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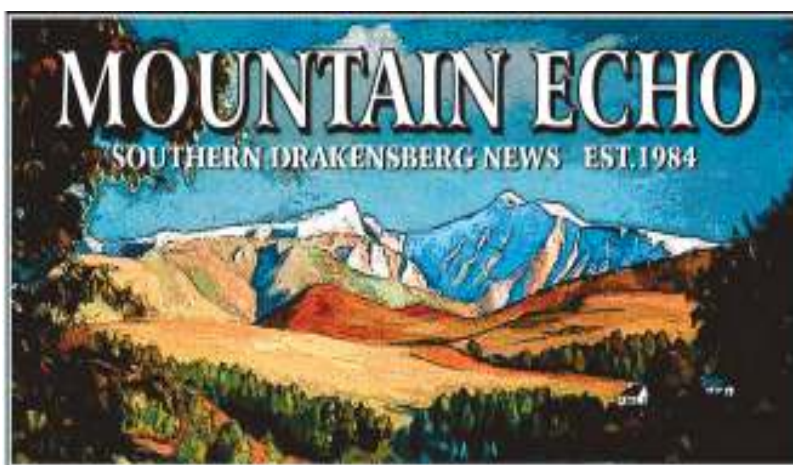
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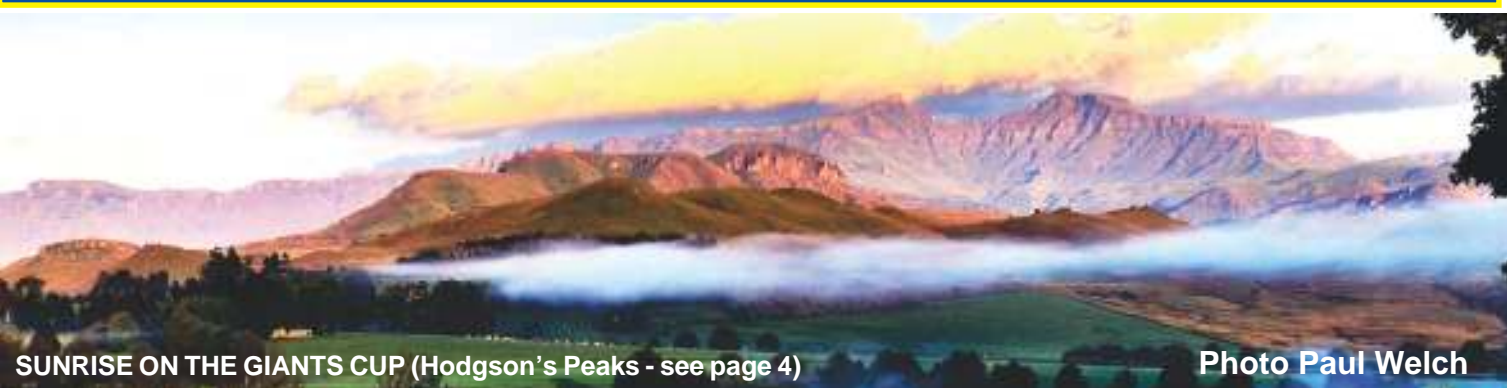
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SUNRISE ON THE GIANTS CUP (Hodgson's Peaks - see page 4)

Photo Paul Welch



U Pick fun @peony.perfect

Photo By; Erika Smith. Julie Braby with her bunch from PEONY PERFECT see page 3

THANK YOU!

The Underberg Farmer's Association thanks Iain Knox and the staff of UNDERBERG SUPERSPAR for the generous Foot & Mouth Disease donation received from their 'Sizzle for our Soil' wors roll initiative.

Over R27 000 was raised during November and December and two weeks into January!

We would also like to thank the Underberg BUILD IT team for making knap sack sprayers available to our local farmers. This piece of equipment is essential in the fight against FMD in the spraying of vehicles, shoes, and anything else that is considered a 'carrier' that accelerates the spread of the disease.

While we are still nowhere near out of the woods with this crisis, our farmers are so grateful for the support from those who are not directly implicated in the daily management of what we are facing. If you want to know more about the disease and its potential public implications, please contact the local Vets, or the UFA for more information.

We live in an amazingly unique and aware community. Let's work together to keep FMD out of our District!

By Bellinda Louch UFA secretary

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JAN 31 Country Market @ The Local Collection last Saturday of the month 9am to 13.00 **contact Lauren 079 244 9601**
JAN 31 Wild Orchids of the Southern Drakensberg walk meet 8.30am latest at Garden Castle nature reserve **Julie Braby 082 804 2442**
FEB 7 Country Market @ Trout walk centre first Saturday of the month **contact Alison 079 351 0901**
FEB 8 Sani Wildflower Walk **bookings www.sanilodge.co.za**
FEB 14 UEMS Valentine's Fundraiser @ Underberg Country Club music by Neil Prior and Andy Dillon **booking essential 033 7011130**
FEB 18 Garden Club Meeting at Under The Berg B&B, in the beautiful garden of Penny and Andy. **third Wednesday of the month**
FEB 21 Live music with Pieta Venter at Bunkers, Underberg. **Bookings: Craig 082 858 5486 Sarah 066 590 3758**
FEB 25 Quiz "Double Trouble" @ Underberg Country Club 6pm. R60pp, 4 per team **sontact Trish 066 0033773**
MAR 21 BERG 100 **www.berg100.co.za**
MAR 25 Quiz "friends, Romans, countrymen" @ Underberg Country Club 6pm. R60pp, 4 per team **sontact Trish 066 0033773**
MAR 27 - 29 Awaken Yoga Festival For more information and to purchase tickets, **visit www.awakenyogafestival.org/**
APR 2 - 6 Splashy Fen Music Festival **www.splashyfen.co.za**
APR 24-26 Ultra Trail Drakensberg for info **www.ultra traildrak.com**
MAY 6 - 9 KAP Sani2C for info **Sani2C.co.za**
MAY 21 - 24 The Giant's Cup for more info **www.thegiantscuptrail.com**
MAY 29 - 31 KAP sani2c nonstop Visit **www.nonstop.sani2c.co.za** for more information and to enter.
OCT 3 Sani Pass TT visit **www.sanipasstt.com** to enter
NOV 14 Sani Stagger entries open 4 March 2026 **info@Sanistagger.co.za**
DEC 12 Christmas market @ The Local Collection **contact Lauren 079 244 9601**

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Highlands Church International
Johann and Debbie Van As 033 7011470
Sunday: 08:30 Prayer Meeting 09:00 Celebration Service 09:00 Kids for Jesus (all ages welcome) Monday: Homegroups 18:30 Tuesday: 15:00 Pevensey Ministry Thursday: 18:00 Prayer Meeting Alternate Fridays: 06:00 Men's Sunrise coffee (confirm 033 7011470)

Underberg Congregational Church
Church Times:
Sunday Services at 09:00. Children & Junior Church at 09:30 Bible Studies on Thursdays: at 10:00, contact Erika Smith 082 - 688 6759 & at 18:00, contact Ray Scott 083 - 413 6917. We hire out our facilities at the House of Grace for private or business meetings / functions / training courses. Contact Daniela 082 - 403 8864

St Michael's and All Angels service The Eucharist service is at 9 am every Sunday with Sunday school at the same time. Thank you. Rev Kayla Urbasch 082 466 8134

Berg Community Fellowship
Berg Training Centre
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Every Sunday at 9 a.m. Phone Pastor Dennis on 0834407889 for more info.

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FAIRMOUNT ESTATE: This beautiful, 3 bedroom, all en-suite, home is ideal as a holiday home or for family living. The open plan living area flows out onto a covered patio, through several stack back doors, and with incredible views, as well as mountain views from two bedrooms. There is a small study / office as well. The kitchen is open plan and well appointed, with separate scullery / laundry plus pantry. There is a lovely casual lounge as well as a formal lounge, divided by the dining room, with incredible views from each of these rooms.

BULWER R7 300 000-00

Established, Off Grid Small Holding with Licensed Pub and Dining. Great Income Generating opportunity in the Midlands, with so much to offer. This self sustained, 12.1 hectare small holding is totally off grid, with 27 solar panels and inverter system, generator and 6 x 50 000l water tanks. A licensed bar and restaurant with a stunning view, managers house with 3 bedrooms, a second, 2 bedroom house, a large timber home, another 2 bed cottage and 6 cabins. There is a communal bathroom and laundry for the cabins and electrical points for the camp ground. Several storerooms and workshops.

UNDERBERG R13 000pm

Mountainairs Rental- The home comprises five bedrooms plus a guest suite, providing ample space for family and guests. There are 4 1/2 bathrooms, ensuring convenience and comfort for all residents. Enjoy the exquisite, 180° views of the Southern Drakensberg mountains, with the famous 'Giants Cup' central to the panorama. The unit is strategically positioned to maximize these breathtaking views, with no obstruction in the foreground. An enclosed garage offers space for storage of bicycles, canoes, and other outdoor equipment. This space can also double as an office or workshop. In addition to the enclosed garage, there is a triple carport, providing ample covered parking for vehicles and additional storage.



Helping Children Through Transitions — Emotional Wellbeing Matters

Submitted by Amanda Memela, Registered Social Worker (SACSSP & BHF)

As schools reopen across Underberg and surrounding communities, many children are stepping into new classrooms with hidden worries. Grade R learners face the challenge of leaving familiar caregivers, adjusting to transport routines, and meeting new teachers. Grade 7 learners, meanwhile, prepare for the leap into high school — a transition filled with excitement but also anxiety.

Add to this the pressures of exams, bullying, and peer relationships, and it becomes clear that emotional wellbeing is just as important as academic success. Amanda Memela, a registered social worker based in Underberg, has made it her mission to support children through these transitions. With over 30 years of experience in counselling, play therapy, and child behavior support, Amanda offers programs that help learners build resilience and confidence.

“Not every headache or stomach ache is medical,” she explains. “Often, these symptoms are linked to stress, trauma, or family challenges. Social work intervention uncovers the root cause and provides children with tools to cope.”

Her seasonal school programs are designed to align with the academic calendar:

- Term 1: Back-to-School Readiness for Grade R and Grade 7 learners
- Term 2: Bullying Awareness and Self-Esteem Building
- Term 3: Exam Stress and Trauma Support
- Term 4: Transition to High School Workshops

Amanda’s approach is flexible. Schools can choose individual counselling sessions for learners or group workshops that benefit entire classes. This ensures that support is accessible even for families without medical aid.

By partnering with schools, clinics, and local doctors, Amanda hopes to create a network of care that addresses the social and emotional roots of children’s struggles. “When we prepare children emotionally, we give them the foundation to thrive academically and socially,” she says.

For more information or to arrange a program, Amanda can be contacted at 0824319425/

“Helping children through transitions — because emotional wellbeing matters.”

Common challenges schools see:

- = **Grade R children** anxious about transport, new teachers, and routines
- = **Grade 7 learners** struggling with the move to high school
- = **Bullying & peer pressure** affecting self-esteem
- = **Exam stress & trauma** impacting performance

Social work intervention uncovers the root cause:

- Play therapy for emotional readiness
- Behavioural support for families
- Counselling for stress, trauma, and relationships
- Parent guidance for smoother transitions

Call to Action

Flexible school programs and consultations available in Underberg, Bulwer, Ixopo and Pietermaritzburg.”

“Partner with Amanda Memela, Registered Social Work

Practitioner (SACSSP + BHF) Health1st Wellness affiliate

Mobile: 0824319425 / amemela07@gmail.com



The Williams Twins went to Epworth. Emily received Honours after matric trials. She received 7 Distinctions and an A aggregate after finals. She received a Top Achiever financial award from Pretoria University and is going there to study her first choice degree which is a BConSci Bachelor of Consumer science in food. Amber received Full Colours after matric trials. She received 4 distinctions and an A aggregate after finals. She is going to the University of Cape Town to study her first choice degree which is a BSc Speech and language Pathology.

- The future lies before us with all its uncertainty and opportunity.
- You can live with expectation that God will



FIRST DAY AT BIG SCHOOL
Ryan, Grace, Michael and mum Stephanie at Underberg Primary School Grade 1, led by teacher Coleen Henderson

continue to carry you.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for bringing me to this point in my life. I recognise that You have been with me and that You have carried me. I celebrate my memories, but now I look forward with confidence in You. Amen.

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Neil Prior and Andy Dillon

What the world needs now is love, sweet love!

The Underberg Country Club and Hackers Grill will be putting on a **Valentine's Day dinner on Saturday 14th February** from 18:30 to 21:30. The evening will be hosted by Neil and Andy and guests can order the seafood platter special or choose from the menu. Cover charge is R125 per person, and a large portion of the proceeds will go to support the **Underberg Emergency Medical Services**.

Underberg Emergency Medical Services (UEMS) plays a vital role in keeping the Southern Drakensberg community safe, providing rapid response and life-saving care across a large and often remote rural area. From medical emergencies on farms and mountain trails to accidents on regional roads, Underberg EMS is often the first—and sometimes only—line of help for residents and visitors alike. Like many community-based emergency services, Underberg EMS relies heavily on fundraising events to supplement limited operational funding. Unfortunately, the recent outbreak of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) has led to the cancellation of several key local events that traditionally generate much-needed financial support. These cancellations have had a significant impact, reducing income that would normally go toward vehicle maintenance, medical equipment, fuel, training, and volunteer support.

**Date: February 14 Venue: Underberg Country Club. Time: 18:30
Entrance: R125 pp Booking 033 701 1130**



Community in Action

The SANI COMMUNITY FORUM appealed to our community for assistance to transport 600kg of rice from Amanzimtoti to Underberg for food parcels supporting those in need. Our sincere thanks to Splashy Fen Festival, Underberg Dairy, Tastic Rice, and Imzamo Communications (Amanzimtoti) for their generous support and collaboration. If YOU would like to donate your time or make a financial contribution, please contact Richard on 071 361 0273. When communities work together, real help reaches those who need it most



"Splashy Cares comes to the aid of Sani Community Forum: Splashy Fen, through its Splashy Cares community program, recently collaborated with the SCF (Sani Community Forum) with a donation of 600kg of Tastic rice. Pictured here is Richard Sutter (SCF) handing over part of the donation to the "Be Your Own Hero" organisation's Safe House in Himeville

"Stay human" is a phrase that calls for maintaining core human

values—empathy, compassion, and moral integrity—

especially during times of crisis, trauma, or in an increasingly automated, technological, or cold world. It emphasizes that preserving one's humanity, moral compass, and connection to others is more important than mere physical survival.



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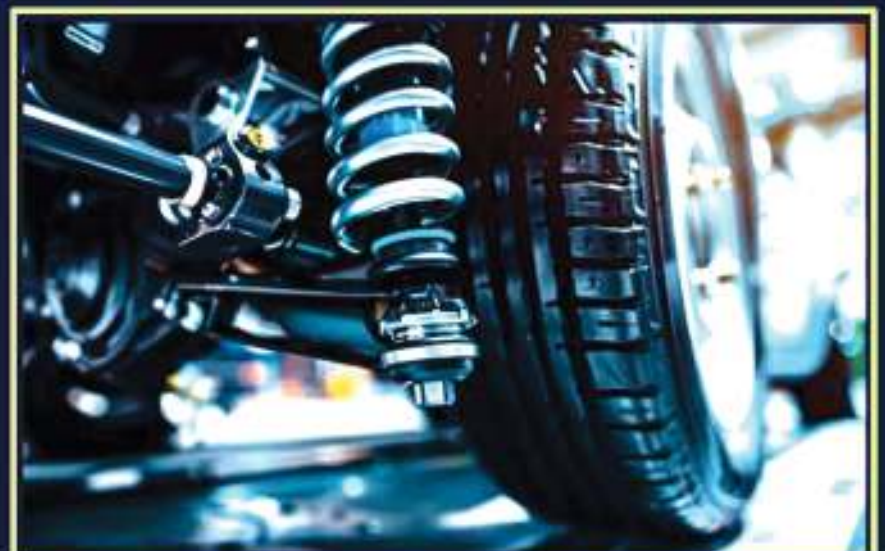
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Graves matter. *Finding Thomas Hodgson's grave.*

Is there such a thing as Grave tourism?

Well as my brother would say; Ask the Sangoma! - Ai of course!

Ai Overview; Graveyard tourism as a niche form has grown in popularity. Visitors, sometimes called "taphophiles," are interested in the stories and art behind tombstones, the history of famous figures buried here, and the unique atmosphere of the grounds.

I must be one of those "taphophiles" something I probably inherited from my mother.

But the fascination I am writing about was definitely inherited from my late father **Robin Guy** who together with my late father-in-law **Bill Small** set themselves the task of finding **Trooper Thomas Hodgson's** grave, 25 years ago and it's not behind Hodgson's peaks. My oldman's



chapter in 2003 **Arthur Champkins** guide booklet '**Stones Unturned**' tells a story of a 1862 autumn Bushman raiding party, an episode still shrouded in mystery. A mixture of Burgers, Troopers and Native levies probably ascended the escarpment over Sani Pass in pursuit of Bushman raiders who had lifted cattle and horses from a Speirs farm in the Dargle. The expedition ended when Hodgson was accidentally shot.

In 1998 a letter surfaced written in 1911 to a **Ms. Phipson** in England. It was penned by **Robert Speirs jr.** who accompanied his father by the same name, ending the 'conspiracy of silence' which kept secret the identity of the man whose gun had fired the shot which ended Thomas Hodgson's life in March 1862. The letter was discovered by his namesake a Great great Grandson also Robert Speirs of Boston in 1998.

Robert Speirs pioneer farmer in the Dargle 1850/60's

Here's the crucial paragraph.

"....I had got thrown from my mare and before I could catch her Henry Dicks had got around the bog and up to the Bushman. Hodgson was with him. Dicks pulled up to shoot but the gun snapped. When he looked to see what was wrong he found the rein on the nipple. He drew it out and the gun went off". (The nipple being part of the firing mechanism)

Photo; Robin Guy

A long story short – In the year 2000, 137 years after the event these two in their 70's were dropped off close to the perceived bog by the 15th Squadron Oryx helicopter with flares and some supplies in case of emergency. Using these archived reports and letters they pictured the scene on March 13th 1862 role-playing Troopers, Burgers and local African levies chasing the bushman down, an act that caused the accident that mortally wounded Thomas Hodgson. The bushman evidently having abandoned his horse escaped through a bog only to be caught a little later. The party carried the wounded Hodgson a few hundred yards up to a rocky outcrop where he later succumbed to his wound, that location a mystery.

"We looked beyond the bog, there was a rocky outcrop with a collection of boulders nearby....Bill and I moved some of those stones. We found nothing, but we had to establish that this was no natural assemblage, which would have included some boulders too large to be shifted. There would have been a sheltering wall built and it was thought that those had been used to erect the cairn/grave. Writes my father; It is a somewhat insubstantial cairn, though. Does it cover a grave dug later, by the party which returned to the scene the following year, 1863? And would they not have left some commemorative artifact at the scene? Was Hodgson the first **Natal Carbineer** to die on active service? This site, and other nearby possibilities, demands another visit, more time."

I hike regularly with **Mountain Backpackers** a down country crowd who have particular affection for the Southern Drakensberg. Dave Gay who knows our mountains better than anyone I know broached the subject of Hodgson's gravesite with me last year – "Could I give him a GPS pin?" My reply – "Sorry Dave I only have my fathers photo's". I sent him what I could, the next thing I knew an expedition was scheduled - these guys move fast. Dave's plan; To ascend up Stones Pass traverse toward the Rhino, scout the grave site estimated to be close to the head of the Mzimkulu pass, overnighting in caves en route, a 4 day trip - Irresistible. <https://www.mountainbackpackers.co.za> Summer hiking is not for the 'unprepared'. Alas after spending a pleasant night in Wilson's cave we arose to thick mist which disorientated us. Dave made wise decision to retreat. We would now traverse below the berg to Mzimkulu pass across Eland flats, much of this off path with a plan to ascend Mzimkulu pass in the morning. Whew! I'm not going to recommend this in a hurry, but it's memorable! No complaints about the spectacular campsite we found.

Back to 1862 - Separated from the party after rescuing fellow trooper George Robinson, who seemed stuck in the pass Robert Speirs

snr. overnighted in the cave which now bears his name, it was close to our camp and we passed through it. I wonder if he saw the beautiful painted Rhebok scene?

Regular Sotho foot traffic is in evidence, I'd say Mzimkulu pass is doable on horseback. We had a few photo's as a reference and a rough idea of what the circumstances were when Hodgson was accidentally shot. So as my father and Bill had done 25 years ago we looked for a bog, the escarpment has plenty of them. Slingsby Maps are best for the berg, a rough X indicating the inconclusive grave site, we learnt the mapmaker had speculated the location from Bills description. We debated the definition of a 'bog', something a horse would find difficult to navigate and imagined the chase. Bill and the old man's photo's gave us some ideas.

The wounded Hodgson was carried about 300 yards from the bog to a rocky outcrop. Meanwhile Speirs had caught the bushman, later he led the party to a ridge opposite a cave with bushmen in it, the party observed them until they (only women and children), moved off. One Trooper George Robinson appeared to have difficulty returning up the Pass, Robert Speirs snr. descended to help him but cramped up and was unable to return. Now he limped down to the bushman cave and spent the night out there. He fired shots to communicate his whereabouts, they were returned. Returning the following day, he found Hodgson dead and buried under stones built from the shelter by his comrades who had gone. He was perplexed when he found his horse and supplies nowhere to be seen. The men Fred Bucknall, a pioneer in Underberg history and Robert Speirs's his nephew had been with Hodgson. Why would they take his horse and supplies?

Speirs's story is disjointed, controversial contradictory to other accounts. Had there been a disagreement with Captain Proudfoot the officer in command? The whole episode had no doubt been under sharp observation by bushman who were and still are masters of their own domain – my guess is they got their bounty. Speirs's journey home on foot can only be imagined, what ended up as a 2 week epic slog to Chief Dumisa's homestead on the upper Mkomas left him exhausted, with limited ammunition Speirs survived off the veld and at one point scratched his will on a rock, he never fully recovered. Back to our December 2025 search; There are bogs aplenty in the vicinity of Mzimkulu pass. We scouted a few, the sort you wouldn't ride a horse over in a hurry, they needed to be 300 yards from a rocky ridge/outcrop. After stumbling on rocky outcrop not far from the head of the Mzimkulu river Underberg's Dan Lowe the youngest amongst us had an alternative thought. He pondered - bogs can change just like a stream changes it's course, after all it's 150 years ago, the headland of the Mzimkulu could have once been a bog. We mounted Dan's rocky outcrop concluding it not a bad place to be buried. It even had a headstone, a Sotho herd boys **Morabaraba** board game etched onto a flat rock but alas not enough proof to change the grave site on Slingsby's map.

Back to the **Sangoma!** Ai is deceptively inconclusive as to the exact location of Thomas Hodgson's grave location and what a relief, one wouldn't want to spoil things for the next "taphophile" expedition.

Footnote; **Who was Thomas Hodgson anyway?** I'm speculating - but I really enjoy joining the dots. A **Rev. Thomas Hodgson** a missionary was associated with Namaqualand, and Natal where he had acquired a 6000 acre farm **Buffel's hoek** in extent with forests a streams, he'd never lived there. **Thomas Fannin** had been involved in a copper mining operation in Namaqualand. In 1847 **Fannin** bought **Buffel's hoek** from **Rev. Hodgson** for 150 pounds and renamed it '**The Dargle**' after a river in Ireland where he'd grown up. A **Fannin** son had been on the Hodgson Bushman raid expedition where a young **Thomas Hodgson** had come to grief, he must have been a relation of **Rev. Thomas Hodgson's** the Wesleyan minister who had worked in Natal as a missionary. Another Namaqualand connection to the district is **Jackson** a magistrate who monitored the Pholela district in the 1870/80's from the present Highbury near Bulwer. He was also a son of a Namaqualand missionary who had moved to the Karkloof and later facilitated the surveying of settler farms in the district in the 1880's.

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ABOUT TROUT FISHING IN UNDERBERG

It is so nice to see the rivers looking very good this part of the season. Regular rains in the catchment areas have had the rivers flowing strong and have kept them full. This is good news for the fish and anglers. The lower reaches discoloured a few times after heavy showers but cleaned up quickly. Almost all anglers fishing have reported many small fish all over. A very good sign the rivers are recovering well from the bad season we have had. The fish that

survive will give us plenty joy once they have grown a bit. Some good reports of bigger fish around too. Both the Umzimkulu and Pholela have produced fish above 40cm with the biggest a 43cm Rainbow trout from one of the pools on the Pholela. The upper reaches of the rivers also still fishing very well with many fish being caught. The beauty of the places these little fish we target live is truly breathtaking and worthwhile doing a trip to these upper reaches where fish rise to dry flies very willingly. Some Of the Brown trout rivers close by has also produces some very good fish and reports of decent fish being brought to net from anglers venturing a bit further to go fish. Smaller Nymphs have been working well fooling fish and the odd report of streamers being used to get fish fooled. The still waters around Underberg have also fished well, with good reports coming in for the first part of the month. Average size of the fish caught all between 50cm and 60cm with a good 62cm Rainbow trout netted in one of the local resort's still waters. Club stats show 32 fish caught of 36 rods. Unfortunately,

the hot day temperatures we have been having has warmed the still waters enough for the fish too seek colder zones deeper down. Fishing has slowed a little with the hot days. Changing up in tactics will increase your chances of hooking into one deeper down. Fish slower and deeper, trying to imitate bottom dwelling food sources like Snails and Bloodworm. Fishing smaller fly patterns like a Coch Y Bonddu or Bigfoot snail that imitates snails well and do good job at fooling fish. Other patterns reported to do well were various Leach patterns as well as Dragonfly nymphs. Old faithfuls like Woolly Buggers and Red eyed Damsels also mentioned. I'm sure that before the waters warm up too much some more good fish too be netted. Just a reminder when fishing Stillwater especially smaller bodied water in warmer days to keep fights short and fish handling to a minimum. Fish mortality increases significantly in these warmer months.

Duane Howell of the Underberg Flyfishing Shop, has been appointed by the Underberg Himeville Trout Fishing Club as the contact person for FOSAF monthly reports

By Duane Vaughn Howell

Underberg Flyfishing and lifestyle centre at The Clocktower Centre. - Contact 0832286707 or 0655232877 Check out our website at uhtfc.org

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Wild Orchids of the Southern Drakensberg
"It's My Passion"
A photographic guide to the wildflowers of the Southern Drakensberg
Richard Braby

WILD ORCHID WALK WITH JULIE BRABY 31 JANUARY

Meet at The Drakensberg Gardens Nature reserve at 8.30am at the latest or get there earlier before the sun gets really hot and bleaches the colour out of your photos. Richard and Julie Braby share their passion for wild orchids and Richard has published a book and pocket guide to WILD Orchids of the Southern Drakensberg. Sethlabathebe in Lesotho just above Bushmansnek is full of wild orchids at this time of the year. I remember the first time I went there with Richard, it was like an easter egg hunt, so exciting, so many orchids you had to watch your step. Looking for orchids is a bit like looking into a rock pool at the sea, the more you look the more you see. I can see people enjoying this well into their old age as you don't have to be a great walker and sometimes 150 meters can take an hour. By Paul Welch. Contact Julie Braby 082 493 8700. Remember to bring cash for the entrance fee into the reserve. R80 for those without a rhino card.

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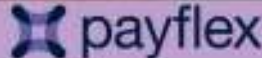
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'Skonkwaan' – book review By doneguy59@gmail.com



I love the way Zulu names have crept into the (KZN) Natalian mlungu subculture. Traditionally cattle in a herd are known and identified by name not by number. We had cattle on our Zululand farm, they all had names often given to them on account of their character and so was/is with us farm children. What a kick I got when returning to the farm I grew up on, and hearing the soft chorus of “Uchakide wafika” (The mongoose arrived) amongst the staff, it gave me goosebumps, I was home. I’m hardly qualified to write a review on the biography of Underberg’s on James Mervyn Nicholson. I only knew him from a single encounter, never attended Maritzburg College, failed to excel in Rugby and did not grow up in Underberg. I attended another midlands ‘College,’ but the name ‘Skonk’ and its associated reputation was known to us. Maritzburg College rugby had ‘Skonk’, that is why they were so hard to beat. Easily identified by his shooting stick ‘Skonk’ had a kind of Shamistic effect on the College game. (Except for 1975...sorry about that Skonk). Authorship is shared by Ruth Crouch (nee Nicholson) his daughter whom we all know, Simon Haw, Jeremy Oddy, Matthew Marwick and John Bishop with contributions by Ruth’s sisters Margaret and Diana. Towards the end of the book we discover that ‘Skonk’ was affectionately known to his grandchildren as ‘Rot’ – ‘out of the mouths of babes we get some real gems’. We learn early on in the book that ‘Skonk’ didn’t get his iconic name on the Nicholson farm he grew up on the Bushmans nek road, he got it at DHS where he went to boarding school in the 1930’s. Skonkwaan means ‘wooden peg’ in isiZulu.

A letter to the editor

The residential community of the little village of Himeville is a perfect example of our rainbow nation. Here, amongst the leafy streets, people from all walks of life live in relative harmony. Our community is small but safe, and all of these homes pay rates. Every month, all of these families contribute to the municipal coffers. Generally, property rates contribute largely to services such as road and street maintenance, streetlights, public safety, parks and recreational areas, as well as supporting municipal administration and governance. And herein lies the problem... Residents who are paying are wondering how much bang they are getting for their bucks. When we separate the various municipal functions, the picture becomes clearer. NDZ is a local municipality, and therefore water and sewage services fall under the Harry Gwala District Municipality, which bills separately for these services. NDZ also charges a separate tariff for refuse removal, which appears as its own line item on your municipal bill. What residents are therefore paying for through property rates relates mainly to road and street maintenance, streetlights, parks and recreational areas, public safety and municipal administration. Currently, there are three main roads that run through Himeville town. The main road, Arbuckle/Sani Rd, is maintained by the Department of Transport. This leaves only two main streets for NDZ Municipality to maintain. Sutton Street was tarred and completed in 2019. It is a high-quality tarred road with a good drainage system. At the time, the budget did not allow for speed humps. That was six years ago, and now this road—which runs through a prime residential area—functions more like a highway. Residents, children and pets are put at risk daily by the high speeds on the road. Despite numerous requests by the public and the DA to install speed humps, we are all still waiting with bated breath. The DA is escalating this matter and will keep residents informed. Thomas Street was tarred and completed in 2023. At the time, the scope of works did not include a proper drainage system. Residents were promised this would be done at a future date. While the tarring of the road was welcomed, it is not acceptable that a road to the value of R8.4 million did not include proper drainage. The consequences of such actions are dire, and the costs of the drainage should have been planned for in

‘Skonk’ was named after an ox called ‘Skonkwaan’ – The head prefect of DHS likened him to an ox on his own family’s farm – able to take a hammering! This information from the first chapter which highlights the subculture of DHS under the headmastership of the legendary A.S.Langley a rugby playing, cane welding disciplinarian who set the scene for many a Durban boy and beyond. Bill Payn a relation of Skonk’s also features, I was first introduced to these characters through reading around famous Durban born poet Roy Campbell. ‘Skonk’ went on to become a teacher legend in his own right but by twist of fate - at Maritzburg College the opposition. Rugby is a constant theme throughout the book, if you grew up or were at school in the midlands many names will be familiar to you ,for my part surprisingly many I personally have known. Very modest Andy Van der Watt a Springbok rugby winger taught me for one. A teaching clone of ‘Skonk’ up the hill ? – he’s represented in Skonk’s ‘dream team’, the details on which you’ll find in the book. Apart from seeing him perched on his shooting stick I never meet ‘Skonk’ in person until one day an Old Collegian friend of mine asked me to film an interview with him at the school. ‘Skonk’ and my father had corresponded on Underberg historical themes so I knew him from that perspective. I remember little of the content of the interview, this was controlled by Old Collegians Matthew Marwick and managed by Craig Elstob . Afterwards we took a stroll down to Goldstones and met with the likes of Craig Jamieson and a group of other old former great players pictured in the book (pg 117) standing under the Nicholson arch. In a few years he would be gone. It’s written that ‘Skonk’s last words were; ‘Phelile’ (I’m finished’). It’s strange isn’t it that expression in that unique KZN subculture so often defaults to isiZulu, there’s more about that in the book which is exceptionally well researched, written and illustrated. ‘Skonk with affection’ is available from Ruth Crouch his youngest daughter and sells for R300.00 while stocks last. Phone Ruth on 0842073057. Don Guy is a writer, artist & filmmaker who lives in Underberg writes for the Mountain Echo, takes guided Drakensberg and historical hikes and is all ears for a story. 066 0186430. A Request and footnote; I have a friend in New Zealand, an old schoolmate from Richmond who is compiling stories around Zulu nicknames given to farmers, farm boys their offspring and the like. Any ‘gems’ with anecdotes are welcome. doneguy59@gmail.com jemcockburn@gmail.com Skonk’s name and story has been added to Jeremy’s list. By Don Guy

the next financial year. During the summer months, Himeville experiences high rainfall, so one would expect that without adequate drainage in place, the rates paid by residents would at least cover the maintenance of this road—clearing stormwater drains, the side drains, and general upkeep of the road. Instead, repeated requests for this to be done since winter earlier this year have been met with stony silence. The municipal manager did reply that “they will be attended to but they cannot give a timeframe.” This is also not acceptable. Two years have passed, and still no timeframe has been provided as to when the drainage will be completed. At the time of writing this letter, work on the drainage has still not commenced. In the meantime, residents’ homes have been flooded, and the road fills with water every time it rains. The municipality must ensure that funding for the drainage is included in the adjustment budget in January 2026. Coupled with that, there is now only one streetlight working along the whole of Thomas Street. Earlier in the year, residents were asked to drive around in their own time and report back on the functionality of streetlights. The report was compiled and submitted in April. It is now December, and we are still awaiting a service provider to be appointed. A broken streetlight in Underberg has been hanging lopsided since February this year—still not attended to. But don’t forget to pay your rates on time every month! Whilst we acknowledge that all residents within the municipality should benefit from municipal services, it is important to recognise that when rate-paying areas receive only the bare minimum — or, as is now the case, do not receive even the basic services they pay for — property values inevitably decline. A drop in property values reduces the municipality’s revenue base, which in turn makes it even more difficult to expand service delivery to underserved areas. Looking after rate-paying areas is therefore not an act of favouritism; it strengthens the municipality’s overall financial position and creates a positive ripple effect for all communities. At present, however, it is becoming increasingly clear that rate-paying residents are neither valued nor prioritised, but are instead last in line to benefit. The adjustment budget in January 2026 presents a crucial opportunity for the municipality to correct course and begin restoring confidence in its ability to deliver even the most basic services to the communities that fund its operations. The DA will continue to champion practical, service-driven solutions that protect property values, strengthen the municipality’s financial position, and ensure that rate-paying areas receive the maintenance and respect they are entitled to. When NDZ invests wisely and fairly, every resident — in every community — ultimately benefits. **By Cllr Rowena Aldous-Trollope. Democratic Alliance**

The Mountain received a highly technical evaluation By Prof. Allan Parrocka (retired geotechnical engineer) of the work being done on the R617 “In the method adopted, ie build up over existing layers, a much more resilient pavement is ensured as rain water is immediately dispersed with no softening of already-constructed layers. The above is only meaningful if construction is carried out to the required specifications and within contractual time periods”

Himeville fort and museum



history happens here

New Military Exhibition at Himeville Museum

A new military exhibition at Himeville Museum is inviting members of the community to explore the often-untold human stories behind military service, remembrance, and sacrifice.

This exhibition moves beyond battles and uniforms to focus on the personal experiences of ordinary soldiers. Through narrative panels such as The Forgotten Soldiers and The Conscripted Soldier, visitors are encouraged to reflect on the lives of men whose stories are not always found in history books, but whose service shaped families, communities, and generations. The Forgotten Soldiers acknowledges those whose contributions have been overlooked or under-recognised, reminding us that history is built on the lives of many, not just the few. The Conscripted Soldier explores the reality of compulsory military service and the profound impact it had on young men who were called to serve, often with little choice, and carried those experiences with them long after returning home.

The exhibition has been made possible through the generous donations and assistance of Ivan Reynolds and the Boot and Saddle Shellhole, whose support has helped preserve and share these important stories with the wider community. Sincere thanks are also extended to Brett Deavin for his donated military items and gear, which have added greatly to the depth and authenticity of the exhibition.

Himeville Museum hopes the exhibition will encourage reflection, conversation, and a deeper understanding of our shared past. Community members, families, and visitors are warmly invited to visit and engage with this meaningful addition to the museum.



online mountainecho.co.za
facebook: mountain echo based in underberg

HIMEVILLE UNDERBERG GARDEN CLUB 18 FEBRUARY

In February the Garden Club will be meeting at Under The Berg B&B, in the beautiful garden of Penny and Andy. The theme is “growing vegetables organically” and we look forward to drawing on the extensive knowledge of Barbara and Clinton, owners of Snappy Dragon Farm. The meeting includes a visit to the farm in Saligna Avenue. So please save the date, 18 February 2026, starting at 10h00.



LIVE MUSIC @ BUNKERS 21 FEBRUARY

Live music with Pieta Venter, on the deck at Bunkers, Underberg. 21st of Feb, from 12 to 3pm. Cover charge R300.00 per person. Includes a braai pack, salads and rolls. BYOB.. coldrinks available.. Bookings: Craig 082 858 5486 Sarah 066 590 3758

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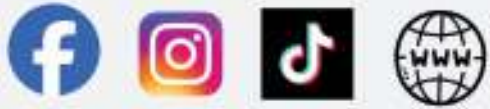
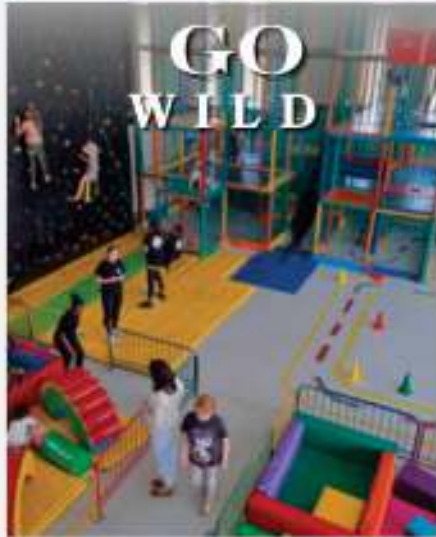
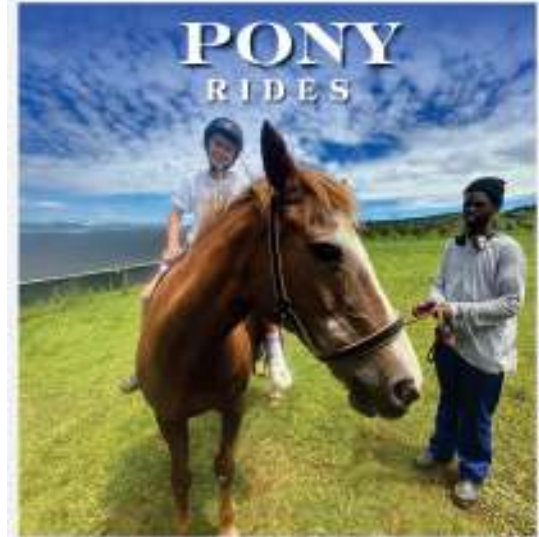
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SANI COMMUNITY FORUM

“I THINK PART OF JEFFREYS BAY’S SECRET IS THAT IT DOESN’T PRETEND TO BE PERFECT. IT JUST TRIES TO BE BETTER.”

ANGELA DANIELS. JUDGE DAILY MAVERICK SMALL TOWN OF THE YEAR COMPETITION. 2025

DAILY MAVERICK SMALL TOWN OF THE YEAR: NUD congratulates Barrydale for winning this prestigious competition and the runner up, White River, followed by Jeffreys Bay in third. Only one KZN town, Howick, made it into 7th spot, and we extend our congratulations. Credit must go to Mayor Chris Pappas and his team for this outstanding achievement, underscored by strong leadership, excellent community participation, and the dedication, diligence and pride of the Municipal staff. Well done, Mayor Pappas and your town.

Towns were judged in 7 Categories to formulate their overall percentage score.

1. Cleanliness
2. Municipality
3. Community
4. Safety
5. Nature
6. Family
7. Connectivity

Where was NUD?

Community. This is the very fabric that binds us together; a town where residents resolutely stand together in a time of chaos or emergencies, or merely welcoming new folk to our towns with open arms and coffee, or a cold beverage. We care for our underprivileged and those enduring hardships. We do have some “squatters” as Dr Tod likes to call those who merely exist in our community, without any contribution to improving NUD. Hopefully, we will get them on board this year.

Score: 8/10 Can be better.

Safety. NUD is probably the best in the country for security, with thanks to Kevin Webster and his team at Comm Watch, Magma Security and Berg Security. Thank you to you all for this service. Score. 10/10 Nature. We live in a World Heritage site, with clean rivers, alpine air, prestigious mountain biking, hiking, or canoeing on our doorstep, majestic mountains, fauna and flora, picture-perfect farmland, and of course, our iconic Sani Pass. Score. 10/10.

Family. This is a family orientated community. With the Covid shutdown of the initial period of a mandatory 3 weeks, many families came to their holiday house in the Berg, to “sit it out.” Weeks stretched into months and families found peace, outdoor entertainment for all family members with everything nature threw at them, kids were educated online, and a simpler and slower way of living was the norm. Most families stayed after Lock Down, embracing a town where family always comes before frivolous fun. Score. 10/10

Connectivity. Johan Potgieter and the ISP24 Team has us linked to a world class fibre, coupled with his incredible support system. Thank you, Johan. The Low-Cost Villages are also being connected. Openserve provides an additional choice of a fibre network. Additionally, we are serviced by the major networks for WiFi, which work well. Connectivity is critical for investors and those now operating their businesses from home, or those pursuing online education. Score 10/10.

So, where are our weak points? **Cleanliness** and Municipality who are irrevocably amalgamated. Without the iconic Ruth Crouch and her Tidy Towns accomplishments, we would be just another dirty little backwater town. Yet, despite Ruth’s brave and selfless endeavours and her absolute commitment to NUD, we still have street mechanics, traders monopolising pavements, drunkenness, the absence of public toilets and a Municipality, unwilling to enforce the By-Laws. Why? The Cities of Johannesburg and Ethekweni are enforcing their By-Laws with strict authoritarian control and discipline. This mantra has been adopted by so many Municipalities committing to just “doing the job that they have been paid to do” in their pursuit of zero tolerance. These Cities and

Municipalities are clearing the traders, drug peddlers and unsavoury characters, enforcing penalties for drunken and reckless or indecent behaviour, and generally, enforcing the By-Laws. RNM Municipality works closely with the Lower South Coast Tidy Towns movement and the devastating floods of the 21st December bore testament to what can be achieved when a Community and a Municipality, work together for tourism and pride in their town. We salute you both.

With a committed Municipality, we can shoot the lights out, as NUD’s rather dismal cleanliness and an indifferent, mute, and opaque Municipality, armed with a history of shocking service delivery, are NUD’s only weak areas. Please get on board, Dr NDZ Municipality. We CAN and WILL win this prestigious competition, with you on board. Score. Too weak to score in both areas.

TOURISM: Some facts and figures of the role that Tourism plays in South Africa, according to the Tourism Minister, Patricia De Lille and her team, at the World Economic Forum, at Davos, Switzerland, this week.

- Tourism accounts for 8.8% of GDP.
- Tourism brought in R105Billion in 2025.
- Tourism created 1.8M jobs.
- Tourism in turn, creates a wonderful window for potential investors to view South Africa in a positive light creating optimism, and their subsequent investment ensuing.
- South Africa is now off the Risk/Grey List so we can expect Tourism figures to surge.

• NUD needs a far bigger slice of this Tourism pie, which will create jobs and investment. This is simple economics and a quick fix to create employment. With the Daily Maverick Town of the Year as one of our accolades in 2026, this will create the conduit for increased tourism and investment.



TIDY TOWNS By RUTH CROUCH.

We all have demands and challenges that await us in 2026 in our personal and business lives, and we need to juggle the two and keep focused to maintain a balance between the two. From my small ‘One Man’ Tidy Town perspective, I will keep plugging away working on the many little things where I know I can make a difference. I feel I have built up a good rapport with Ms Trish Maphanga and Mr Sfiso Mkhize from the Municipality, and I will continue to liaise with them. Sfiso is really keeping abreast with the maintenance of the verges, but I do wish to encourage Residents to help do their part and tidy and neaten where they can. Collectively, we can help maintain a good overall image of a district, one which reflects pride in its environment. May we all - businesses, schools, residents, farmers, churches etc please appeal to their staff, pupils, congregations or members, to **KEEPNUD CLEAN and TIDY.**

I lived in PMB for 60 years, and so I am all too familiar of this city when it was in its former glory. It is so disheartening to see the degradation, filth and unkempt areas. There are however pockets of excellence; The Eye Hospital, the modern and well-maintained Shopping Centres, Maritzburg College, amongst other schools. I cannot help but think of the Bible parable of the wheat and the tares (weeds), Matthew 13: 24- 30; “Where the good and bad exist and grow alongside one another.” The heart of PMB along Church Street is dismal and neglected, and the urgent matters of maintenance, continue unabated, and unattended.

Our Underberg Village is fortunately small and has some lovely areas, but I feel the actual heart is worrying. This is the area round the Underberg Inn and Standard Bank where street mechanics ply their trade and people openly defecate down the alley and cook, with smoke wafting into these businesses. Tourist buses pull in here regularly, and the stench is too terrible. Yet the powers that be, seem indifferent to act and assert their government given authority. We need to come up with sensible solutions to cope and cater for the needs of all mankind. But, turning a blind eye to such matters is very foolish and only allows matters of further civil disobedience, to take root. One Municipal miracle did take place and that was the ‘skip’ area between Spar and Super Quick. So yes, things can turn around. The Municipality, Tourism, the Business Forum, Sani Community Forum, Tidy Towns and other like-minded organisations or individuals, should jointly apply their minds to find solutions, together.

I do not propose to write on all the matters, like the murals, gardens and places I wish to address and attend to this year, other than mentioning I would like to stage another Tidy Town Gum boot dance early in the year. I also propose to revamp and paint the Tidy Town rubbish bins. So, I will be visiting and appealing for donations - not something I relish doing, but it is for the sake of NUD.

I do wish again to thank those who help donate to TIDY TOWNS. However, I do need to pay for the labour between two to four guys that I use at any given time, and hence I urgently need financial support, even if it is a small monthly scheduled amount. Please too, if anyone has on their heart to ADOPT A SPOT, do contact me. Ms Trish Mpanga and I have devised a very simple form and then the three resident landscapers or Tidy Town can be contacted to help. Your own suitable business sign can be then erected to state that you maintain this spot. Pam Golding in PMB has done this at the Athlone circle as you approach the entrance into PMB which shows where there is a will, there is always a way. **VIVA NUD VIVA to making a difference**By RUTH CROUCH.



From The Saddle of Boot and Saddle



We have entered the new year on a mixed note. A positive note for the Shellhole, but regrettably, a troubled note for our farmers with the current Foot and Mouth disaster afflicting the industry. Our thoughts and support for our local farmers go out to them and we wish them strength and well.

For the Shellhole we have had a flying start. We have inducted three new recruits to the Order, and we welcome R. Ferreira, Andrew Cochrane and Don Guy to the fold. We look forward to their company and contribution.

A memorial wall has been built at the Himeville Cenotaph. This wall has three facets which will feature Underberg/ Himeville fallen on the central wall, and the Boston and Bulwer fallen on the two wings. The fallen in reference are for WWI, WWII and the Bush War. As Boston and Bulwer MOTH Shellholes have collapsed, we feel it is our duty as Boot and Saddle Shellhole to Honour these fallen – We Shall Remember Them! The plaques with the names will be mounted by the time of our first parade for the year.

For the above structure, our thanks and gratitude go out to one of our MOTH members for donating all the bricks and to Thatch (Grant) Trollope of Rusty Nails Concepts for the design concept and providing the staff and other materials at cost for the erection of the wall. In both instances, true comradeship and true community spirit, well done!

On behalf of myself and the MOTH, I would like to wish everyone a successful and positive 2026. Should you wish to get involved with the MOTH, either as a veteran or as a supporter of the Shellhole, please feel free to contact me.

Monthly meetings held on the 1st Thursday of the month ay 18h00.

Ivan Reynolds – Old Bill - Boot and Saddle – 082 5300 935

Faithway College Does It Again!

Congratulations to the 2025 Matric class. 100% pass rate of which 83% were bachelor passes and 12 distinctions. These results show that Faithway is where learners can receive an excellent education and can achieve their full potential.

The Principal, Mr Van der Merwe, on behalf of Faithway Collage, would like to thank John Little and his chaps from Montague Farm for cutting all the school's grass ready for the new term Also, a big thank you to Debby Deavin (Faithway Governor) and her son for doing a super makeover in the school Reception Area.

The Faithway Scholarship fund has successfully helped five new learners join Faithway College this year. A big thank you to all of those who have supported this. However, some of the money that was raised was a one off payment and so for these five learners to be able to stay at the school in future years we will need more people contributing to the Scholarship fund either as a one off gift or as a stop order (anything from R50 a month) would be gratefully recieved. All these learners are bright and able and will benefit hugely by having an education at Faithway College.

Bank details for the Faithway Scholarship fund: Faithway Christian School FNB 62069318410

Do follow Faithway College Himeville on Facebook to see what the learners, teachers, and governors participate in during the year. Sue Little Chair of Governors 0822909770

100% pass rate with 12 Distinctions



REQUEST FOR WOOL

The Witty Knitters are needing donations of wool. We are making knitted goods **for the Safe Houses in Underberg and Himeville.** Please support this drive to **keep the children warm this winter.** Donations can be left with Mariann at her Yarn and Patch boutique in The Trout Walk Centre. **Thank you, Jenny Larkens**

email info@fenestrasa.com website: www.fenestrasa.com

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This month Apple announced a multi-year partnership with Google. Google’s Gemini AI models will be integrated into Apple Intelligence, including the much-anticipated Siri upgrade. Apple’s AI capabilities will be rapidly and greatly advanced and Google benefits by placing its AI at the core of Apple’s global device base of 2.2 billion users. Apple’s growth has been steady. Revenue grew by 6.43% in fiscal 2025 and net income by an impressive 19.5%. Google has stronger growth. Revenue increased by 13.87% and net income by an amazing 35.67%. The agreement with Google reflects Apple’s cautious approach to AI and is a significant endorsement and validation of Google’s AI leadership and expands Gemini’s footprint on iOS devices. Importantly the partnership preserves Apple’s privacy model by running AI on Private Cloud Compute and on device whenever possible. Google offers faster growth and



Plan to THRIVE in 2026

therefore potentially greater capital appreciation. The company has varied revenue streams and a still under monetized U tube. Apple is more defensive but services and hardware sales are expected to show strong growth in 2026 due to the new iPhone 17 upgrade and the anticipated improvement in Siri. The company has avoided the AI arms race and is highly cash generative. For investors this partnership improves Apple’s competitive positioning while vindicating Google’s AI monetization pathway. The return profiles for both stocks are attractive, with Google offering higher growth potential and Apple providing stability and resilience. It is wise to allocate based on risk tolerance and time horizon : growth – orientated investors may overweight Google, whereas long-term diversified portfolios can benefit from holding both. Set risk management rules carefully by considering buying levels with portfolio allocation quantities and appropriate stop loss levels. AI used William Meyer to write this article. If you are not happy with your portfolio performance or would like a second opinion, please do not hesitate to contact Fenestra for a free review of your portfolio. William Meyer - 0796244031

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website: www.fenestrasa.com for more info

ALCOHOL

Welcome to 2026 and it is a good time to focus on alcohol as some are doing a dry January after the excesses of the Festive season. This is the first in a series on alcohol for the new year. Perhaps you are cutting down, have concerns about your intake or just want to be more mindful of alcohol. One of the most addictive substances known to man needs respect. Due to my work in hypnosis, I see many clients who are struggling with alcohol. Hypnosis is very effective with alcohol addiction and hypnosis techniques are making their way into rehabilitation therapy, slowly but surely. Many years ago, I attended a seminar given by the head of one of Johannesburg’s top rehabs. He started the seminar by asking the audience “do you think if we knew the damage alcohol causes and how addictive it is we would ever have allowed it to be licenced?” He then went on to talk about the person who is addicted and the substance itself that is highly addictive. That was such a thought-provoking way to look at alcohol. Many people beat themselves up about their lack of “willpower” when in fact alcohol itself is an incredibly addictive substance, with many other addictive ingredients mixed with it (e.g sugar). Sophisticated marketing campaigns are used, it is widely available, there are cool places to imbibe, and it’s associated with “having a good time”. All these factors make it a potent brew (pun intended). Many people who are trying to stop drinking will avoid socialising as the temptation is just too much. Alas, they often become lonely and will succumb again. Loneliness is so real for people who are losing control of their drinking. It is created when most people in the drinker’s life start to relate to them as an “having a problem”. Often parents, spouses, children, friends, family members, colleagues etc all relate to the drinker through the lens of their problem: alcohol. As a result of so much energy and focus from others going into the “problem”, the individual feels their real selves disappearing. This is a desperately lonely experience. This often drives the drinker back to drinking and their drinking mates who at least don’t criticise them. The lack of meaning and not connecting with real loved ones drives more

drinking and the cycle just goes on and on and on. Nothing is sadder and robs more potential than long term alcohol abuse. What fuels all of this? There is great deal of information available about genetic predisposition to addiction in the form of dopamine regulation, genetics, childhood trauma resulting in low self-esteem and many other theories. The most important takeaway from all the research is the knowledge that the individual is more than capable of recovery but that it takes some effort, mindfulness and a programme of recovery. Recovery programmes like the 12 Step programme are vital. Many people drink because of underlying emotional issues and without a programme of recovery they often return to drinking because the core problems are still there – just without the drinking and that can be intolerable for some people. Next month we will focus on the first steps of the 12 Step Programme.

By Heidi Kyle



Smoking - Weight Loss -
Fears & Phobias - Depres-
sion - Anxiety - ADHD and
much more

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South Africa: is helping bees through multi-faceted efforts, including replanting indigenous flora for forage, controlling invasive plants, improving water access, training beekeepers, reducing pesticide use, and promoting bee-friendly farming with organizations like WWF and local groups, all crucial for food security and biodiversity. Between June 2024 and March 2025, beekeepers across the United States reported losing around 62 percent of their colonies, the highest loss ever recorded. It is a number that feels heavy, not just for scientists, but for anyone who understands how deeply our lives depend on these tiny creatures. Researchers point to pesticides, shifting climates, disappearing habitats, and parasites like the varroa mite as the main reasons behind this decline. Yet this story is bigger than data. Bees carry the rhythm of nature in their wings. Their quiet work keeps fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds growing, feeding both people and the land itself. Without them, harvests shrink, prices rise, and the balance of entire ecosystems begins to tremble. This loss asks us to pause and reflect on how interconnected we truly are. If such small beings can shape the life around us, imagine what our choices can do. With every garden we plant, every pesticide we avoid, and every habitat we protect, we help create a world where bees can thrive again.

HONEY IN UNDERBERG

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SOUTHERN DRAKENSBERG HONORARY OFFICERS

Last year ended on a high note with many projects completed. The final meeting of the year included a braai at the neatly upgraded picnic ground in the Himeville Nature Reserve. Our members were very involved in this project. The Bird Hide nearby is an ongoing attraction.

During the festive season members took it upon themselves to clear invasive alien trees at the Cobham end of the Giants Cup trail and also near the Bushman's Nek waterfall. Both of these sites attract visitors from far and wide during the year. Visitors to the area have expressed their compliments on the Interpretative Centre at the base of Sani Pass which was opened to the public in November in time for the festive season.

Looking forward into 2026 there are many activities already in place. Unfortunately, due to littering over the long holiday period the Honorary Offices will have to do a clean-up of the Sani Pass ahead of the annual Flower Walk which takes place on 8th February. (For more information and to book the Flower Walk contact Russell Suchet 0817724319). Litter is an ongoing problem and we urge all users of the Pass to adhere to the "Leave no Trace" principle of taking out what you take in. All that is required is for a rubbish/shopping bag to be carried in each vehicle and used by the passengers for the disposing of containers, packaging, bottles, cigarette butts etc. and then placed in bins at the end of your journey. There is no formal rubbish collection on the Pass or at view sites and we do not need to attract baboons to scavenge at areas used by the public or for these areas to be aesthetically degraded.

The national biannual bird count, CAR (Coordinated Avifaunal Roadcount) for large birds and raptors on farmlands, each of which is counted, will happen at end of January with Birdlife SA and Honorary Officers. CAR has taken place over many years and has proved invaluable in assessing bird distribution and rise and fall of numbers and species. This year of great importance will be the numbers of the Amur Falcon. This small raptor occurred by the thousands a few years ago in this district alone but recent reports for this season from across the whole country, not only here, have been the alarmingly small numbers seen.

For more information on Honorary Officers contact our chairman Simon Acutt 0826243670 or secretary Cayla Beghin 0824932305

By Roseann Clarke

SOUTHERN DRAKENSBERG COMMUNITY TOURISM ORGANISATION

DECEMBER HOLIDAYS

The spread of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), together with the cancellation of the January Drak Challenge and Eurosteel Run the Rivers, highlighted the vulnerability of the district's two largest economic drivers — agriculture and tourism. Cancellations and refunds affected accommodation providers, member stakeholders as well as the event organisers.

Despite this, the CTO committee decided to adopt a proactive approach. Tubing activities remained popular, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife trails were well supported, Reichenau Mission tours were successful and tour operators had a steady stream of guests. At a meeting held on 12 January it was agreed that, under the circumstances, the festive season had been successful.

Encouragingly, more eateries were open over Christmas, Family Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day than in 2024, when limited trading led to capacity challenges and visitor complaints. Members are reminded that peak periods are essential to sustain businesses through quieter months — when January can feel like it has 65 days.

R617

The CTO expressed appreciation to Terrance Khawula from the traffic department for ensuring visibility at multi-disciplinary roadblocks, where road safety and tourism information were shared. The tragic accident on 15 January at the bottom of Lundy's Hill reinforced the need for visible policing, speed enforcement and continued attention to dangerous sections of the R617.

ROADBLOCK SAFETY FIRST CAMPAIGN

In December, the SDCTO worked with the Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma Local Municipality Tourism Office and Traffic Department, the Harry Gwala Development Agency and volunteers to carry out tourism awareness initiatives on 15 and 19 December. Information was shared at roadblocks and at a promotion table outside Underberg SPAR, where motorists welcomed the engagement.

Grateful thanks are extended to all who contributed marketing materials. We will do this again.

PRINT MEDIA SPONSORS NEEDED

Committee member Robyn Ferraz has taken on the printed media portfolio within the committee. Her hard work has been rewarded with an exciting opportunity being explored for members to feature in a travel magazine.

FMD

The CTO remains concerned about FMD and will

continue responsible marketing and information sharing.

FAREWELL BUT NOT GOODBYE

Founded by Huck and Elsabe Orban in the early 2000s, The Lemon Tree became a cherished Underberg institution. For many visitors, a stop in town was synonymous with an award-winning cappuccino enjoyed in the warmth of the yellow-walled bistro, while the gallery at the back showcased Hucks' photography celebrating light, texture and the beauty of the region.

After more than 20 years in Underberg, they are leaving to begin a new chapter in Gauteng, closer to their daughter and her family. We wish them well - they are leaving a lasting mark on the district. The baton has been passed to Sarah and Stephen Clowes.




The Southern Drakensberg Community Tourism Organisation (SDCTO) thanks Huck for sharing his photography via Underberg Calling. SDCTO social media manager Rosemary Hall noted his credited images have long helped showcase the region and grow the organisation's social media presence. We now have over 50000 followers on Facebook.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE


Those interested in joining the CTO can contact Sphamandla Vezi, Secretary and Administrator, via WhatsApp on +27 61 246 6166. The organisation thanks its members for their continued commitment and support and we wish everyone a kind 2026



from:Michelle southerndrakturism@gmail.com



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Awaken Yoga Festival - Friday 27 March - Sunday 29 March

A transformative weekend of yoga, meditation, music, and connection with like-minded individuals, the festival includes:

Yoga classes for all levels, with 6 different stages and over 30 teachers. Guided meditation and relaxation sessions. Workshops on mindfulness, breathwork, self-care, and music performances. Camping facilities (bring your own camping equipment), hot

showers and permanent ablutions. 10km and 6km Trail run.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.awakenyogafestival.org/

KAPsani2c - Adventure, 6-8 May and 'OG', 7-9 May

The first sani2c took place in 2005, and it grew into one of the largest MTB stage races in the world. This year's KAP sani2c has two versions of the three-day mountain bike stage race, set to thrill riders from Glencairn Farm down to Scottburgh. The Adventure starts on 6 May and finishes 8 May, and the 'OG' (which includes the UCI racing at the front end of the field, with a Prologue on 6 May at Glencairn Farm) will start 7 May and finish on 9 May. For more information and to enter visit www.sani2c.co.za

KAP sani2c nonstop - 29-31 May 2026

The KAP sani2c nonstop is not your average mountain bike race. Covering 260 km of uninterrupted, rugged terrain from Glencairn Farm to the beach at Scottburgh, this is one of the most demanding one-day endurance events on the South African calendar. Starting at 2am, riders take on a route that travels almost all of the three days of the sani2c three-day event, within 24 hours, including the legendary 'Umko Drop' descent. Visit www.nonstop.sani2c.co.za for more information and to enter.

NUDFC Kicks Off Kickboxing Debut with Thrilling Bouts

On the 6th of December 2025, our very own Underberg fighters took to the ring for their first kickboxing event, and it was a night to remember. Cameron "The Spartan" Smith faced off against Congolese fighter Romeo, in a highly anticipated match-up, and it was a clash of styles. Smith's boxing skillset was on good display that night, but Romeo's aggressive flying knees and leg kicks proved to be the difference-makers, earning him a split decision victory. Romeo scored two knockdowns, in the first and third rounds, showcasing his formidable striking ability. We are very proud of Cam for his toughest fight to date.

In other bouts, Tsepo secured a split decision win in his debut, against an undefeated opponent, while his brother Tsepang put up a tough fight against a seasoned opponent, ultimately losing by unanimous decision. "We're proud of all our fighters for representing NUDFC with pride and skill," said a spokesperson for the gym. "A big thank you to Shihan Kenneth Hana and the Warriors K1 team for their support." NUDFC is now officially registered with SAKA and MMASA, and is looking forward to its next event. On the 7th of February, Jaden "No Love" Knox will be putting his skills to the test at a Box360 event on the South Coast. Contact NUDFC: 074 930 7724 By Jaden Knox

LIFE OF A VET THE BIG AND SMALL

In a vet's life you get used to dealing with all sorts of animals, from the very big to the very small. I clearly remember when this lady and her son brought me her son's pet Gerbil with a broken leg and asked me if I could fix it. I am sure you can all picture the size of a Gerbil's leg and the problems that spring to mind. BUT old Muggins here says "Sure . Leave it with me ". And THEN thinks about the problems..starting with the anaesthetic. With bigger cats and dogs we have a lot of different ways of treating broken legs, starting with the old faithful of Plaster of Paris (although this has fallen out of favour with my younger colleagues) through to steel pins and plates and screws and all sorts of things that resemble a carpenter's shop. But this was Gerbil !!

Anyway we gave it a wiff of gas and luckily, he passed out. In we jumped. I fashioned a very small steel pin from part of an injection needle and lo and behold it held it all together. Breathing a sigh of relief I closed the wound up and watched with bated breath while he recovered. He did and thankfully I was able to send him home. It all healed beautifully.

Some time later the husband came in with another of their pets. His first words were " So you're the guy that fixed that blasted Gerbil. I was hoping it was not coming back home again."

My very old vet friend Dr Mike Lowry (can you believe we met in 1965 at PMB University on our very first day at university ?) has had far more experiences with unusual animals than I have but the one story he tells that has always stayed with me was when he was called out to see a circus elephant with a swollen foot. As they were not able to get near enough to examine the foot properly, they resorted to anaesthetizing it with M99. Once she collapsed he was able to probe where the pus was coming from and found an old piece of baling wire embedded deep inside her foot. He managed to remove it and then cleaned and disinfected the wound, put her on gallons of antibiotics (sorry, my exaggeration) and woke her up again. A week later he returned and she was a different animal, calmer and more approachable. Later she was retired to the Lion Park and years later Mike went out there for something and she has always recognized him and approached him with affection. Amazing.

My other very good vet friend used to work for Gold Circle racing. This involved being present at all the race meetings and dealing with any horse problems. It also required him to drive on the inside of the track when a race was in progress to accompany the horses, in case of any emergency during the race.

One Durban July day there was a heavily backed favourite. Off they went !! Robin too shot off in his bakkie accompanying them. As the crowd cheered the horses went on the track behind the drill hall. As

they passed out of sight of the main grand stand the favourite put his foot in a hole and went down, breaking his leg and throwing the jockey. Robin leapt out of his vehicle. The horse was thrashing about and screaming with pain. There was no choice and so he shot the horse there and then to put the poor thing out of its misery. Meanwhile the rest of the field thundered on and finished the race. But there was no favourite. Well, the crowd and the papers had a field day. The poor vet was accused of being in league with the bookies and all sorts of accusations were flung at him.

He actually was a sensitive person and all this affected him badly and he had to take some time off.

Ironically the next time a race horse went down with a broken leg, because of all this negative publicity, they decided to try and fix it. The horse was transported off to Summerveld and put in a sling while the bone tried to heal. It did not work and the horse too had to be out down. I am sure I later years there may have been some successes, but you always have that big weight of the animal to deal with while it is immobile.

This is one of our big problems as vets. You cannot say to the animal this is for your own good. It is hard enough trying to convince some of the owners of this. I think most vet's have had the experience of recently spayed dogs opening up their operation wounds and pulling out loops of intestine that they then chew on. Sadly they often die of shock. I once had the experience when I was only qualified about 2 years when a little Scottie dog was brought in to me at death's door. There were a lot of stones in the bladder that had blocked the bladder and prevented the dog from urinating. I quickly operated and literally saved the little dog's life. About 10 days late the owners brought the dog in for suture removal and I could feel a small break in the underlying muscles. I told them to bring the dog back the next day for correction of this. They went out to see a film that night leaving the dog unsupervised. The dog tore open the wound, pulled out loops of intestine and chew on it. They called me out. I rushed to the surgery and spent the whole night trying to save the little dog but sadly it died. The owners went to a lawyer and tried to sue me. Fortunately nothing came of it.

Wild animals are even more difficult. I had a class mate who opened a practice in White River where he did farm work, domestic animals and wild life. He got more and more involved with transporting wild game, in fact I saw him on tv once when they darted a rhino prior to transporting him. As the staggering rhino was about to topple over it looked as if it might fall into a ditch. My friend jumped forward to try and prevent this and instead the rhino fell on him. He never fully recovered from the injuries he received that day.

Because of the distances involved he got a pilot's license and bought a small plane. One day he was transporting a sedated leopard in his plane on his own. AS he was flying along from the far northern



French Volunteers Leave a Lasting Mark on Underberg Schools



For four months each year, two quietly dedicated French volunteers make their way to the deep rural schools around Underberg, bringing with them a wealth of experience, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to children's wellbeing. **Christian Desceul and Isabelle Girard** have become valued members of the Family Literacy Project, working tirelessly to strengthen literacy and provide much-needed therapeutic support in local schools.

Christian Desceul, a former headmaster in France and Reunion Island, draws on decades of educational leadership and classroom experience. In Underberg schools, he has worked directly with teachers and learners, supporting Art and Reading Programmes, mentoring educators, and helping to build a culture where books and learning are valued and enjoyed. His calm authority and deep understanding of schooling have earned him great respect among staff and learners alike.

Alongside him is Isabelle Girard, a psychologist with extensive pro-

fessional experience. Isabelle focuses on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of children, offering therapeutic support that is often unavailable in deep rural contexts. Her work helps learners overcome barriers to learning, building confidence, resilience, and a sense of safety that is essential for literacy development to take root.

Underberg Spar recently hosted an exhibition of the beautiful works that Goxhill Students produced – go and have a look at the stellar works at the Take Away Counter.

Together, Christian and Isabelle give generously of their time and skills, asking for nothing in return. Their four-month annual commitment to South Africa has had an outsized impact, touching classrooms, teachers, and hundreds of children across the Underberg area. In a time when rural schools face immense challenges, their presence is a powerful reminder of what dedicated service and international solidarity can achieve.

The Family Literacy Project and the communities it serves are deeply grateful for the Desceuls' ongoing contribution—proof that meaningful change often begins with people who are simply willing to show up and serve.**By Pierre Horn**

The Kwa Sani Live-stock Association held their first meeting for 2026 at VKB in Underberg on the 23rd of January. Discussions were around the current FMD crisis as well as planning for the year ahead. We are grateful for the support we receive from all the agricultural stores and the UFA in Underberg.
Mr T. Bhakwa (Chair)

Paul, salutations for a new year
Rainfall over past 50 years in Underberg village.
2022.....1430 mm
-->2025 .. 1198 mm
1987 1195 mm
1985 1176 mm
2000 1166 mm
From Tod Collins on 1 January 2026

I LEARNT SOMETHING NEW Through google AI
The traditional 3 Rs in education are **Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic**, representing the foundational core skills for academic learning, but modern interpretations also propose **new R's** like **Responsiveness, Resilience, and Relationships** to address 21st-century needs. These core skills have historically been seen as the bedrock for intellectual development, forming the basis for all other subjects. **Modern Interpretations (Evolving 3 Rs)** As education evolves, some educators suggest new foundational R's for today's world: **Responsiveness: The capacity to adapt quickly to change and new challenges, like those seen during the pandemic. Resilience:** The ability to bounce back from setbacks and persevere.**Relationships:** Fostering strong connections and social-emotional skills for collaboration and community. **(A response to Technology?) editors note Relevance:** Connecting learning to students' interests and real-world goals. While the classic Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic remain vital, **these newer interpretations highlight the need for broader skills to prepare students for a complex future. Only 34.1% of Grade 12 pupils studied maths in 2025**



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Transvaal he realized to his horror the leopard was starting to wake up. He hastily radioed Wonderboom airport in Pretoria and requested permission to land. They started to fob him off saying they were doing repairs and he must rather go on to Lanseria. He replied " I have a leopard in here !! I am coming down NOW !!" He landed on a tickey, leaped out and fortunately was able to resedate the leopard through a small hatch in the fuselage. Some years later he gave up the wildlife work and when I asked him why, he said because he was away so much his kids started calling him "Oom". Definitely time to stop.

**By Llew Evans
retired vet**

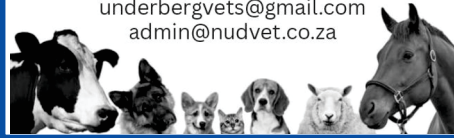


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ACUTTSTM

ESTABLISHED 1851

REAL ESTATE

UNDERBERG

INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY IN HIMEVILLE

EXCLUSIVE MANDATE



R3 500 000

Situated in McKenzie Street in Himeville, this property has a lot of potential with an erf size of 4 753 sqm. A large, well-positioned workshop with storage and offices at the workshop is complemented by two staff buildings to comfortably accommodate a number of staff. Fully fenced, the property offers separate entrance and exit points, allowing easy access for large vehicles to enter and exit. This is one of the last remaining light industrial sites in Himeville and is well suited for use as a depot, workshop, storage facility, and staff accommodation. The price excludes VAT.

STUNNING HOME IN UPMARKET ESTATE



R3 200 000

Stunning 3-bedroom home in Fairmount Estate, offering luxury, comfort, and spectacular southern Drakensberg views. Each bedroom has a full en-suite, and two elegant lounges with fireplaces provide perfect entertaining spaces. The wide veranda with folding glass doors is ideal for relaxing, dining, or enjoying the jacuzzi. The modern kitchen features granite countertops, a centre island, walk-in pantry, and scullery. A dedicated office, triple garage, and ample storage add convenience. Bordering the Country Club, enjoy golf, Padel, swimming, and social amenities.

SPACIOUS HOUSE + 2 COTTAGES AND STUNNING MOUNTAIN VIEWS

EXCLUSIVE MANDATE



R2 650 000

Nestled in a prime location, this exceptional property boasts breathtaking views of the Southern Drakensberg. Set on a spacious lot, it features a well-constructed 4-bedroom facebrick home complemented by two charming cottages, ideal for investment or family retreat. The residence includes four carports and a Wendy house, with the entire property securely fenced and an electric gate. The open-plan kitchen and living area flow to a closed-in patio with a fireplace and front deck. The main suite has his and hers dressing areas. One cottage generates R4500/month; and the other cottage could be rented or be an Airbnb.

SMALLHOLDING FOR SALE WITH ESTABLISHED BUSINESS



R5 950 000

Situated in a Country Lane is Heritage Plants. This well established Nursery is very well known far and wide. It caters for all the needs of the seasons for Underberg including the severe cold climate. Plants include shrubs, trees, annuals and perennials. Concrete garden pots and compost and fertilizer is also included in the business enterprise. The main house is set in the beautiful showcased gardens and has stunning views of the mountains. There is a small cottage. Several outbuildings which include office, large garage/workshop area. **SOLD AS A GOING CONCERN**. Price includes VAT, stock, tunnels, shade houses and irrigation systems.

CONTACT OUR AGENTS

SCAN FOR MORE LISTINGS

Poppet Acutt

073 171 9446

Kathy Abbott

082 923 7583

Kerry Abbott

076 934 1487

underberg@acutts.co.za

033 701 1359



PROPERTY SHOWCASE

Underberg



HIMEVILLE - R 2 850 000

4 BEDROOMS | 3 BATHROOMS | 2 GARAGES

A well-maintained home, enjoying prime position in Himeville. Established garden with mature trees and shrubs. Offers a peaceful retreat where you can relax and enjoy the outdoors.

Paula Bullimore

+27 (0)79 491 0101

Registered with the PPRA - Full Status FFC



UNDERBERG - R 1 500 000

2 BEDROOMS | 1 BATHROOM | 2 COVERED PARKING

Charming two-bedroom cabin set down Scotston Valley. Featuring open-plan living, off-grid capabilities, and beautiful mountain views. Perfect as a tranquil retreat or an investment opportunity

Jade Lloyd

+27 (0)72 194 2121

Registered with the PPRA - Full Status FFC



HIMEVILLE - R 7 900 000

5 BEDROOMS | 4 BATHROOMS | 2 GARAGES

Exceptional lifestyle farm offering expansive living & outdoor features, including a rock pool, boma and private dam with a quaint boathouse cottage. Designed for comfortable family living & entertaining.

Jade Lloyd

+27 (0)72 194 2121

Registered with the PPRA - Full Status FFC



UNDERBERG - R 6 250 000

3 BEDROOMS | 2 BATHROOMS | 2 GARAGES

This small farm (44 ha) is suitable for a variety of small-scale farming pursuits. A spacious home and cottage in a beautiful garden with farm and mountain views.

Paula Bullimore

+27 (0)79 491 0101

Registered with the PPRA - Full Status FFC



UNDERBERG - R 1 895 000

2 BEDROOMS | 2 BATHROOMS | 2 GARAGES

Modern, easy-living home with Drakensberg views. The property offers two en-suite bedrooms, a convenient study nook and a bright open-plan living space ideal for relaxed mountain living.

Khwezi Ngcobo

+27 (0)73 381 3957

Registered with the PPRA - Full Status FFC



UNDERBERG - R 1 395 000

4 BEDROOMS | 2 BATHROOMS

A quaint thatched cottage set behind a wall with a beautifully established garden, offering privacy and charm close to town. Ideal as a country retreat or full-time residence.

Sue Preston

+27 (0)84 880 8701

Registered with the PPRA - Full Status FFC

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