

The Hogsback Times

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Editor's Letter — February 2026

So this isn't really a formal letter. It's just me, from Miki to my Hogsback family.

If there's a thread running through this issue, it's this: disagreement and conflict ask more of us than politeness ever will.

True engagement isn't only about warmth and kindness; it asks for patience with irritation, room for disagreement and the willingness to look beyond our need to be affirmed. That's not always comfortable... but it is honest.

The Hogsback Times is slowly becoming a record of who we are and what's happening in our mist...not just at our best, but in our frictions and arguments too. This month has been a little heavy, emotive and teaming with trails.

If some of what you read feels challenging, Allow it to invite reflection rather than defensiveness.

If you're still reading, thank you.

Just in case sitting through Feb HBT gets too heavy for you (I get it); We've added a record number of Hogwash toon strips to offer a giggle in the gloom. (Thank you, Oom Hogsback!)

Here's to a gentler, brighter month ahead, together.

With Love,

Miki

A HUGE BIG FAT THANK YOU TO YOU ALL!

**FOR CRITIQUING, PARTICIPATING, FOR CONTRIBUTING,
FOR READING & FOR CARING ENOUGH TO BE PART OF
THIS LITTLE EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY
STORYTELLING.**

By Community. For Community. On Community.

NEWS, UPDATES & FEEDBACK

For Local Residents Only

I ASKED. I REMINDED. I REMINDED AGAIN.

If submissions@hbtimes.co.za does not receive an update by the 23rd, should we assume there's nothing to report on?

CPF SAYS

No official report or feedback submitted.

Only a confirmation that the HSA and CPF are two seperate entities.



HOGSBACK ROADS GROUP

No official report or feedback submitted.

However, please read page 8 and join the Pothole Opposition!

HEAR HEAR HUG

No official report or feedback submitted.

FMD Updates and procedures posted on the local WhatsApp groups.

HB TOURISM TOOT

HTO has implemented a new operational structure, with the existing EXCO continuing to provide governance while a dedicated project team focuses on marketing, promotions, events, and tourism growth initiatives.

Planning has begun for Christmas in July, with an emphasis on coordinated communication and collaboration among local tourism stakeholders.

Financial administration has been strengthened through the introduction of a monthly invoicing system, improving consistency, transparency, and predictable cash flow.

The Visitor Information Centre remains staffed on weekends and public holidays, ensuring continued support for tourists and maintaining Hogsback's visibility as an organised destination.

The HTO AGM is scheduled for the end of March 2026 and will cover annual reviews, financials, and future tourism strategy as well as a preview of Christmas in July plans.

HTO also advises that the advertised 2026 Music in the Snow event has not been approved or formally submitted, and its status cannot currently be confirmed.

WATER CRISIS

A picture is worth a thousand words...



This does not mean you can go back to hours of showers and lusciously flushing.

Thank you to each & every water warrior, we can SEE the difference! Keep up the good work, dry season is on the horizon.

If we all do our part, Nature does hers.

By Community. For Community. On Community.

NEWS, UPDATES & FEEDBACK

For Local Residents Only

A Love, a Lament and a Lashing...

Imagine sitting down at your favourite Hogsback eatery; you're early and while you wait for your coffee, your waiter asks: "Have you read the Times yet?"

He hands you this gorgeous big newspaper to devour. Eventually the friend you were waiting for arrives.

Suddenly your weekly complain & gossip coffee date, turns into a shared laugh at Hogwash, a discussion about the existence of a HB Poker club, shared Cape Parrot sightings, a coo over cute-kid-wisdoms and plans form to go drumming this Sunday.

Imagine... and keep imagining. Because if the HBT never leaves the dark shelf beneath the order counter or bar or reception desk; then it all remains just a fantasy.

As you may have gathered, there will be no HBT-delivered printed copies this month. Besides that February is not the most lucrative month, for anyone on the mountain; I can't yet find peace with a HBT hiding in the hollows.

On the other hand; via email inboxes, downloads and even WhatsApps; January HBT travelled beyond local eyes only... all the way to the UK, Gauteng and East London.

I threatened and pleaded and said I was going to name and shame the sharers...Why? Because I wanted control? Wanted to protect myself from lawsuits?

Que sera, sera"..



Photo Credit: Mornay

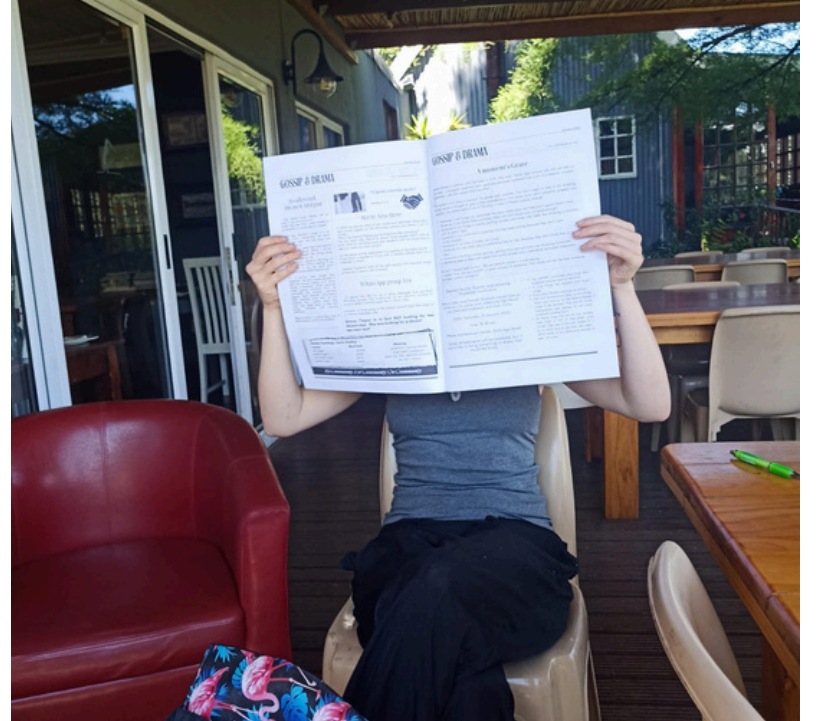


Photo Credit: Forest

CONGRATULATIONS HAPPY HOGS!

You WIN! Happy Hogs was the most creative with their reader engagement!

Thank you every local and Happy Hogs staff member! You made me laugh and filled this little heart with so much joy!

They handed back a beautifully decorated, coloured and doodled January HBT.

Well Done! And thank you for being PRO-HBT-COMMUNITY!



FROM THE FOREST FLOOR

For Local Residents Only

GREEN VISITOR LOCAL ENDEMIC



Maureen’s close-up of a pea spider (*Araneus apricus*), a common forest resident often mistaken for a cucumber spider, contrasts with Hogsback’s far rarer endemic species described by Leon N. Lotz.

A recent photograph by Maureen captured a small, bright green pea spider (*Araneus apricus*), a species often confused with the similarly coloured “cucumber spider.”

The identification is confirmed not only by its rounded, bead-like abdomen and its habit of resting in a small silk retreat during the day, but also by location. Green pea spiders are native to Southern Africa and commonly occur in local shrubs, garden vegetation and forest margins, whereas true cucumber spiders (genus *Araniella*) are primarily found in the UK, Europe and parts of Asia.

Like most foliage-dwelling orb-weavers, the pea spider is harmless and quietly industrious, they’re part of the forest’s natural pest-control team.

Beyond this common forest resident, Hogsback is also home to a far rarer species.

In 2015, South African arachnologist Leon N. Lotz formally described *Cheiramiona hogsbackensis* from specimens collected in indigenous forest leaf-litter near Hogsback. The long-legged sac spider is considered a micro-endemic, known only from this locality, making its habitat of particular conservation importance.

Research and records for the species are maintained through the South African National Survey of Arachnida, highlighting how much biodiversity lives unnoticed beneath our feet.

FORESTBEING FINDS...

Blessed new lunar year to all with the horse galloping the mushroom season in!

When you find yourself outside in nature, you might have noticed that our magical friends, the funguys and fungirls are popping their heads from underneath the soil! It feels like a shy "hello" as our rainfall this season, too, has been a little shy!

Always make sure you know exactly who's who in the fungus world as some are deadly! Yet some are delicious! Mushrooms out in bloom at the moment includes the deathcap, panther caps, blushers, Parasols, false Parasols, "the always here" russula and a variety of different boletus, just to name a few, so spot and snap a pic before they're gone again!!!

Forest tip:

Always make sure that you inform someone responsible before heading out on a trail, and make sure you have more than enough battery life on your phone in case of an emergency, as you never know what could happen!

Stay safe out there, and remember, PLEASE DON'T LITTER!

Till next time

Adi Forestbeing



Not the exact specimen, but as close as we could get. If anyone knows more, please share



ON THE GROUND

For Local Residents Only

RODGER THAT

A Quick Chat About HogWatch

A few of you have asked what's really going on with the new Hogsback Security Association (HSA – trading as Hogwatch), so HBT interviewed the Hogwatch Team, and here's the gist; plain and simple.

The first thing to know is that the HSA is separate from the Community Police Forum (CPF). There was some confusion early on, but this has been clarified. It is independent of the CPF. Think of it as "locals helping locals". There will be an AGM before the end of April 2026 where anyone can attend, ask questions, vote or even step in if you feel called to.

So what is HogWatch, really?

It's not meant to replace the South African Police Service (SAPS). Think of it more as an extra layer...visible patrols, someone to call when you're worried, a bit more presence out there on the quiet roads and misty nights.

SAPS still handles the real policing side of things. The CPF still keeps oversight. And HogWatch answers to the HSA and the people who support it.

Where it stands now

About 45 households have indicated an interest in signing up, and at the time of going to press about 15 have completed the forms and committed to the R400 per month subscription. Some of the bigger plans might take a little longer, but the intention is simply to build something steady and local.

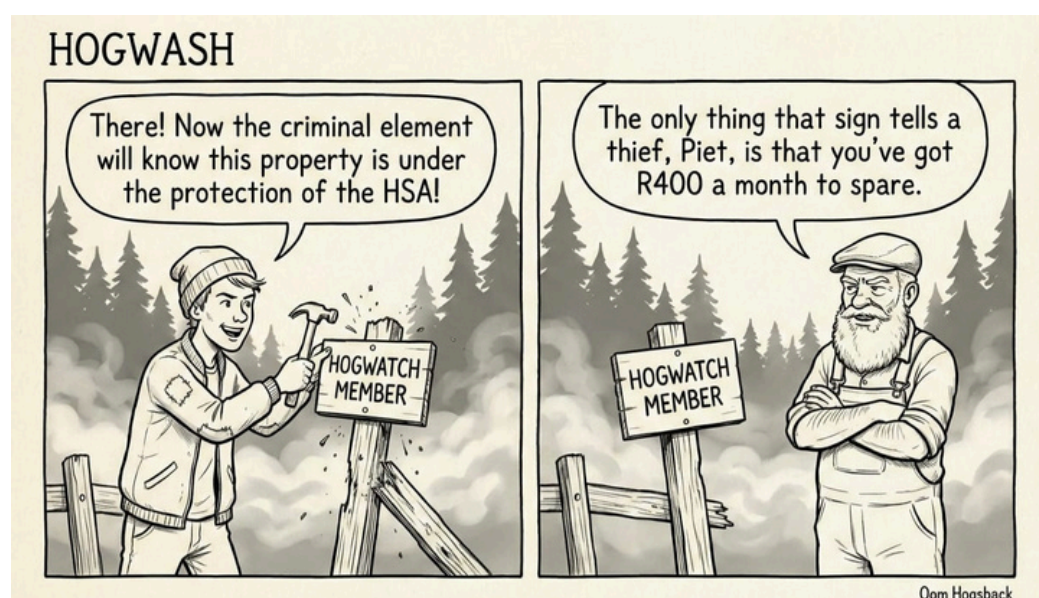
The Hogwatch team also said, and this feels important, that guards have helped non-subscribers in emergencies before, and SAPS remains there for everyone, as always.

My take

To me, this feels like one of those very Hogsback things... a community trying to look after itself a little more, without replacing what already exists.

Yet the questions raised by residents are not trivial. The real test for HogWatch will not be its launch, but its governance: clear communication, an actual PSIRA registered guard, visible accountability and a continued commitment to ensuring that community cohesion is strengthened rather than segmented. If those elements hold, the initiative has the potential to function exactly as intended...not as a substitute for policing, but as an additional layer of vigilance in a village that has always relied, at its core, on collective care.

It looks like it is really going to happen – so whether you're fully on board, still unsure or just watching how it unfolds, the invitation is really just to stay engaged, keep asking questions and show up when it matters.



Anyone remember Eblock Hogwatch? Seemed like it was actively running, or at least spoken about in the old HBT, between 2010 and 2018. What happened? What worked? What didn't?

ON THE GROUND

For Local Residents Only

THE ROAD TRAVELLED LESS AND LESS...

There is one thing almost every resident, business owner, visitor and service provider in Hogsback agrees on: our roads are hurting us. We all feel it, I can feel it in your spines; you feel it in your vehicles, our travel times, our stress levels and also in our local economy. The frustration is real, and it is shared.

If there's one thing this community has proven time and again, it's that we don't shy away from challenges; we step in and do what we can. The HB Roads Team and its supporters have carried a tremendous load. That effort deserves real acknowledgement. But we also have to ask, honestly, how sustainable that approach is going forward?

The reality is that there isn't a single cause or a just one villain. Road deterioration comes from a mix of heavy vehicle use, water and drainage failures and ~~limited~~ zero municipal support. These temporary fixes, on their own, can never fully resolve a structural problem.

There are realistic paths forward... like Improving drainage to slow the deterioration, working toward shared accountability with road users, testing longer-lasting repair methods and materials and continuing coordinated community maintenance where it makes sense. None of these are instant. But together, they move us from reaction to progress.

Honestly, realistically... we may not get a perfect road overnight... but we can build a steadily better one if we act together and stay consistent. We need to work on building stronger evidence to unlock external support. **Small actions, applied repeatedly, create real change.**

Community effort has already carried this road further than many realise. Now we need participation, not just untethered frustration...and this is where every resident and business owner can make a real, measurable difference. (Well at least I think so, please community, can we try this?)

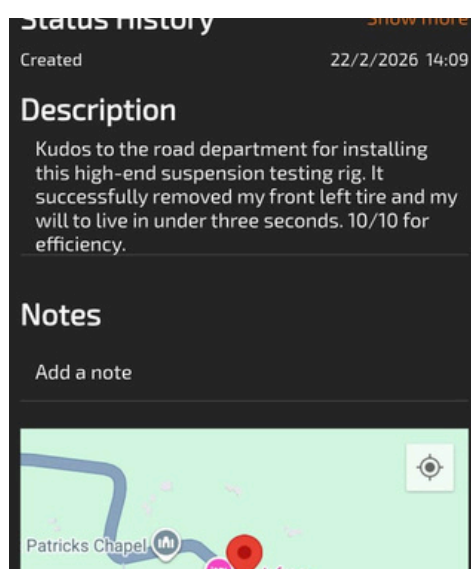
PLEASE HOGSBACK, I BEG YOU: Download either the SANRAL Pothole or ValaZonke App? Find them on the app store in your phone, both are free, quick to install and easy to use.

Once registered, you can:

Pinpoint potholes and drainage problems on the map, upload photos and log repeat damage when issues reappear. Because multiple reports create verified data. A handful of complaints can be dismissed...but dozens of logged incidents build a clear, trackable record that strengthens funding requests, prioritisation as well as accountability. In short, numbers speak louder than bitching to your neighbours.

It takes just a minute while you're already on the road, but collectively it gives our community something incredibly valuable: evidence! If our road ever makes it to Carte Blanche... wouldn't it be better if we have proof of how many times we've asked for help? 😊 So if you want to help improve the road without picking up a shovel, this is your moment.

Download. Register. Report. Repeat.



Don't be a simpleton, report responsibly. Last thing we want is for them to think we're lying..

That doesn't mean you can't amuse yourself while reporting our potholes. Get creative and feel free to screenshot and share your brilliance with me via WhatsApp.

Description

I noticed the municipality has adopted a 'deconstructed road' aesthetic. Very avant-garde. Its bold to assume we actually needed that specific patch of tar. Ive left my hubcap there as a modern art installation to complement the vibe.



Description

Found a pothole so deep its developed its own microclimate. Im pretty sure I saw a Knysna Loerie nesting in the side of it. Should we mark it as a tourist attraction or just wait for it to swallow a Hilux?



ON THE GROUND

For Local Residents Only

MAMMAL MEMOIRS...

Contributed by Dogs of Glory; Billy & Gigi

Mammal Memoirs shares the stories of the animals who pass through our village – sometimes briefly, sometimes forever – always leaving pawprints behind.

As most of you have probably already heard – because let's be honest, news in a village like ours travels faster than Foot and Mouth Disease – there are growing concerns about FMD in our area. (Too soon? Maybe. But the point stands!)

While the humour helps, the situation itself is serious, and it's important that every resident understands what this disease is – and what we must do to prevent its spread.

What Is Foot and Mouth Disease?

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is a highly contagious viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs. It does not infect humans, but it spreads extremely easily between animals and can cause severe losses for farmers and smallholders.

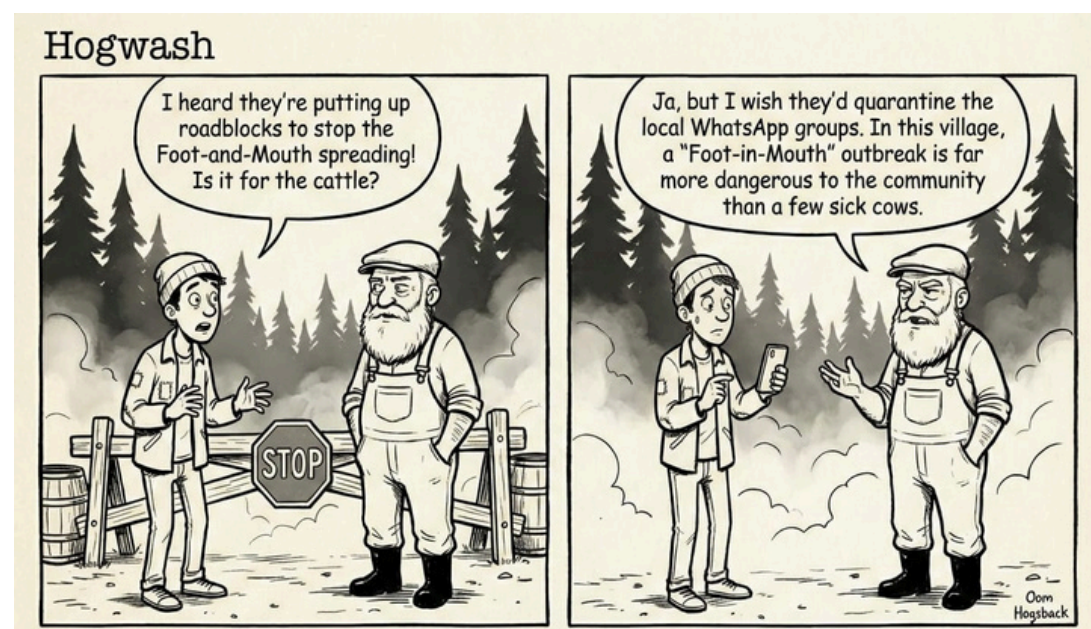
What Are the Signs?

Animals with FMD may show:

- Blisters or sores in the mouth
- Excessive drooling
- Blisters between the hooves or around the feet
- Lameness or reluctance to move
- Fever
- Sudden drop in milk production
- Weakness

In young animals, especially calves and lambs, the virus can sometimes affect the heart muscle, which may lead to sudden death.

If you see any of these signs, report them immediately to Billy & Gigi or your local State Veterinary.



How Does It Spread?

FMD spreads through:

- Direct contact between animals
- Contaminated boots, clothing, and equipment
- Vehicles carrying mud or manure
- Shared grazing areas

Something as simple as driving through infected mud and then entering another property can spread the virus.

ON THE GROUND

For Local Residents Only

MAMMAL MEMOIRS...

Contributed by Dogs of Glory; Billy & Gigi

CONTINUED...

What Must Be Done?

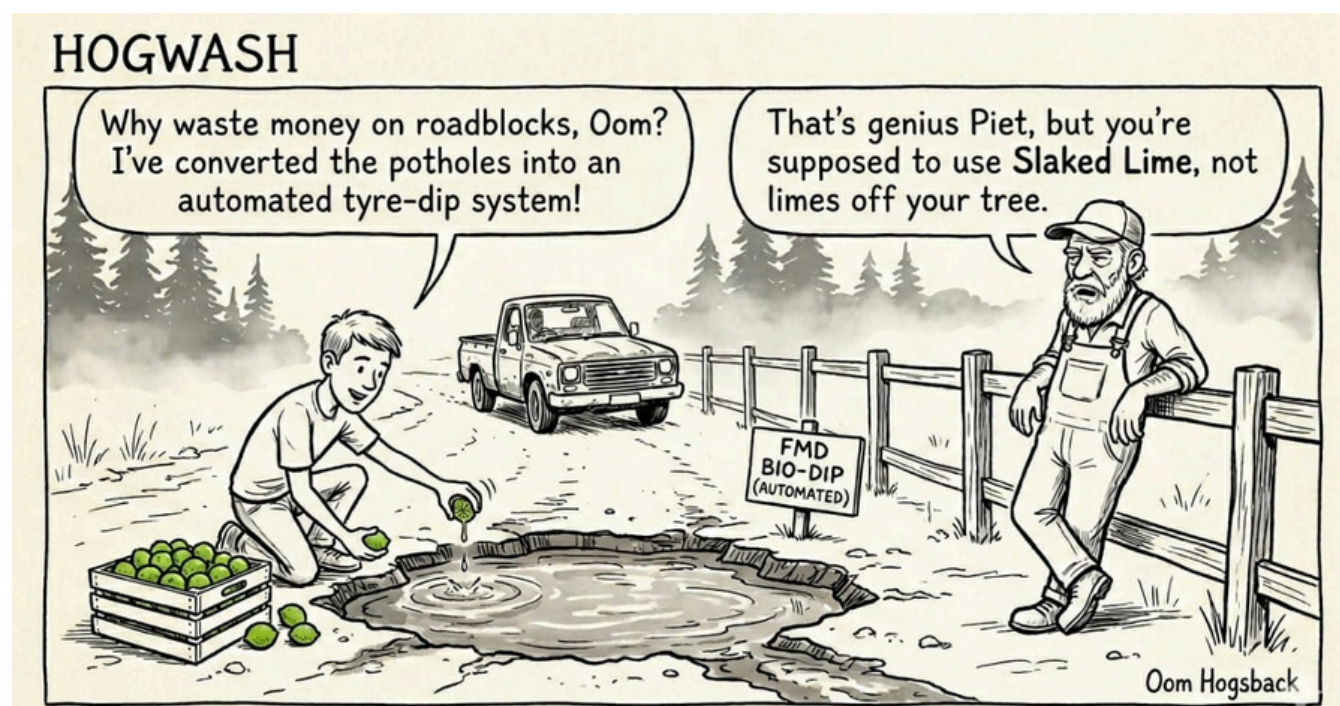
To protect our farms and our community, the following measures are essential:

- No movement of animals to or from properties.
- Immediately separate sick animals from healthy ones.
- Establish clear buffer zones between groups.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect vehicles, boots, and equipment.
- Report suspected cases without delay.

Disinfection only works if done properly:

- All mud and manure must be removed first.
- Vehicles must be pressure washed completely — including tyres, wheel arches, undercarriage, and trailers.
- Disinfectants must remain visibly wet for the full recommended contact time.
- Simply spraying a dirty surface or quickly driving over lime is not effective.

There is no cure for the virus itself. Treatment focuses on reducing pain, fever, and preventing secondary infections.



Why This Matters

Hogsback is a close-knit community. Many of us rely on livestock directly or indirectly. One outbreak affects not just one farm, but neighbours, workers, and families. The good news? Our community has stepped up in an extraordinary way. People are cooperating. Movement has been limited.

Disinfection protocols are being taken seriously. Information is being shared quickly and responsibly. That kind of collective action is exactly what prevents wider spread. So, while we may joke that news travels faster than FMD in a small village, what truly spreads even faster here is community spirit.

Thank you to every farmer, smallholder, neighbour, and volunteer who is taking this seriously. The way Hogsback is responding shows exactly why this village is so special. Let's keep protecting our animals — and each other. And HELP US TO GXOTHA the valley cattle down mountain.

If there is any question or you need more information, please feel free to contact Billy or Gigi Breytenbach. Our veterinarians on call for whom we are thankful for, are Dr. Karl Hagemann (Aloe Veterinary Clinic) and Dr. Nomva Nyathela (State Veterinarian).

VOICES, VENTS & VISION

For Local Residents Only

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.

HSA, SAPS, CPF or prayers?

Dear HBT,

I'm writing as one of many locals who are trying to understand where we're actually heading with this whole CPF and HogWatch situation and, frankly, feeling a bit uneasy about it.

If the CPF's role is to hold the police accountable, what does it say that we now need a paid service to feel safe? Are we quietly accepting that SAPS can step back while residents step in with their wallets? And if something goes wrong, who exactly is responsible, the police, the CPF, or a private association?

I'm also struggling with the optics. When the same small pool of people sits across these structures, how do we know the lines aren't blurring? And what about those who simply can't afford another monthly fee? Do they just hope goodwill fills the gap?

Add to that the financial uncertainty and the fact that a professional company couldn't make it work here, and it's hard not to wonder whether we're building something sustainable or just something hopeful.

These aren't accusations they're the questions many of us are quietly asking. Clarity would go a long way.

Sincerely,
A concerned (and slightly weary) local

Dear Miki,

I don't know who decided that what Hogsback really needed was more buttons, but here we are.

I opened WhatsApp the other morning to find everything has been shuffled into this new "Community" thing, and suddenly I need a small instruction manual just to find the group I've been using perfectly fine for years. Nothing is where it used to be, messages are hiding, and I keep landing in the wrong place like I've walked into the wrong room at a party.

I'm sure someone thinks this is very clever, but for some of us it just feels like unnecessary tinkering with something that wasn't broken. We're told it's "simpler," yet I now have to press twice as much just to read the same messages.

Maybe I'm just old-fashioned, but I miss when things stayed put and did what they said on the tin. Progress is all well and good just not when it makes everyday life more fiddly than it needs to be.

Please tell whoever is in charge that at least one grumpy local would like their old, simple WhatsApp back.

*Warm-ish regards,
(Please don't use my name, chose one for me)
A technologically tired resident*

**Write your own vent, brag,
thank you letter or share
something true to Hogsback
and your experience here....**

submissions@hbtimes.co.za

Hogwash



VALENTINE VALOUR

"Love me or hate me, both are in my favor. If you love me, I'll always be in your heart. If you hate me, I'll always be in your mind"
William Shakespeare

Huis Toe

Hogsback,
jy roep my
in die mis
en in die stiltes
tussen wind en voëls.

Jy toets my
met jou koue,
jou berge,
jou eerlike stilte –
en wanneer ek bly
en mooi luister,
beloon jy my.

Met lig deur bome,
waterstrome
en die sagte wete:
dat ek hier hoort.

Om jou lief te hê
is om stadiger te leef
en elke dag weer
terug te keer
na my Hartshuis,
jy, Hogsback, is Huis.



February Quiet

In the soft heat
of a Hogsback afternoon,
where the wind moves slowly
through the trees,

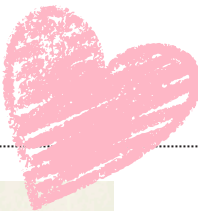
I love you
in the spaces no one notices.
Between your words,
in the way your gaze
rests somewhere just past me.

It is a small love,
well-behaved,
tucked into the pocket
of ordinary days.
You will never need
to carry it.

Still, it glows
like late sun
caught in the dust
of a quiet room.

"Trust the overthinker when they say I love you. They have, most assuredly, thought of every reason not to...and chose you anyway."
– L.K Pilgrim

"Die wereld is mal,
kompleks en kwesbaar
mense wat oormekaar val...
Jy is die uitsondering,
want die wereld is mal..."
Francois van Coke



Hogwash



Hogwash



Love in Hogsback
means sharing your last log
and your Wi-Fi signal...
because here
love isn't grand gestures,
it's small, stubborn kindnesses;
showing up,
laughing when plans fall apart,
and not judging
how many layers
they're wearing in February.

If you still like each other
after a weekend of mist, mud,
and no signal;
that's basically marriage.



GOSSIP & DRAMA

For Local Residents Only

Titbits:

- Did you hear the silence since the arrest?
- THREE babies will be born this month! Whoever comes last, will officially be the youngest in Hogs. Who is the eldest?
- Violence is rife, Miki pushed Gordon and Mark killed a dog.
- "Next Month is my 10yr!! Join me in celebrations" (Guess who)

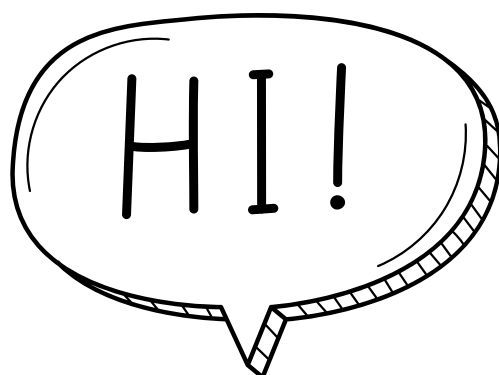
Clearly I have no gossip for you this month... It's quite ironic. Rooms go quiet when I walk in, no more calls, no more 'have you heard'... And IF I hear 'skinder' in my massage room, it evaporates the minute it's spoken anyway.

People don't talk half as much and some have even started fact checking themselves! It's a beautiful privilege to observe. If I only knew...

Riddle me This:

I am the breath that clouds your glass, yet I have no lungs to heave. I am the grey veil that humbles the peaks, asking you to believe in what you cannot see. I am the quiet architect of the frost, building cathedrals on the Samango's path while the village sleeps. You seek the sun to banish me, yet without my shroud, the yellowwoods would thirst. I am the silence that forces you inward, back to the hearth, back to the truth you've been avoiding.

What am I?



"Silence..."

Quoted Newbie



The newbie-wave is real. My faith in it, less so. I had this romantic notion that everyone who lands here is somehow called... destined to fold neatly into the fabric of the mountain. Turns out... the fabric remains largely unread

My illusion of unison and welcoming people most locals are not yet familiar with, is just that; delusional.

All but ONE newbie completed my questionnaire/ introduced themselves. (And I feel like I bullied him, so does it even count?)

Well, if you're new here; Welcome to the mountain anyway!

When I first arrived, Ingrid welcomed me to "The world's largest open air Mental Asylum" and Garth Concar said: "Whatever you brought with you in your proverbial suitcase... trust me, this mountain will unpack and amplify it"

My dad said never to trust a man who says 'trust me'... but boy oh boy, Garth was right...and Ingrid wasn't far off either.

Maybe that's the real mountain ritual: if you don't tell your story, someone else eventually will.

Should no new mountain folk decide to introduce themselves; this section will make room for a Fiona-project. Maybe our OG locals will lead by example and introduce us to some unknown personal truths?

"I'm creating a do-you-know-who-this-is quiz. I'm digging for unusual facts about individual Hogsbackers that most people (even their friends) may not know (nothing mortifying or too embarrassing, except with your personal permission!). So...a secret hobby, a previous career, a hidden talent, a great achievement, a provincial or South African sports team cap, a famous person you are related to, an unexpected claim to fame, a world authority in something, published writing, a naughty story from your past (or present) - basically anything that would make other Hogsbackers say: "You're kidding me" or "I didn't know that" or "Who knew?"

Here's your chance to lift your veil, I dare you! What do people not know about you? And more than one fact about you would be extra welcome.

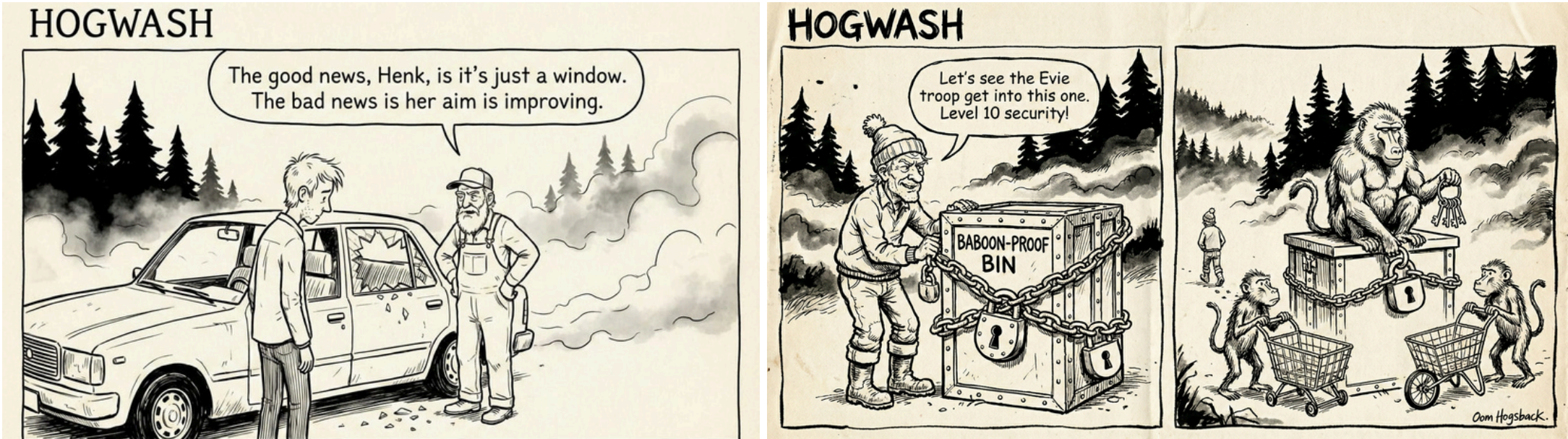
Many thanks in advance.

Fiona Wallace

By Community. For Community. On Community.

THIS MONTH'S HOGWASH

For Local Residents Only



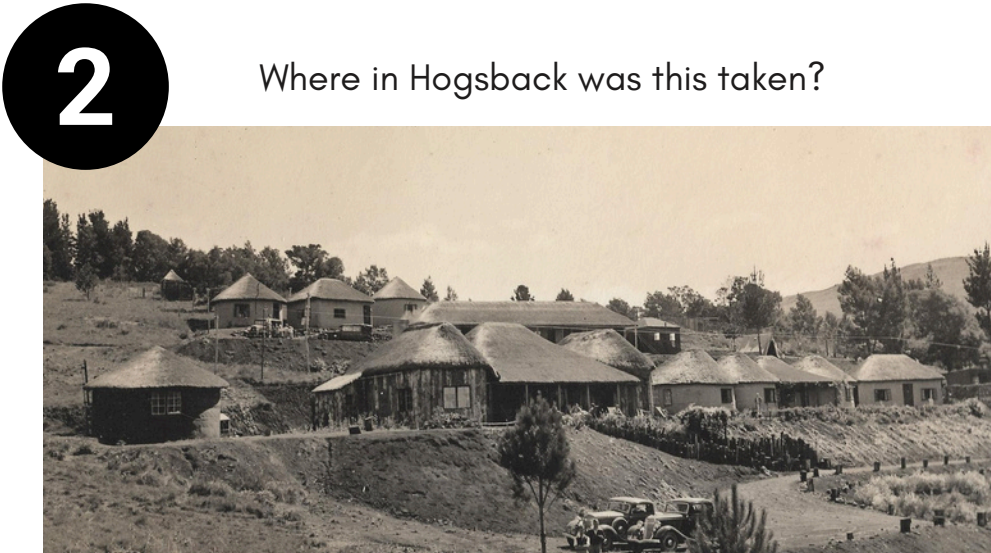
CREDIT: OOM HOGSBACK

QUIZ TIME



REMEMBER THIS POOCH?

1 What was his name?
&
can you remember what the village
elected to call him?



3 Who won South Africa's first
competition for the largest
dagga plant (grown in their
veggie garden)?

Requests:

- Anyone still have a 'Green Book'; the hiking guide and hog-code, GREEN BOOK.
- Photos, real photos
- Go click and fill out all the links and buttons in your HBT e-mail.

⚠ TOP SECRET:
DO NOT SCAN ⚠



FOR OFFICE
USE ONLY!

