however many of us came for the day) for walks out in the forest to spots he found during the week.

This one peculiar sunny day, we went out to a section of pine trees that had been cleared, walking along streams and indigenious sections, led by my grand parents' little fox terrier dog, with an ego the size of bull terrier!

After a while of magical spottings and loads of calling for Spottie (for the life of me I cannot remember his name, so we shall call him Spottie)

Spottie heard something and darted off, followed by an army of cousins and my Granddad calling out for things to look out for!

And then we found barking Spottie... with a troop of baboons!!! Playing some form of game with a massive pinecone!!!! Some say they were playing rugby, some swore they were playing soccer, all I know was they were not happy that we interrupted as they started giving big bullows! We grabbed Spottie and sped of back home before any of us thought of asking them about their choice of sport!

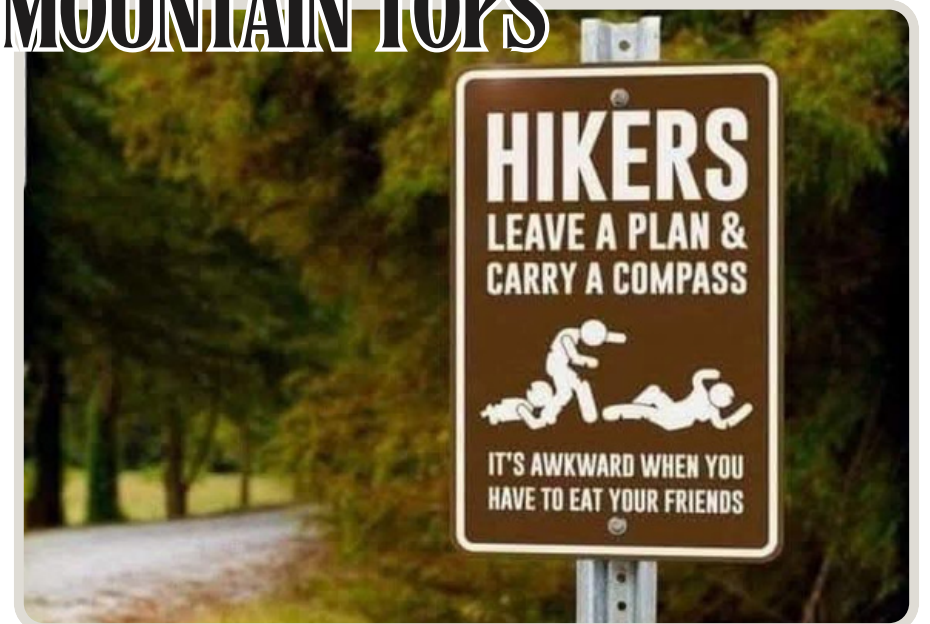
We all made it home safe and sound and mostly out of breath, but not to out of breath to tell our parents on what we all just witnessed!!! They obviously didn't believe us, who would?!

Lesson learnt: when out on the trails and you have a busy doggie, keep them on a leash or they could become a baboon's chew toy!

Also lesson learnt: take photos now that we are able to!!!

Till next time

Adi Forestbeing



AGING AIN'T FOR SISSIES

One day, you're 72 (or 65, or 76, or 90), and suddenly, it becomes apparent... no longer a valid human. Instead of talking TO you, family starts talking ABOUT you. You went shopping and grazed a curb, now your children decide you can't drive anymore. Meanwhile, you've always driven like a jerk, but now your age is to blame.

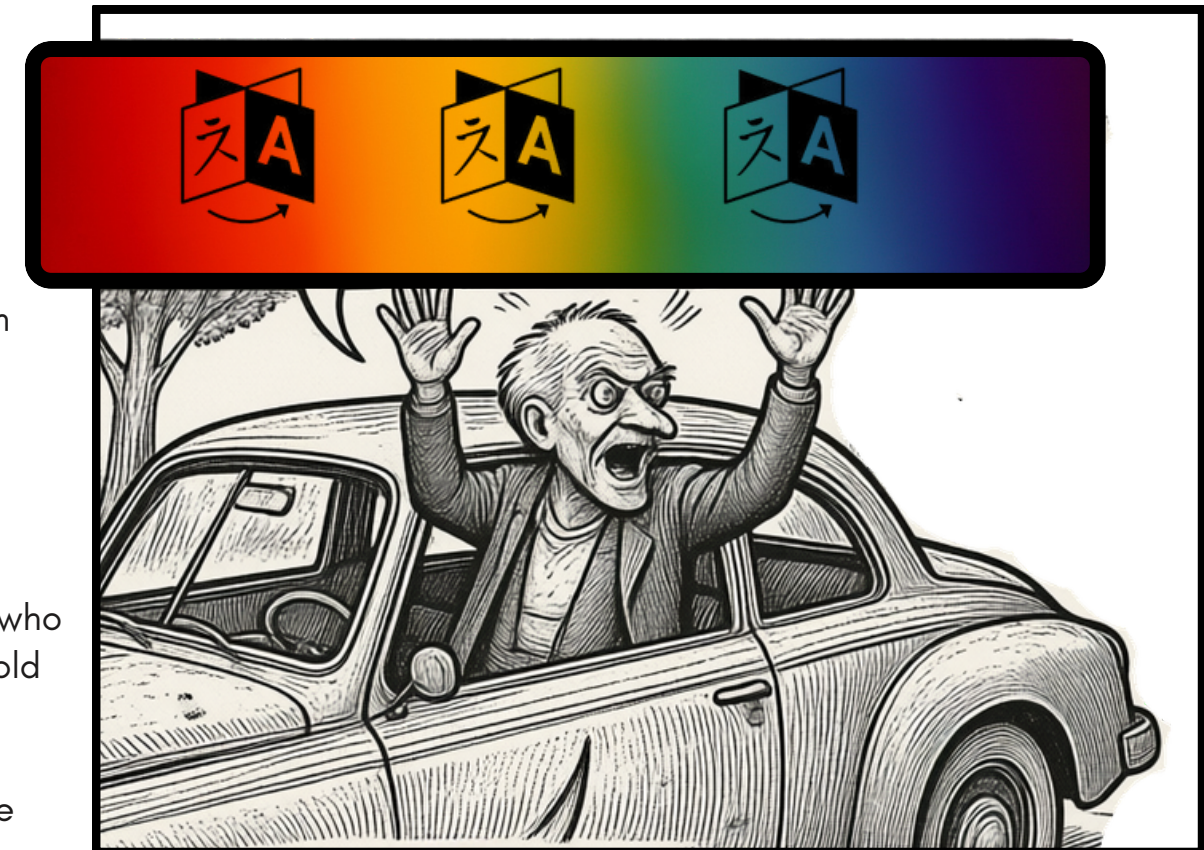
By the time you have appeased a few "small changes" they insisted on, you realize you've lost your autonomy. Now you can't argue the matter of going into a care home. You can't stand up and remind them that you're still their parent. Saying, "I brought you into this world and I can take you out" suddenly carries absolutely zero weight.

Let's be real: as much as it sucks to admit it, there are some things you just can't do like you used to. Facts.

But look at the context. You do things slower now, you do them with help, or maybe you always hated doing them anyway and now finally feel free enough to just not. Life showed you so many amazing things and afforded you so many books that your eyes do, in fact, struggle to focus. You've had to listen to incredible stories, your teenagers' terrible music, your spouse's complaints and your grandchildren's noisy toys. You've listened to unsolicited advice more times than you can count! So why be surprised when your ears start auto-tuning, practicing selective listening, or just quit altogether?

We can talk about your hands, your voice, your dexterity and your bladder too. But none of those parts make you who you are. While you might be praying for some replacement parts, you don't feel any less like your 30- or 40-year-old self inside. Right?

I have written about this subject; it's close to my heart and I can get quite fiery on this... but truth is... I'm not there yet, so I will leave you with something written by a member of the wiser generation...



Friends shared this and it is so true. (Thank you for passing it on Lynden.) Originally written by Pam Erwin Moreton.

When I turned 63 last year(64 in March) I sat in my favorite chair, looked back at my life, and thought to myself, "So... this is the beginning of the final stretch." And slowly, the truths I had avoided all my life began to surface. Kids? They're busy writing their own story. Health? Slips away faster than sand through open fingers. The government? Just headlines, promises, and numbers that never change your daily reality.

Aging doesn't hurt your body first — it hurts your illusions. So I sat down with myself and carved out a handful of bitter but necessary truths. Kids don't save you from loneliness. Children grow, life pulls them in every direction, and you become a memory they visit when time allows. You smile... and yet something inside you remains strangely hollow. Kids bring joy — but they are not a shield against loneliness.

Health is not forever. One day, the outings you once jumped into with enthusiasm feel like a marathon. You realize health was never a background character — it was the main pillar holding your life steady.

Retirement and money. Retirement is not a reward — it's a reality check. Depending on the system is like standing on thin ice. Bills grow, needs grow, prices grow... but support doesn't.

So I rebuilt my life on new rules — honest, sharp, practical rules for living with dignity.

*****Read her '7 Rules for Living with Dignity' on page 7**

Euthanasia... When Is the Right Time to Let Go?

There are few decisions more painful than deciding when it is time to say goodbye to a beloved pet. Our animals become part of our families. They share our homes, our routines, our happiest moments, and often our most difficult ones. Because they trust us completely, they also depend on us to protect them from unnecessary suffering. One day, that responsibility may include making the difficult decision to let them go.

The Ethics of Euthanasia

The word euthanasia comes from the Greek words eu (good) and thanatos (death), meaning "a good death." In veterinary medicine, euthanasia is not about ending a life because it is inconvenient or unwanted. It is an ethical medical procedure performed with the sole intention of preventing unnecessary pain, distress, or suffering when recovery is no longer possible or when an acceptable quality of life cannot be restored.

Unlike human medicine, where ethical and legal debates continue, veterinary euthanasia is widely accepted as an act of compassion when it is in the best interests of the animal. The guiding question is not simply, "Can we keep this animal alive?" but rather, "Are we preserving life, or are we prolonging suffering?"

The Veterinarian's Responsibility

Every veterinarian takes an oath to protect animal health and welfare. Performing euthanasia is one of the most emotionally demanding responsibilities in the profession.

Although veterinarians may perform the procedure regularly, they never become indifferent to its significance. Each euthanasia represents the end of a unique life and the grief of a family who loved that animal.

The veterinarian's role is to:

- Carefully assess the animal's medical condition and quality of life.
- Explain the diagnosis, prognosis, and available treatment options honestly.
- Help owners make an informed decision without pressure or judgment.
- Ensure that, if euthanasia is chosen, the animal experiences a peaceful, painless, and dignified passing.
- Support the family before, during, and after the procedure.

Veterinary professionals often carry the emotional weight of these moments long after families have left the consulting room.

The Owner's Responsibility

Choosing to bring an animal into your life is a commitment that extends from the first joyful day to the final goodbye.

As owners, we naturally want more time with those we love. It is human to hope for another good day, another treatment, or another miracle. Yet our responsibility is not only to preserve life—it is to protect our companions from unnecessary suffering.

One of the hardest truths about pet ownership is that love sometimes means putting our pet's needs before our own desire to keep them with us.

The question should not be, "Am I ready to say goodbye?" but rather, "Is my pet still able to enjoy life?"

When Is Euthanasia the Right Choice?

Every animal and every situation is unique, but there are circumstances where euthanasia may be the kindest option.

Examples include:

- A pet with terminal cancer experiencing uncontrolled pain despite appropriate medication.
- End-stage heart, kidney, or liver disease where treatment no longer provides comfort.
- Severe neurological disease resulting in persistent distress or inability to function.
- Traumatic injuries that cannot be repaired and are associated with significant suffering.
- Progressive arthritis or musculoskeletal disease where pain can no longer be managed and normal movement becomes impossible.
- Advanced cognitive dysfunction where the animal is constantly anxious, disorientated, or distressed.
- Inability to eat, drink, breathe comfortably, or maintain normal bodily functions despite treatment.
- Repeated medical crises with little hope of meaningful recovery.

Age alone is never a reason for euthanasia. Many elderly pets continue to enjoy an excellent quality of life. The focus should always remain on comfort, dignity, and overall well-being rather than simply the number of years lived.

Questions to Help Guide the Decision

When faced with this difficult choice, it may help to ask:

- Is my pet in pain that cannot be adequately controlled?
- Does my pet still enjoy the things they once loved?
- Are they eating and drinking willingly?
- Can they rest comfortably?
- Are they able to move without severe distress?
- Are there more bad days than good days?
- Is treatment improving their quality of life, or merely prolonging the inevitable?

Some owners find it helpful to keep a daily journal or calendar, marking each day as "good" or "bad." Over time, this often reveals a pattern that is difficult to recognise in the moment.

It is also important to have open conversations with your veterinarian, family members, and anyone involved in the animal's care.

Making the Decision with Compassion

No checklist can remove the sadness of losing a cherished companion. However, making the decision thoughtfully and with your veterinarian's guidance can provide peace of mind that it was made out of love rather than convenience.

Remember that animals live in the present. They do not understand why they are suffering or anticipate future recovery in the way humans do. Their greatest comfort comes from feeling safe, loved, and free from pain.

A Final Gift

Euthanasia is never easy. It is heartbreaking because love always makes parting difficult.

Yet, when chosen for the right reasons, euthanasia can be one of the greatest acts of kindness we offer an animal who has spent a lifetime giving us unconditional love. It allows them to leave this world peacefully, surrounded by familiar voices, gentle hands, and the people who mattered most.

In that sense, euthanasia is not a failure of love—it is its final expression.

Death is an inevitable part of every life. It is not the enemy of life, but rather one of its natural chapters. Our responsibility is not to prevent death at all costs, but to ensure that, when the time comes, it is met with dignity, compassion, and peace.

Perhaps the greatest gift we can give our faithful companions is not simply a good life, but also, when the moment arrives, a good death.

7 RULES FOR LIVING WITH DIGNITY

Continued from page 5...

For Local Residents Only

Rule 1: Money is more reliable than anything else.

Love your kids, cherish them —
but don't make them your retirement plan.

Save for yourself.
Even small savings create big freedom.
Financial independence is dignity.

Rule 2: Your health is your real job

Nothing else matters if your body refuses to cooperate.
Move. Walk. Stretch.
Guard your sleep like treasure.
Eat cleaner. Reduce the poison disguised as sugar and salt.

Illness doesn't discriminate,
but it respects those who take responsibility for themselves.

Rule 3: Create your own joy

Waiting for others to make you happy is the fastest way
to heartbreak.
So you learn to enjoy the small things —
a peaceful breakfast, a good book, music that warms the
soul.

When you know how to make yourself happy, loneliness
loses its power.

Rule 4: Aging is not an excuse to become helpless

Some people turn aging into a performance of
complaints. And slowly, even those who love them
start stepping away.

Strength is attractive. Resilience is magnetic.
People respect the ones who stay capable, not the
ones who surrender.

Rule 5: Let go of the past

The good old days were beautiful — yes.
But they're gone, and there is no return ticket.

Clinging to the past steals the present.
Life today may look different, but it still holds
moments worth living.

Rule 6: Protect your peace like it's your property

Not every argument needs your voice.
Not every insult needs your response.
Not every relative deserves access to your
emotions.

Peace is expensive.
Protect it from drama, negativity, and draining
people —
even if they're your close ones.

Rule 7: Keep learning something — anything

The day you stop learning is the day you start
aging.
A new recipe, a new word, a new app, a new
hobby — your brain needs movement just like
your body does.

Learning keeps you young.
Stagnation makes you old.

Strength and freedom still belong to you

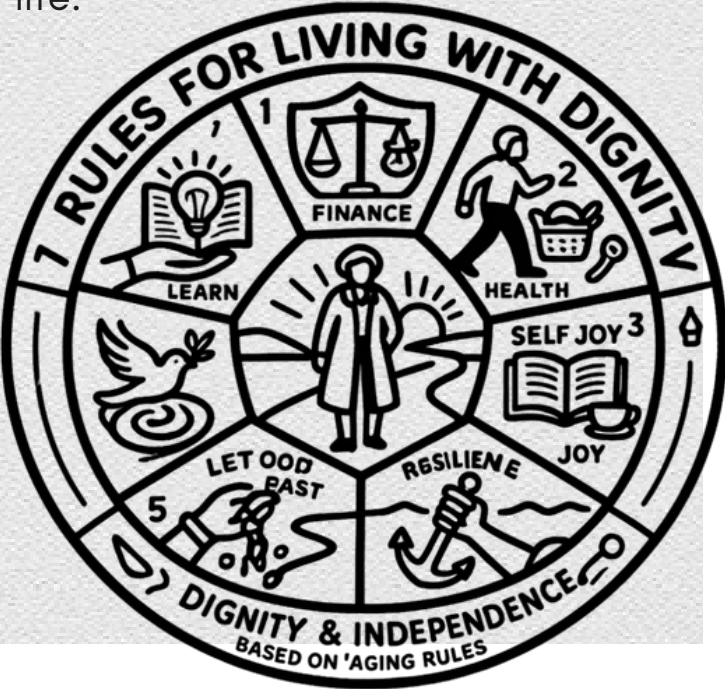
Aging is an exam no one can take for you.

You can adapt, rebuild, and rise stronger...
or sit back, complain, and wait for someone to
rescue you.

And ifNo one comes to rescue you

Stand up for yourself ...Because you still can..

And that single truth is enough to transform the
rest of your life.



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.

BEFORE THE MAGIC DIES

We have spent much time speaking about the beauty of this mountain and what it offers to those who come here from all walks of life. The forests, the waterfalls, the mist, the wildlife and the sense of wonder that surrounds it. But if we truly love this place, we must also be willing to look at the ugly. And really look.

Because for all the hardships we face here, the storms, the power outages, the water shortages, the isolation and the unforgiving weather, none of these are the greatest threat to the mountain. We are.

What have you contributed to this place?
What have you taken from it?
What magic have you brought here, and what magic have you helped preserve?

A mountain community should be more than people simply living beside one another. It should be built on empathy, support and shared purpose. Neighbours helping neighbours. People lifting each other up simply because it is the right thing to do. Yet too often, that is not what happens here.

Some people pour their hearts into projects, events and ideas meant to strengthen this community, only to be ignored because they are not part of the right circle, the right clique or the right politics. Meanwhile, others receive endless support and favour.

Why?
What happened to togetherness?
What happened to compassion?

When did helping become a performance done for publicity and clout rather than because something truly needed to be done? This mountain is too small for division. Too small for bullying, exclusion and the quiet destruction of reputations and livelihoods. Yet people are pushed out, silenced and isolated simply for not conforming.

And the damage runs deeper than many realise. Some stay silent because they are afraid. Others simply do not care. But every act of division slowly poisons the spirit of this place.

Paradise for some and purgatory for others. Is that truly what we want this mountain to become?

The young people growing up here are watching us. Learning from us. Learning what community means, what leadership means and how people should treat one another. What legacy are we leaving behind?

This place could be extraordinary. A true refuge. A thriving and supportive community.

But that future will never arrive unless we first heal what is broken within ourselves.

The storms are not what will destroy this mountain.

The winds are not what will destroy this mountain.

We will.

Unless we choose to become something better before the magic dies.

by Seeker of Magic

***SPOT PRIZE* - Seeker of Magic is almost ready to reveal themselves. Do you think you know who has been behind ‘The Rhythm of the Mountain’, ‘The Mercy of the Mountain’ and now; ‘Before the Magic Dies’..First two (unrelated) people who text me their correct guesses, will WIN!! Text or WhatsApp 0724862105 with your guess.**



"The man who really counts in the world is the doer, not the mere critic—the man who actually does the work, even if roughly and imperfectly, not the man who only talks or writes about how it ought to be done."

--Theodore Roosevelt

My absolute love for these things, most likely comes from my childhood and originated in a Spur. Nostalgia of reading the walls and day-dreaming of where I'll go 'one day when I'm a grown-up'...

When I was still at the Fairies I begged Dan... 'imagine how nice it would be to show these foreign students, exactly how far they are from home.' Then with the Info Center, I suggested we make one that guests can mark too...But just like the Wine Festival; it matters not who TALKS about doing; I commend the one who actually DOES it.

When I saw this, outside **Salt of the Earth**, I was THRILLED!!

Well done Lizzy & Andries!

If you haven't seen it, do yourself favour and go read these quirky, fun signs and get some direction.

If one ever feels lost in Hogsback then visit the Salt of the Earth gift shop and find guidance on which direction of life best suits you.



SOCCER & NETBALL PLAYERS HOLDING HOGSBACK'S NAME HIGH

Ace Tonardo were crowned champions of Hogsback soccer league. Big Thanks to Rance Timber and Spar Savemor for the Sponsorship

Buffaloes Are champions of Hogsback Netball League with only one Defeat throughout the whole campaign, pity I did not have medals and trophies for the ladies

Congratulations to the Hogsback Champions



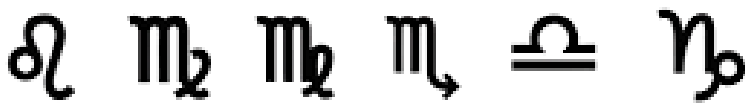
IN THE AIR

For Local Residents Only



Hogsback Horror-Scopes

July Hogsback Horror-scope



Capricorn
You will spend July carrying everyone else's responsibilities while loudly insisting you don't mind. You do mind. Deeply.

Aquarius
Another brilliant plan arrives at 2am. By sunrise you've designed a logo, formed a committee, and lost interest.

Pisces
The mountain mist mirrors your emotional state. Nobody knows where it begins, where it ends, or what it's doing.

Aries
You will start a disagreement over something insignificant and somehow uncover three years of buried community resentment.

Taurus
A hot chocolate, blanket and fireplace have become your entire personality. Frankly, it's your best work yet.

Gemini
You promised six different people six different things. The terrifying part is that you meant every one of them at the time.

Leo
A stranger compliments you and you'll be dining out on that confidence until spring.

Virgo
You will silently correct spelling errors on community notices and wonder why nobody appreciates standards anymore.

Libra
You are currently mediating a dispute you didn't start, don't understand, and secretly enjoy.

Scorpio
You know exactly who unfollowed whom, who blocked whom, and who is pretending not to care. Your powers remain unmatched.

Sagittarius
Cabin fever strikes. You will attempt an adventure during freezing weather and spend half of it asking whose idea this was.

Cancer
You adopted three emotional support humans this month. Unfortunately, none of them know they've been adopted.

OVERALL HOGSBACK FORECAST FOR JULY

- 7 Frosty mornings
 - 14 Facebook misunderstandings
 - 3 New healing workshops
 - 1 Important Community Meeting that could have been an email
 - 86% chance of mist
 - 92% chance of gossip travelling faster than fibre internet
- Lucky Number: The number of unread WhatsApp messages.
Lucky Colour: Smoke from someone's fireplace. Lucky Herb: Whatever is currently being recommended as life-changing.
Stay warm & Trust nobody who says "I don't want to get involved, but..."

Surviving the Christmas in July Influx

- **Aries** - The impulse to ram a slow-moving SUV from Gauteng off the road is a cosmic test of patience. Take a deep breath, count to ten and remember that sound horn usage does not actually clear a traffic jams.
- **Taurus** - Your favorite corner at the pub has been compromised by a family of six wearing matching elf hats. Do not engage. Retreat to your fortress, lock the gate and survive on your emergency cheese stash until August.
- **Gemini** - You will be tempted to give entirely fictional, overly convoluted directions to the Big Tree just to see how far into the forest they get. Resist the urge; local search and rescue is already busy enough.
- **Cancer** - When a shivering tourist asks you if it's "always this cold here," trying to explain the concept of microclimates with a glare will only exhaust you. Just nod, smile tightly, and walk away.
- **Leo** - Yes, the village is full of new faces, but no, they are not looking at you. They are looking for a functional ATM. Lower your expectations for applause and keep your thermal layers hidden like the rest of us.
- **Virgo** - The sheer lack of parking etiquette this weekend will test your sanity. Do not spend your Saturday color-coding a map of illegal parking zones; the universe is in chaos and you cannot organize your way out of it.
- **Libra** - You'll find yourself caught between wanting to be a hospitable local and wanting to hiss at anyone who stands too close to the fireplace. It is perfectly balanced to just stay home.
- **Scorpio** -Your energy field is currently a solid "Do Not Disturb." If a Snow Hunter mistakes your brooding silence for a local invitation to chat about the mist, a sharp look should suffice. Keep the venom packed away.
- **Sagittarius** - You are the only sign prone to actually joining the tourists for a drink. Enjoy the novelty, but remember: do not promise them a guided hike through the secret trails unless you actually intend to show up.
- **Capricorn** - You've already calculated the exact financial impact of the festival on the local economy and concluded it's still not worth the noise. Keep your head down, optimize your firewood consumption, and ignore the outside world.
- **Aquarius** - When asked for a weather prediction by an anxious visitor, do not give them a riddle about the wind or tell them your knees can smell the snow. Just give them a straight answer so they leave your radius quicker.
- **Pisces** - The psychic weight of three hundred extra people romanticizing "mountain life" is heavy. If the mist rolls in, use it as literal camouflage to slip away unnoticed before someone asks you where the fairies live.

ON THE GROUND

For Local Residents Only

A MOUNTAIN OF MOMENTS

Image by: Luke Foroom

Notes to Self - December 2025 - (When Tony Moody finally said yes) - **“Hogsback; we have one year...I will give it my all, do what I can do and commit 100%, just one more year. My hopeful heart, no matter how FULL of hope, cannot live in a community who has lost all theirs.”**

...I can hardly believe we're half way through that year already...I've had a ball and you've been amazing.

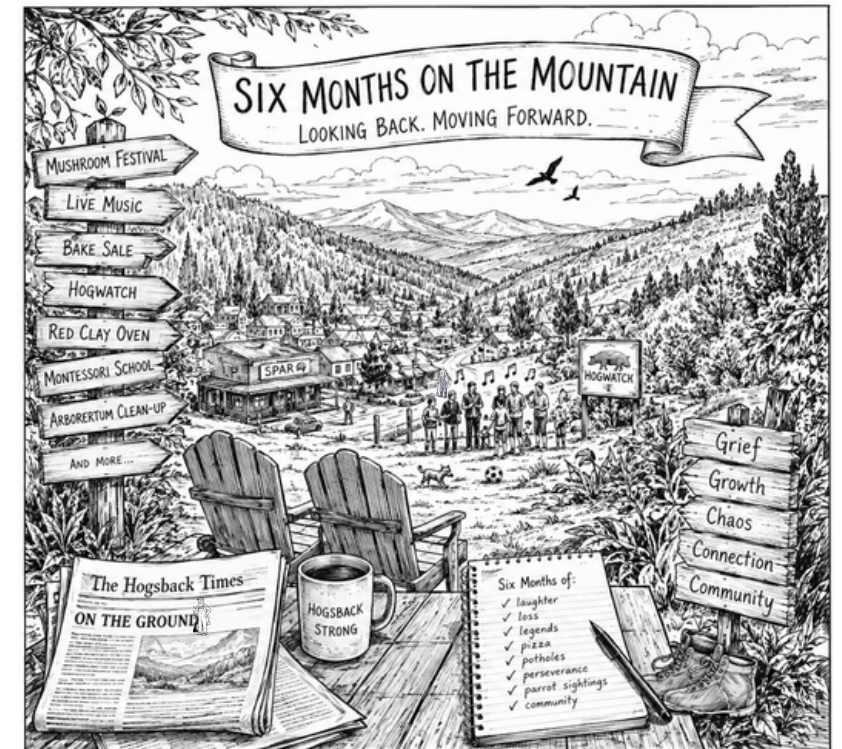
In January we had updates, reports and feedback from almost every committee, association and cohort in Hogsback. Since February, however, I've been nagging, pleading, reminding and occasionally bitching about not receiving any reports at all. The June's Hogsback Times features my plea from May, again. I apologised for repeating myself, but in hindsight, I've been repeating it since February... and I'm officially retiring the request.

The space is here. If your committee, club, organisation or group would like to tell the community what you've been up to (or simply brag a little about what you've achieved) send me something by the 23rd of any month over the next six months. The invitation remains open.

Looking back... what a remarkable six months it has been. We lost SMhart Security, more importantly, we lost Roger, and then we got him back. HogWatch was born and we're looking forward to hearing how their first quarter has gone.

We navigated Foot-and-Mouth Disease, only to have Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease arrive shortly afterwards among our mountain minis. Thankfully, both cows and kids have mostly recovered.

(Except for one determined youngster with a broken bone, but he'll be 100% by the time the next issue lands)



During those first few months I received some of the most honest heartfelt, beautifully written letters from readers. They reminded me why this newspaper exists. I know I haven't always managed to chase every answer or solve every concern that landed in my inbox, but please know they were read and much appreciated. June is the first time I received no letters or vents. June was also the first time that 99% of our columnists submitted early or at the very least, on time! Well done and thank you!

At least four new babies arrived on our mountain, while we sadly said goodbye to more neighbours than that. Living this close to nature has a way of making life's cycles impossible to ignore. Birth and death aren't distant concepts here; they're seasons we walk through together.

We've highlighted how names and history repeats itself here in Hogs. Now new names appear on our community WhatsApp groups every month. As a community, we've held bake sales and fundraisers. Celebrated another fantastic Mushroom Festival. Named the Irate Primate and witnessed the completion of the Red Clay pizza oven and tasted the fruits of their labour. We celebrated encouraging Cape Parrot numbers (albeit it just an increase in visibility) while sighing collectively at rising fuel prices. We've enjoyed live music, hosted celebrities, rolled up our sleeves for community outreach and Arboretum clean-ups, survived AGMs (and the absence of), watched our soccer teams soar, celebrated a hugely successful bowls tournament, attended far too many memorial services and welcomed a brand-new Montessori school! Not bad for six months.

In half a year this little mountain community has weathered infrastructure failures, biosecurity scares, deep grief, political debates, digital rebellions and at least one carbohydrate-induced war. And somehow, we've managed it with a uniquely Hogsback blend of resilience, humour and just enough stubbornness to keep the balance between frustration

and fascination. Whether we're sorting through a mysterious mountain of mail that materialised at the Spar, debating whose responsibility something actually is, or trying to figure out who's smoking bluegum leaves somewhere in the forest, The Hogsback Times has been privileged to hold up a mirror to this beautiful, complicated, frustrating, magical and fiercely independent village.

Reflection isn't about pretending everything has been perfect. It's about recognising that despite the disagreements, disappointments, celebrations, losses and triumphs, we're still here. Still arguing. Still helping. Still creating. Still showing up when it matters. We're still here...

Thank you for reading. Thank you for writing. Thank you for disagreeing, correcting me, making me laugh and sharing your stories with us over the first half of 2026. Here's to whatever the next six months decide to bless Hogsback with. Lift your veils. Stay warm. Dodge the potholes. Mind the craters.

And don't forget to stop, every now and then, and look back at how far we've already come.

HOGSBACK SECRETS – THE FINAL FIVE (plus one)

by Fiona Wallace

Here are the answers to last month's baffling head-scratchers:

1. Who was caught smoking in Std 9 and had her chances of prefectship scuppered because the nuns rigged the voting results (she claims)?

Glenn I-was-robbed Naude

2. Who cosplayed as a Pirate (in the Caribbean city of Nassau) in 2005, just for fun, and now appears in 100s of family photo albums around the world?

Janice Buccaneer-Bomb Adlam

3. 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?

Bevan Coal-to-Credits Jones

4. Which three Hogsbackers completed their high school teaching diplomas together at UCT in 1978?

The Pedagogical Politburo: Ian Green-Guerilla Weir, Andrew Sawdust-Subversive Stevens, and Fiona Bourgeois-Bling Wallace

5. 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"?

Emily Luister-Nou Kirsten

And here are the final Hogsback Secrets. Look out for the answers in the next edition of The Hogsback Times.

1. Which Hogsback author is an illegitimate descendant of King Charles II of England?

2. Who was a provincial chess player and has published an in-depth academic article on stock car racing?

3. Which qualified safari guide duetted with President Kenneth Kaunda on guitar in a (probably) raucous rendition of Willie Nelson?

4. Which IT geek is a dab hand with the sewing machine and loves baking their grandma's recipes?

5. Who has 50 jumps under their belt and an A license in free-fall skydiving?

6. Who was a teenage poet, drum majorette, and league squash player in high school, then ended up shoveling manure in their first job?

Hogsback Secrets: The Final Curtain

When Fiona launched this dare from the mountain peaks, she handed us a golden opportunity to prove our investigative mettle.

Instead, we gave her radio silence. Whether it was terminal laziness, a sudden outbreak of small-town discretion, or simply a collective fear of retaliatory exposure, absolutely nobody cracked the code. To our collective shame, the highly prestigious, wildly unofficial title of Secret Breaker of the Month remains entirely unclaimed.

But while our detective skills were non-existent, what we learnt about our neighbors was nothing short of magnificent.

Who could have guessed that behind our village's calm exterior lies a history of forest-dwelling, seven-year-old bluegum smokers (looking at you, Carol Neith), or that our local water guru, Trevor Rossouw, was a pioneering horticultural legend? We discovered that Adi Meintjes tiled the restrooms at Nkandla, Tony Naude survived a lighthouse ghost and Cheridene Boucher was once a debt-collecting Jiu-Jitsu practitioner you definitely don't want to cross. From global carbon credit pioneers to a trio of 1978 UCT revolutionaries dubbed the "Pedagogical Politburo," Fiona revealed that our mountain is populated not just by eccentric rustics, but by international crocodile wranglers, secret saxophonists and literal royalty.

As for these final tantalizing riddles? They'll be in the July HBT... (in case you can't wait that long; Fiona and I are both open to bribes).

I like giving credit where it's due. Thank you, Fiona. Thank you for lifting the veil, stirring the pot and reminding us that small-town embarrassment is, indeed, forever. You've proven that behind every quiet garden gate in Hogsback is a wildly complex, utterly unpredictable human being.

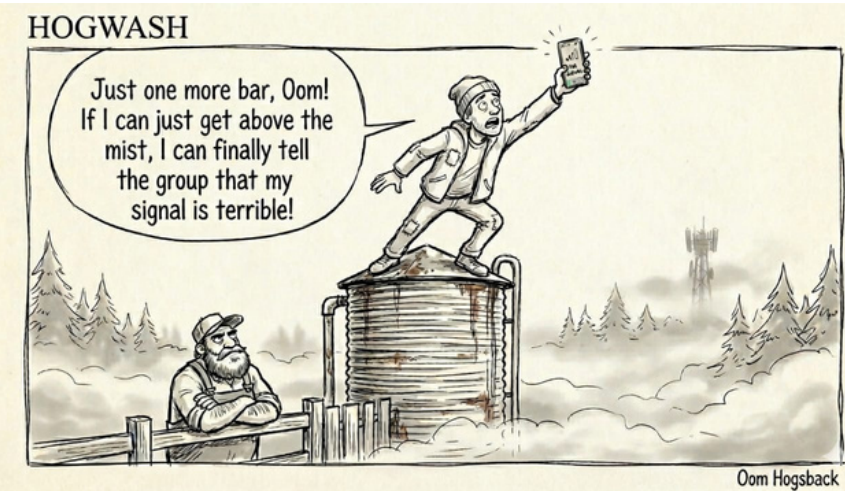
Sleep well tonight, Hogsback. Your secrets are finally safe again...no thanks to your investigative skills, but entirely thanks to Fiona's mercy.

HOGWASH

For Local Residents Only

What would a reflective issue be without looking back at how Oom Hogsback made us giggle. Here's just a few, **one last time**.

HOGWASH



Just one more bar, Oom! If I can just get above the mist, I can finally tell the group that my signal is terrible!

Oom Hogsback

HOGWASH



Why waste money on roadblocks, Oom? I've converted the potholes into an automated tyre-dip system!

That's genius Piet, but you're supposed to use Slaked Lime, not limes off your tree.

FMD BIO-DIP (AUTOMATED)

Oom Hogsback

Hogwash



Oom, big news! Barry and Zelda are finally official! It's a whole new chapter for the village!

In Hogsback, there are no "new" relationships, Piet. There are only new combinations. It's like a deck of cards... eventually, you recognize every hand that's been dealt.

Oom Hogsback

'HOGWASH'

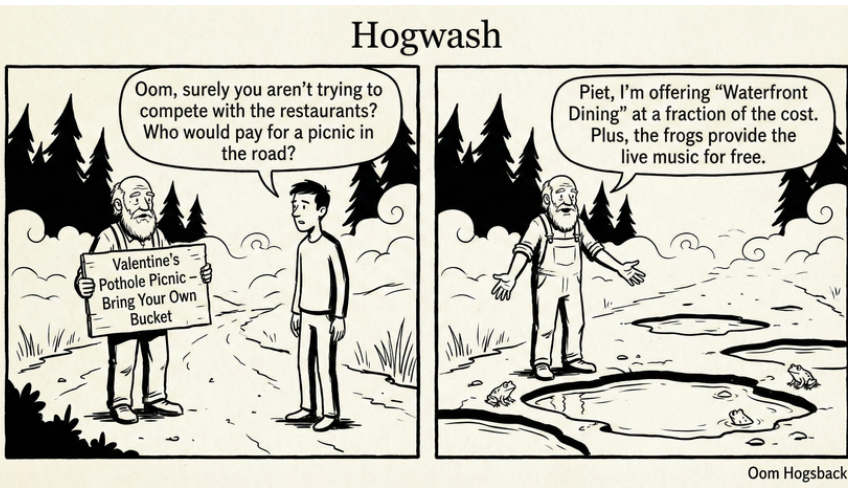


That's the fourth one today, Oom! The turf just eats them!

Standard balls are for the plains, Piet. In Hogsback, if your sports equipment doesn't have a puncture-proof lining and a tetanus shot, it won't last past the first half.

Oom Hogsback

Hogwash



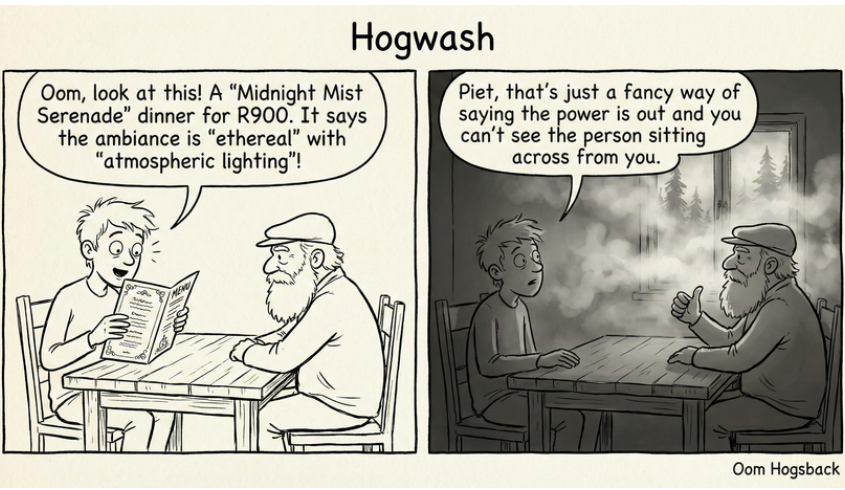
Oom, surely you aren't trying to compete with the restaurants? Who would pay for a picnic in the road?

Valentine's Pothole Picnic - Bring Your Own Bucket

Piet, I'm offering "Waterfront Dining" at a fraction of the cost. Plus, the frogs provide the live music for free.

Oom Hogsback

Hogwash



Oom, look at this! A "Midnight Mist Serenade" dinner for R900. It says the ambiance is "ethereal" with "atmospheric lighting"!

Piet, that's just a fancy way of saying the power is out and you can't see the person sitting across from you.

Oom Hogsback

Hogwash



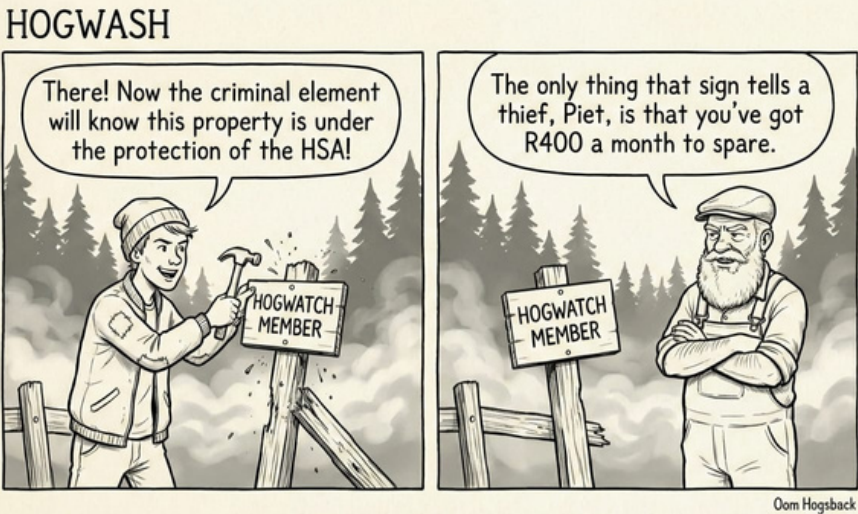
Oom, my WhatsApp is haunted! My groups are gone, but they're also still there?

Relax, Piet. They just moved into a Community. It's a big group that holds all your small groups, but it isn't actually a group itself.

So I post my lost cow in the Community?

No! You post in the Group. The Community is only for the Announcement Group, which is a group where nobody talks so that the groups inside it can talk. It's like a box for your socks, except the box is also a sock.

HOGWASH

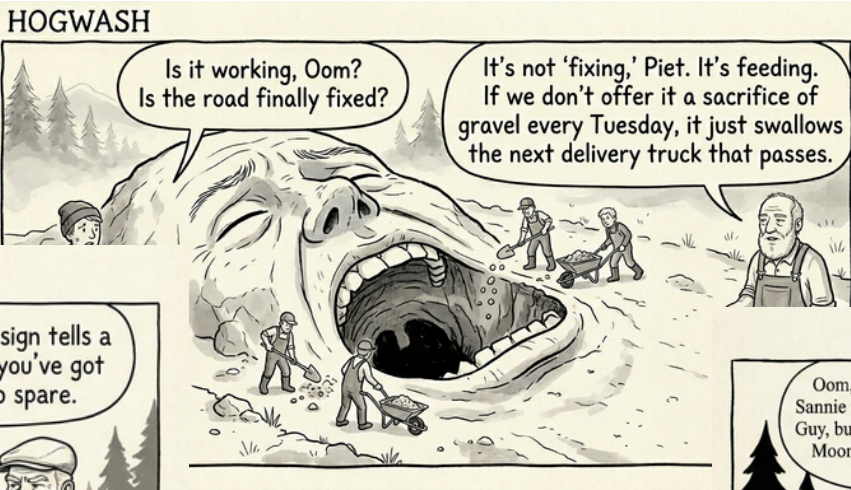


There! Now the criminal element will know this property is under the protection of the HSA!

The only thing that sign tells a thief, Piet, is that you've got R400 a month to spare.

Oom Hogsback

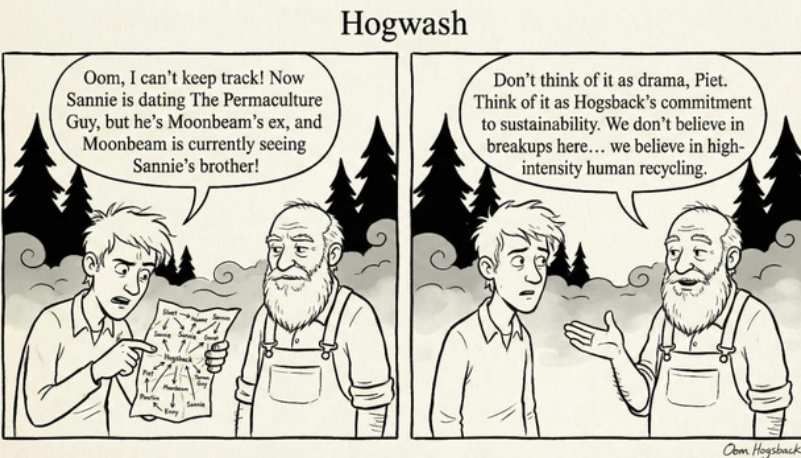
HOGWASH



Is it working, Oom? Is the road finally fixed?

It's not 'fixing,' Piet. It's feeding. If we don't offer it a sacrifice of gravel every Tuesday, it just swallows the next delivery truck that passes.

Hogwash



Oom, I can't keep track! Now Sannie is dating The Permaculture Guy, but he's Moonbeam's ex, and Moonbeam is currently seeing Sannie's brother!

Don't think of it as drama, Piet. Think of it as Hogsback's commitment to sustainability. We don't believe in breakups here... we believe in high-intensity human recycling.

Oom Hogsback

CLOSING TIME

For Local Residents Only

Slowing down...

A mouse takes 120 breaths per min and their average lifespan is about 3 years. A horse takes 20 breaths per min and lives around 30 years... yes yes I know, we have all known a mouse or a horse that's the exception to this rule. That's not the point. Did you know; 'n skilpad neem 3 asemes per minuut en hulle lewe min of meer 100 jaar! So here's your sign; slow down you breaths. Inhale deeper, exhale longer. (unless of course you aren't interested in living longer, it's your life)

Speedy Snippets

- Simple Sense will be closed 7 to 17 July. Everyone else, has extended hours, make sure you're clued up.
- Our beloved smiling Siya (King's Lodge), has been promoted and now also manages the King's Lodge, along with newbie, Cindy.
- A few old, rather; familiar faces will make an appearance this month.
- The Permit office was spotted walking itself down the hill, towards the Arboretum.
- It's officially winter when baboons start eating our chickens. Their survival instinct overrides our poultry passions...

Rumour mills True or False:

- True: Yes Miki was spotted in the Main Road in her pajamas earlier this month... there's a perfectly reasonable explanation.
- False: Jo-Ann is not getting married in October
- True: Virginia is back on the mountain
- False: Shaun is the fastest carpenter
- False: Kings Lodge did not tell the Market and its crafters, to leave.
- True: Colder weather means less drama, less interaction and less injuries. I don't have much gossip, and the gossip I have, can't be shared just yet...
- True: I don't always like you all, but i love you so much! Always! Take care of yourselves and have a fabulous July!



IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN!

I'm so excited, don't you just love that we get to do it twice a year!

A few important things to remember:

- Do not give guests WinterQuest clues or tell them where to look, it defeats the point and takes away from their experience.
- Get clued up on the program; guests will ask you questions and this is the one time where "I don't Know" can't be your answer. Please.
- Participate, join in. Ask hosts for local discount. Hosts; allow locals free of charge, if you can. Lets fill up events.
- Find your bunting and put it up Wednesday or Thursday 22nd/23rd; that way I can fill gaps effectively on Friday morning.
- Last but not least, imagine it's really Christmas, bring your kindness, your joy and giving spirit. Let's make magic!



Has the **Mountain**
Officially gone
to the **Dogs?**



**FIND OUT
IN THE NEXT
HBT!**

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!