

MDUKATSHANI,  
P. O. Box 795,  
HILTON,  
3245

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**CAPFARM TRUST 2004-2005**

**The oldest beads in the world ...**

This was a year when the discovery of perforated mollusk shells at least 75 000 years old made headline around the world.

*Ancient shell jewellery hints at language*, said NEW SCIENTIST.

The shells, uncovered at Blombos in the Cape, provide evidence for the theory that modern human behaviour emerged gradually in Africa between 250 000 and 50 000 years ago. Archaeologists believe that if early humans could string shells together as necklaces and bangles, they had advanced concepts of symbolism and language much earlier than anyone had realised.

The discovery was of little comfort to the modern humans trying to make a living from beads in South Africa in a “hanging on by the teeth” kind of year. With the Iraq War still impacting on the tourist industry, there was a very real sense of hardship everywhere, with crafters making smaller, cheaper items in an attempt to sell anything at all.

Mdukatshani crafters cut down on big, glamorous items to make small art deco angels and stars using packets of spillage and dribbles.

They also worked on an order for small beaded balls for the Los Angeles and Washington premiers of “World on a String”, a documentary on the history of beads commissioned by the Bead Society of America. In September the producer, Diane Friedburg, visited the project to film the women for the second documentary in the series.

Films do not bring orders, however, so the crafters were grateful for every order that came their way, in particular the Tatham Art Gallery’s annual ECHO Bazaar, where they sold almost R 25 000,00, worth of bits and pieces.

During the year our beads sold out at both the Ambiente International Craft Exhibition in Frankfurt, Germany, as well as at the opening of a special South African Exhibition at Bochum – our work being channeled through the SA Craft Council. With more than 100 crafters, however, the project needs volume more than prestige.

## **A little gold bowl**

In June Mzonzima Dladla (19) started weaving a small bowl of real gold wire, a special order commissioned by the CEO of an Australian mining company.

Ignorant of the strict laws on the working of gold, the wire was sent to Natal by ordinary courier, and was woven in the shade of a thorn tree in the sun – the waste snippets licked up on wet fingertips at the end of every afternoon. The gold wire proved to be more difficult to work than copper, and at year end the little bowl remained unfinished, awaiting technical input.

## **Peter Brown**

When CAP found the farm now known as Mdukatshani in January 1975, Peter Brown drove down immediately to have a look at it, walking its wide, unknown spaces, trudging through the gorge, sleeping among biting ants on the river bank. It was hard country, but he would vote for it, and his vote was a vote that counted%.

His first visit gave him a bad dose of tickbite fever – a gift the farm continues to dole out to its visitors – but he was back ten days later for a director's meeting among the rocks. Disturbed by swarms of biting ants, the directors wasted little time on discussion. They noted to buy the farm – and then ran for their cars to escape the torment.

Peter helped finalize the purchase of the farm less than two months later, and was there through all the years of violence and hardship that followed.

When Peter died on June 28, he left heartache among the many lives he had touched at Msinga. He was a shy, reticent man who did his best to cover up his actions, so it was impossible to know the extent of his help. Although he was always read to make a stand on principle, he avoided attention if he could.

In 1961, as chairman of the Liberal Party, he was jailed for six months, and then banned for 10 years – a testimonial to his effectiveness in blocking forced removals. During the long years of his ban, which restricted him to the magisterial district of Pietermaritzburg, he was a listening post for all CAP's problems, and soon after his ban was lifted drove to Maria Ratschitz Mission with his wife, Phoebe – the start of an involvement that would continue until he died, more than 30 years later.

How does one ever say thank you for all he brought to the project? He would appear unexpectedly at moments of need, the most steadfast of friends, but never uncritical. When Neil Alcock died Peter and Elliot Mngadi began monthly visits to the farm to discuss the issues of the wider world with the CAP team and tribal leaders, and after Elliot died Peter came alone – his Zulu, but not his humour, faltering, as he tried to answer questions on the intricacies of the tricameral parliament.

He made the world seem a better place – and it's a lesser place without him.

## **Bhekuyise Ngxongo**

Ngxongo was chief induna of the Mthembu tribe when he first became involved with CAP in 1981, at the start of the drought years. A tribal man with no education, he had worked as a nightsoil carrier in Kimberley before he retired and came home to take up the job of chief induna. What he lacked in education he made up in authority, commanding respect in a tribe fiercely divided by interclan feuds.

When Ngxongo retired as chief induna in 1986, he started to work for CAP fulltime as manager, providing a sheltering presence for the refugee women and children who lived on Mdukatshani after their homes were burnt out by rival impis at Msusampi in 1987. a director of CAP who could neither read nor write, he added immeasurably to our growth, providing insights on the inner workings of the tribe – and a wit he offered deadpan. Leaving laughter in his wake.

He was ill with cancer months before doctors diagnosed what was wrong, and died on a short visit home from hospital on November 29.

## **Robert Morthé**

Robert Morthé was naked, bound hand and foot with wire, when he became a CAP problem in early 1965. at the time he was living on an Anglican mission near Piet Retief, on the Swaziland border – and nobody wanted him. He was raving mad and dangerous.

The solution seemed easy. At the time about 75% of the patients at the Pretoria Mental Hospital were pellagras. Good food and a Vitamin B injection would steady him. No hospital would admit him, however, and so for almost 40 years Robert became CAP's responsibility. A huge man who hurled rocks when he was violent, he won a place in the hearts of the hospital staff who gave him his medication, and the Koornliver community, adjoining Mdukatshani where he became a familiar sight, strolling up and down the hill, calling his cracked voice calling out greetings to the women who teased him, calling him "Hub". They teased with affection, and prepared his body for burial in tears.

"Who is going to tease us now?" they asked.

Robert died after a stroke in June, and even in frail old age was huge. He was carried to his grave on the back of a bakkie, surrounded by a community that had made him one of their own. Whatever his disabilities, Robert Morthé had been loved.

## **Rainfall**

January to December 2003:	302,5 mm
January to December 2004:	722,25 mm

After the devastating drought of 2003, which killed thousands of cattle and goats at Msinga, late rains at the end of summer transformed the bush. Trees like *Pappea capensis* which had not fruited in 30 years, produced branches shiny with red fruit, while sacks of sweet, green *mpumbulu* fruits were carted to taxi ranks in bags to be sold as a delicacy. (*Mpumbulu* is a Tugela endemic, *Vitellariopsis dispar*).

On the veld mats of starry yellow flowers stretched to the horizon like alpine meadows. The flowers belonged to the aptly named Devilthorn, or *Tribulus terrestris*, with such terrible thorns that even walking in shoes was difficult. Animals suffered, and although cattle ate the leaves for lack of any other green stuff, their dung was so full of thorns that it became impossible to dung floors or plaster mud walls.

A pepper tick infestation had everyone scratching, while termites used the damp of the wet months to forge new entry points under floors and walls, demolishing shelves, files, cushions and packets of beads. Large pythons became a common sight, and several were killed attacking fowls.

Because of the rain the phone was out of order for a total of 26 weeks, the cellar roof collapsed on the storeroom, and the ferryboat overturned twice, in the heavy current, drowning a boy and a woman.

With communication so difficult the craft section was grateful for the e-mail and delivery service provided weekly by Rauri Alcock.

### **Audit Problems**

Because of a four year delay in obtaining an audit, CA had already decided to find new auditors when a Messenger of the Court arrived at Mdukatshani in August to serve a summons on the project for non-completion of VAT and tax forms. Our previous auditors, Douglas and Velcich, admitted that due to an oversight the returns had not been done ... but CAP, not the auditors, had to appear in the Weenen magistrate's court to plead guilty.

It was an unpleasant experience, sharing the dock with men charged with armed robbery and gun offences – and it would be eight months and as many court appearances before the tax paper were finalised – and the charges withdrawn.

The transfer to our new auditors, LMD Africa, produced a series of shocks, including the discovery that CAPFarm Trust had never been registered with the Master of the Supreme Court.

The new auditors were privately scathing about previous audits, and we had to learn new rules we had never been aware of. While every request of LMD is being seen to, the fact we are dealing with a backlog of audits means no improvement will be registered until 2005 – 2006.

The accounting firm, Cawood Accounting Solutions, is putting our handwritten account onto disc in an acceptable form for audit. The initial costs of rectifying the past will be high, however.

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## **CAPFARM TRUST**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006**

This was a year for looking back and measuring. It was 30 years since CAP had arrived at Mdukatshani, years of drought, flood, and 21 separate inter-clan conflicts. What had changed? What had grown? What had been achieved? The answers were not always to our liking.

When CAP arrived there were no schools, no fences, no taxis, no phones. Gunfire, like birdsong, was a background to the day. The injured and the dying and the dead were carried across the river on an old iron bed that did duty as a stretcher, while rival impis sheltered in our woodland, and for months at a time sections of the farm were out of bounds.

The conflicts eventually petered out, but when a Gun Amnesty was announced, with a deadline of March 31 this year, only token samples of guns were handed over to the police. It might be peacetime, but no community could afford to be unarmed. On deadline day local homes were shut up and deserted in anticipation of ... what? The Amnesty was going to be extended, but by May helicopters were busy on raids in the valley, looking for guns.

It was a wet year (rainfall 756,25 mm), with bridges under water, and the Tugela River in flood – the water bobbing with refuse for the first time, and leaving piles of bottles, shoes, plastic and other junk behind when the water receded.

A new road was built on the hill opposite the farm, opening the valley to the sights and sounds of heavy vehicles, their headlights flashing at night onto the cliffs where the Bald Ibis nest. Although wildlife is being increasingly constricted by human activities, fresh aardvark burrows appeared on the riverbank, in earshot of passing taxis.

Once again the phone was out of order, this time for a total of 22 weeks, partly due to rain, partly due to the continued theft of telephone poles, sawn off at the base, presumably for building purposes.

With the Bushman's River bridge under water, the auditor could not get to the farm to check the stocktake, while the dangerously high level of the Tugela stopped the ferryboat operating, preventing women on the far bank delivering bead orders on time.

### **A Painful Farewell**

In April the old blue Toyota bakkie, NUM 9644, broke down on a track a long way from home, and this time the cost of repairs was beyond us. It had lasted 17 years, a loyal friend working on some of the roughest tracks in the country, and the ailments of its old age had become expensive.

The Chairman's Fund of Anglo American had originally granted the bakkie to the project – a donation made with reluctance contrary to its own policy of refusing vehicles to NGO's. The old blue bakkie had done all it could to justify the Chairman's Fund gift.

In September we were able to buy a secondhand Toyota bakkie for R 95 105,00, paying in full with the accumulated savings Roxanna Earle had set aside during the years she had done our accounts. The "new" bakkie will be used as far as possible on trips to town.

### **The Crafters**

Despite some big orders that helped to clear out stock (The Santa Fe Fold Art Festival, and San Francisco's Bridge for Africa), it was a year when work was often scarce, particularly in the winter months, when the women turned to an old standby – mbedizane, or grass bangles. The bangles are woven with *Sporobolus africanus*, which only appears in damp places, and only in wet years, and the women traveled distances of up to 30 km to look for the fine, silky stalks. Small groups did the cutting, and the bundles were shared out at home.

In March the first gold bowl was finally completed, Mzonzima Dladla and Mgongo Ngubane completing the weaving at Global Gold, the Johannesburg factory that makes the wire. It was the boys' first trip to the city, and they came back radiant to report on showers, TV, and a little bowl "as heavy as a stone."

In October Mzo, Mgongo and Jobe Sithole spent two months at Global Gold working on a series of gold bowls that are part of an ongoing project in partnership with Julia Meintjies. Meanwhile the Department of Foreign Affairs bought a large copper bowl, woven by Mgongo, as a gift for a foreign head of state.

Once again the bead women had to learn new designs, struggling with unfamiliar concepts and adapting their skills to a jewellery range for customer, Black Dog. Although they usually work from home, they come to the Learning Centre when training is required. They also attend a compulsory once-a-month Bead Day, when they share problems, and learn about events in the outside world that affect their bead orders. This year they also learnt about tax, VAT and auditors – and the need to start "signing" their wage slips, albeit with a cross.

In September work started rethatching the Learning Centre – a disruption that left the bead room in a mess for months. And just after the thatching was completed, there was a break-in that cost the crafts thousands of rands in lost copper scrap and beads.

## **AIDS**

In July Bonginkosi Thusi died at Nhlawe – the first crafter to die of AIDS. It was a year when the reality of the disease hit home, with several crafters losing sons, daughters and in-laws.

Thusi's wife, MaMshibo, also a crafter, was diagnosed HIV positive after CAP had arranged transport to hospital, and tests, and is now on ARV's with a grant and food parcels to help the home.

## **Welfare and Tribal Liaison**

Natty Duma and Zamani Madonsela continue to travel the hills on the countless tasks that fall under this heading. Once a month they take a bakkie load of serious cases to the Church of Scotland Hospital for treatment or investigation, and do home visits to help with all kinds of crises and counselling. They also visit the tribal courts, and the local chiefs and indunas on a monthly basis.

This background enables them to allocate the food parcels and blankets which are a regular gift from St. Agnes Church, Kloof. This year they focused on the children, or surviving family members, of "thankathi" or witchcraft attacks.

"Thakathi" is a convenient cover for all kinds of grudges – and it leaves the family concerned without any kind of support. Nobody wants to be seen helping a "thakathi" family, and so the children become outcasts without comfort or help. Working, as always, through the local indunas, the CAP team has distributed help on the pretext that it is merely carrying out a task on behalf of Social Welfare at Tugela Ferry.

The Mchunu induna who has been present at each distribution has been a strong, silent supporter, for his own wife was killed when she was accused of "thakathi".

## **The Dagga Crop**

In November four police helicopters arrived at Msinga on a three-week operation to destroy the dagga crop. It was a shock to growers who had become confident that the days of raiding were over. After a 10-year truce they had good reason to think that the authorities had decided to turn a blind eye to an almost-legal activity.

Until 2003 it was a woman's crop, grown in small brushwood gardens that were close enough to water for irrigation. In 2003, however, men and boys became involved, planting large beds inside the government plots near Tugela Ferry.

The police found them all, confiscating the harvest stored in bags at home, and then spraying what was left of the crop.

“And now we know where you are, we will be back,” they promised.

### **A 60-year rule**

In September the Mchunu chief, Nkosi Simakade Mchunu, turned 81 – and celebrated 60 years as chief of the tribe.

It has been a fractious tribe, divided by old quarrels that go back as far as 1909, when the government split the tribe into four. Although the tribe was reunited in 1924, the new chief, Muzocitwayo, had 22 teenage brothers, all with claims or ambitions of their own. When Muzocitwayo died in 1927, after ruling three short years, a civil war broke out over claims to the regency, that kept the tribe in the headlines for years.

The heir, Simakade, grew up away from Msinga, as was customary, and only returned in 1944, when he was 20 – a young man with a sunny spirit, glad to be home. A devout Shembe, loved by his people; he has long wanted to retire, “but the spirits have forbidden it”. Although his son, Gangandhlovu, has taken over many of the day-to-day tasks of the tribe, his father still gets the royal salute: “Bayede”.

### **A new pump**

After 17 years of heavy duty, our old pump and motor were replaced this year, and traded in for something smaller, and mobile, which can be locked away after use, as a precaution against theft and floods. The old three phase pump and motor had become unreliable, and was too expensive for the distance and volume needed since costs had brought irrigation to an end.



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## **CAPFARM TRUST**

### **ANNUAL REPORT – 2006 –2007**

This was a year when it rained, and rained, and rained, December being the wettest month in 30 years with a total of 201,5 mm. Upriver, crocodiles basked with open jaws in full view of the road, making a claim to their share of the valley. They were here first, precedent counts, and wasn't this the age of restitution?

In October land claims on Mdukatshani moved closer to finality with the visit of Clive Long, a government evaluator. Mdukatshani's 2 543 hectares are made up of three farms – Koornspruit, The Spring, and Loraine, which have always been sold as a block because of lack of water. Long inspected the first two, which have been claimed by the Ncunjane community of the Mchunu tribe.

When CAP arrived at Mdukatshani in 1975, the three farms were empty. In 1969, seven years before, the government had forcibly removed all 146 Mchunu and Mthembu families living on the three farms, and those who began to creep back subsequently came as illegal squatters who formed a small, hidden community on a far corner of the farm.

Over the years CAP did its best to protect them, for they were not labour tenants, they did not work for CAP, and this made them vulnerable to government threats of eviction. Their status has complicated their claim to the land – a claim CAP has helped to steer through official channels as collaborator, rather than defendant.

The problem is one of precedent. Although the Ncunjane community have ancestral links with the farm, they were not original residents. The original residents live outside the farm, mainly at Keates' Drift.

Now who has the greater claim to the farms? Those who lived there prior to 1969? Or those who have had continuous residence since the mid-1970's?

Eleven of the original families have claimed the farms through the Land Commission, while the resident community applied for transfer of the land under Section 126, which allows CAP to donate the land to them as residents with no particulars rights. The Land Claims Commission, however, has granted the claim of the original families. This has meant conflict between insiders and outsiders, and although CAP has twice arranged for the tribal authorities to get both groups together to iron out their differences, the Land Claims Commission and Department of Land Affairs have yet to reach common ground on what to do.

The Loraine deal has been more informal.

After discussion with Mthembu tribal leaders, CAP offered to donate its north-eastern boundary to the neighbouring community of Mashunka.

The Department of Land Affairs, however, refused to accept the donation as it did not fall into any pre-defined category. CAP had either to accept new residents as labour tenants, or else sell the farm to the Department of Land Affairs. CAP agreed to sell, but after six long years of official inertia, agreed as an interim measure to allow ten families to build on Loraine's eastern boundary.

Two grey-haired brothers, Swayidi and Dhayimani Dhladla, were the first to move, their chosen sites being ratified by the Mashunka induna, Khonzokwakhe Mvelase. Other families have since followed.

### **Lines of authority**

With change in the air, the Loraine boundary fences started to disappear, and in October a CAP team began to dismantle the fences that remained. They had lasted well. The lifespan of a fence is estimated at 12 to 15 years. These fences had been erected with grants from donors more than 25 years ago.

As the fences went, so did green trees on the hills. The lines of authority were no longer clear, and it was open season for wood-cutters who chopped for home fuel, as well as sale. Several huge woodpiles of the rare Cassine transvaalensis were confiscated before they could be sold, but with no fences to mark our boundaries, and no staff to patrol, it is almost impossible to protect the woodland that remains on CAP land. Periodically, when the ground is wet and there is time, we are doing what we can to mark boundaries by planting hedges of yukka, which can become almost impenetrable.

Because it is so easy to pretend there are no boundaries, in April a large area of bush on our western boundary was cleared for dagga gardens. CAP staff removed the brushwood fences, and made it widely known that this was still CAP land. Almost immediately new gardens appeared on the far side of our now-invisible boundary, and CAP established friendly relations with the owners. The new gardens soon attracted the attention of the police, however, who warned CAP it would be charged for allowing dagga to be grown on its property. After checking the boundary line, the police exonerated CAP – and destroyed the new gardens.

The expansion of the dagga gardens was a response to the rains but it was a disappointing year for growers, with police once again spraying the crops in special helicopter operations in both September and January.

Mabela farmers had a better year, reaping record crops, which were threshed in little brushwood circles in the age-old Biblical manner.

## **CRAFTS**

It was a good year for orders, although the price of copper rose 81% leaving us with little margin to operate. There was no way craft prices could absorb the increase in such a basic material, and although we pushed up prices by between 3% and 8%, it remained more important to sell, than to attempt to sell profitably.

We were grateful for bulk orders from several customers, including an inexplicable order for 300 beaded African huts for a Standard Bank conference in Shanghai!

In September Mgongo Ngubane had a woven copper bowl selected for the Jabulisa Exhibition, which will tour South African galleries for the next two years, and with companion crafters attended his first-ever gallery opening, with wine, snacks, and a speech from the mayor.

Mgongo, Mzonzima Dladla, and Jobe Sithole had to sit with one of the bead women, Ntombizini Mbatha, to learn to do intricate beading for large bowls ordered for Oprah Winfrey's School for Girls which opened with much fanfare in Johannesburg in January. Although the boys had never heard of Oprah, they were impressed that their bowls were visible behind her when she was interviewed on BBC TV.

In June- July about a third of the drafters asked for time off to go to the highveld to cut grass for thatch. The good rains meant that thatch was abundant, and this was a year to consider repairing the leaks in their roofs.

With the river so often in flood, beads were delivered by boys who swam across the torrent pushing buckets in front of them. We were grateful they took the risk.

In September we stopped sending work to the seven Nhlawe crafters when we discovered that a government-sponsored craft group nearby was copying our designs. Copying is a common problem, and while we understand how difficult it was for Nhlawe to hide their work when neighbours stroll in for a visit – they should have alerted us to the problem. We have maintained friendly contact, however.

## **Welfare and Tribal Liaison**

Natty Duma turned 70 this year – an age when her children feel she ought to retire. She continues to work at Mdukatshani two weeks a month, however, organizing the hospital shuttle, arranging AIDS tests for those who need it, distributing blankets and food from St. Agnes Church, Kloof, providing wise counsel, and maintaining close links with the Mthembu and Mchunu chiefs and indunas.

This year she arranged help and support for the families of three bead women who died: Tshitshi Mchunu, Regina Thusi, and Ntoza Ndimande. Although none of the women died of AIDS, “the young people's diseases” continues to take its toll, often, unnecessarily because of resistance to being tested. One of Natty's job is getting the unwilling to hospital, where a positive HIV test results in immediate benefits.

### **Paperwork**

CAP's voluntary and untrained bookkeeper had to cope with an increased load of paperwork during the year as a result of strict new demands from the auditors, LMD Africa. She was therefore grateful when accountant Carol Cawood offered to provide simple bookkeeping training for a local woman, Siyephi Mbhele. Siyephi's increasing bookkeeping competence made this year's audit an almost painless experience, although accounting and audit fees remain high.

Because CAP's legal status is not yet resolved, donations to the project are not tax-free, and as a result the Raimondo Trust decided to withhold its generous grant of R 2 000,00 a month until we could resolve the issue of a welfare number.

This has left the project in a position where it has to fund itself at a time when the margin on craft sales barely covers the cost of the operation. We were therefore very grateful for a grant of R 6500.00 from the Harry Brunskill Trust, which has been steady supporter of the project for many years.

### **“Staff”**

Although the word “staff” is used in this report, nobody attached to CAPFARM TRUST draws a salary. Every one is regarded as a casual worker, and paid piecemeal for individual tasks.

Costs covered by the Trust include the maintenance of roads, remaining fences, buildings, pumps and watertanks and electricity, as well as the spraying of alien and invasive plants.

Total rainfall for the year 2006:            910,25 mm

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**CAPFARM TRUST**  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2007-2008**

**AN ARISTOCRAT**

Nguni they called the new bull. One of ancient stock. An aristocrat. He arrived with a singular disability, however. He had no horns. The difficulties showed themselves immediately. He had to curb his instincts, surrounded as he was by local bulls and oxen, all fully armed with fine sets of horns.

Nguni had no defences. After a few tests of strength he hung his head low and accepted his place as an outsider. A demure bull? Local cattle owners were disappointed. What use was a bull that couldn't get near the cows?

Nguni might be an aristocrat, but he'd grown up in the confines of a research station where all cattle were dehorned as a matter of course. He arrived at Mdukatshani as a gift, a contribution from the Department of Agriculture which was keen to upgrade local herds with a strong dose of indigenous characteristics.

In time Nguni solved the problem his own way. He learnt to operate at night. In the privacy of the kraal.

It was hardly ideal for a cattle breeding experiment, and when, by request, the Department delivered a second bull to Mdukatshani in January, it arrived with its horns intact. Sulumlomo it's been called. Wipe your mouth. (It has a marking like a rim of beer froth on its face).

**APRIL FOOL'S DAY**

There is still no finality on the contested claims to the farms Koornspruit and the Spring, which are owned by CAP. On April 1,, 2007, the Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights wrote to CAP with an offer to buy the farms for R866 000.00. The Commission has since admitted it has no copy of this correspondence.

While Cap has never stood in the way of land claims, and has in fact collaborated with claimants to push the transfer through – the future ownership of the land is highly controversial. There are two sets of claimants, both members of the Mchunu tribe. The government appears to favour a Keates' Drift community, which was forcibly removed from the farm 38 years ago – while the Ncunjane community has actually lived on the land for 30 years.

On April 28 CAP staff and members of the Ncunjane community visited the Commission to discuss the difficulties – but there has been silence from the Commission ever since.

## **BATTLE LINES**

In 1944 6 000 men from the Mthembu and Mchunu tribes clashed over a contested tribal boundary on what is now Mdukatshani land. Previous reports have described the tensions that continue to surround this boundary.

Since 1919 the government has attempted to settle the dispute with surveys and beacons, and as a necessary preliminary to land restitution, yet another survey has established the boundary. But will it be final? Induna from both sides were present at the survey – but on separate occasions.

Meanwhile in December Nkosi Simakade Mchunu asked Mthembu families affected by the 1944 battle to join him in prayers for peace close to the boundary.

## **CLARA**

Can a single woman obtain a field at Msinga?

Can a widow?

Can a woman who is separated and divorced?

For some years CAP has been looking at womens' access to resources in tribal areas, working in partnership with LEAP (Learning and Action Project). For CAP the questions have been more than theoretical, for so-called Zulu customary rules can be used to block development. CAP has hoped that the work with LEAP would show how traditional systems can adapt and change to cope with developments such as AIDS, child support grants, land reform etc.

This year LEAP funded a collaborative research project on womens' land rights at Msinga, using the different skills of CAP staff, working under direction of Professor Ben Cousins of PLAAS (Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of Western Cape).

Although the research touched on sensitive issues, it has had the approval of the Mchunu and Mthembu amakhosi and Traditional Councils. This year fieldwork concentrated on the Mchunu area. Next year the focus will be on the Mthembu area.

Underlying Ben's interest in the research in CLARA – the Communal Land Rights Act – which will have far-reaching effects on the lives of rural people if it ever comes into operation. Although it was signed in 2004 it has remained dormant, awaiting an appeal to the Constitutional Court.

Detailed reports on the Msinga research will eventually become available.

## **CARNAGE ON THE MARKETS**

Crafters have learnt that their work can be affected by distant events, so they listened intently to a simplified account of the sub-prime crisis looming in the USA. What was a mortgage? A life time debt on your house? They had reason to be grateful for their simple mud walls.

Although crafters have since tried to follow radio reports on the ups and downs of the economy, they have found the language confusing. Does “carnage on the markets” mean bloodshed in the streets?

The downturn in the USA had an immediate effect on volume, and while orders continued to come in, none of them offered fulltime work for the women.

The year was not without highlights. Our beadwork made an appearance at SA Fashion Week, while our wireworkers started weaving in combinations of brass, copper, silver and gold. Once again we worked closely with Julia Meintjies Fine Art doing special orders for Stellenbosch University and celebrity clients.

In November Barbara Lindop staged a successful exhibition in Johannesburg, and was able to sell all our beaded bowl. Barbara has been a consistent supporter of the project, and has ordered really BIG bowls for an exhibition that will mark the opening of the New Turbine Hall in Johannesburg next year.

## **AIDS**

AIDS has continued to hit crafters and their families, although denial continues to be a problem, and we attend far too many unnecessary funerals. In February Kwenza Thusi died, aged just 30. Kwenza lives at Nhlawe, about 20 km away, and acted as courier for the Nhlawe group’s work. A tall, polite young man, he seemed hardly out of boyhood when he died. He was a naturally talented weaver, and he leaves us with grief at the promise of a life unfulfilled.

## **A FIXTURE**

Natty Duma has become something of a fixture at the Church of Scotland Hospital at Tugela Ferry, acting as a mouthpiece for the serious patients we send down once a month, and driving apprehensive men, women and children down the corridors to the HIV testing centre. (You’re sick – have a test – you can go to the doctor afterwards.)

In November she acquired a new role as theatre assistant, donning mask, gown and bootees to talk elderly patients through their cataract operations. The operation is performed under local anaesthetic, so the patient is conscious throughout, and an instinctive revous jerk of the head can ruin the operation.

Natty was there at the request of the surgeon, who had already used her to calm patients whose blood pressure soars with the tension of the preliminary examinations. Patients with high blood pressure have to be turned away, and one of our crafters, MaJhophla Dladla, has spent three years getting to the “finals”, only to be disqualified

on the last lap to the theatre. Her BP continues to be erratic, but she has enough sight in her one good eye to go on producing fine beadwork.

In June hospital staff at Tugela Ferry joined a nationwide strike. Nurses pushed patient into the road in their pyjamas, and then sang and danced outside the hospital gates. Two women in labour were turned away, and were able to get a lift in our bakkie. The one had waded the river to get to hospital – and between contractions she waded back. She subsequently lost the child.

## **WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS**

The Mdukatshani Learning Centre was the venue for many meetings and workshops during the year – among them two workshops for local children who help with agricultural tasks at home. The workshops were led by Deborah Ewing and Makhosi Mweli, and were aimed at finding out how much the youth are involved in agriculture, how to value their knowledge, and how to give them support. (A proposal for a support programme has been submitted to donors).

In February goatowners gathered at the Learning Centre to hear Professor Peter Scoggings and Dr. Brigit Letty report back on a study that looked at the potential of a commercial market for goats at Msinga. The study was commissioned by the Department of Economic Affairs, and considered the benefits of setting up a central stockyard at Tugela Ferry – an idea that got little support from the meeting.

Msinga has more goats than any other district in Natal – which suggests there is a surplus for sale. There are few large flocks, however, and if you want to buy a goat you climb the hills looking for an owner willing to sell. It's an informal system, built on experience, and it works because it takes account of hard realities.

The goatowners listed some of those realities in the discussion, offering insights on the problems they anticipated from a stockyard:

- At the moment all goats are sold from home, not along the roadside – a safeguard against theft. If a goat is suspected of being stolen, you trace it back to the seller's home. At a stockyard goats will become anonymous. Thieves will be able to sell animals, no questions asked – while anyone found in the possession of a stolen goat will be able to claim it was bought at the stockyard.
- A central stockyard might be central – but it will be a distance from most local homes. So what happens to animals unsold at the end of the day? Will they be kraaled overnight, a security risk, or have to be sold off cheaply?

(CAP's expanding work with emerging farmers is covered in detail in separate reports and resentations).



## **DISTURBANCES**

In May two men were hijacked on the causeway near Mdukatshani. After being tied up on the back of their vehicle, they managed to roll off, and when a CAP staff member found them, they were shivering and bleeding on the side of the road. The men had become familiar figures on district roads, two Ethiopians who made a living selling pots and blankets. The bakkie was later revered, without the goods, and the men have not been back.

In December there was early morning gunfire near the Mdukatshani farm gate where rocks had been placed across a corner of the road to ambush passing vehicles. Nobody was hurt, and the rocks were removed.

This year saw the end of the ferryboat, which was sabotaged after a quarrel between the owner and the oarsmen. The lack of a ferry has created real difficulties during the summer months when the river is high, and crafters on the far bank use their sons to swim their work across, pushing buckets in front of them. An enterprising tube owner has started to offer his tube as a ferry, at a cost of R5,00 a swirl.

## **REVD DALE WHITE**

Dale White was in a wheelchair when he went to the Union Buildings in April to be presented with South Africa's highest award, the Order of the Baobab. He was frail – and yet he twinkled. There was always a radiance about Dale, an openness and readiness for laughter that made him lighthearted in the face of defeat.

Dale first dropped in on Mdukatshani in 1983 – a brief visit to discuss his growing interest in the problems of rural areas. He returned with his wife Tish soon after Neils Alcock died – this time to ask if there was anything they could do to help. For the next 20 years they picked up threads, closed gaps found markets for our crafts, trained our staff, and connected us to donors. The help was practical – explaining the intricacies of an audited statement to illiterate people, for example – something only Dale would attempt.

“He was a man who listened,” said Mphethi Masondo.

Dale listened with an inner quietness, an acuity that led him past the obstructions of dissent. He had grown up in St. George's Home orphanage, and decided on a life in the church long before he wrote matric. Soon after Theologiola College he was placed in Sophiatown, and for the rest of his life he would be involved with trouble spots and troublemakers.

He was going to need his humour, and his irrepressible wit, to deal with the interminable sounds of conflict. You had to work alongside Dale to get a glimpse of the worlds he inhabited – and even then you could only guess at his influence, for he was reticent about his achievements.

“Dale has never sought the limelight,” said Der. Mamphela Ramphele, when she nominated him for the baobab Award. “He has been a mover and a shaker at critical

stages of our history without drawing attention to himself... He is trusted because he is open to all people, and he brings out the best in the people he encounters.”

CAP changed in the long years Dale acted as Chaiman of the Board of Directors. Development was becoming a professional discipline, and he drew CAP gently into the networks and demands of the wider development community. When multiple strokes left him too frail to drive, he had himself driven to our meetings, still bubbling with new ideas, and the wit that turned discussion to laughter.

When Dale died in October, the tributes that flooded in gave an indication of the immense ground he had covered in his lifetime. One tribute came from a man he had fired, and perhaps that is am measure of Dale’s influence. He was always just, even in opposition, and for the justice in his spirit men loved him.

### **FORMALITIES**

In January TELKOM confirmed that it would no longer attempt to fix our landline because of continuing theft of poles and cable. Although the project had been without a phone for seven months, the announcement came as a shock. As Mdukatshani is out of range for cellphones, it is now necessary to drive up into the hills to make a call.

In February our town-going bakkie was involved in a head-on collision near Tugela Ferry. Nobody was seriously hurt, but both vehicles were a write-off. Because of the economic downturn we decided to bank the insurance money, rather than replace the vehicle. Our 12-year-old farm bakkie has been doing all the transport since.

### **RAINFALL**

It was a hot, dry year, and in Febraury the thorn trees had already dropped their leaves. The total rainfall for the period March 2007 to February 2008 was 576.00mm.

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**CAPEFARM TRUST**  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009**

**A RUSTY MECHANISM**

Qondisani Mtshali (18) was looking for a missing cow when he climbed the hills one morning in May. The cow had wandered far from home, and he had crossed the Mthembu-Mchunu boundary before he found her grazing among other cattle in the Sibiya area.

It is difficult to separate a single animal from a herd, and he was driving the cow with other cattle when he was stopped and surrounded. He was an Mthembu boy. A stranger. What was he doing driving Mchunu cattle?

“One is ours,” he replied. The others he would leave at the top of the ridge when he drove the cow down into the valley.

What happened next is not clear. There is a protocol around missing stock. You report that you are searching as you pass local homes. Had Qondisani done so? Probably not. He was a truculent boy with a difficult personality, and he’ never had much time for caution.

The questioning got rowdy. There were homes teads nearby, and a crowd came running. Could he vouch for himself? He provided cellphone numbers that rang without reply. Sticks were produced. “Don’t hit me,” he pleaded.”Call the police.”

He was going to take a long time to die, beaten, hanged, than set alight, burning slowly above a wood fire.

The repercussions were immediate. Before nightfall tribal officials had helped the police arrest three men and one woman. When they were subsequently released without charges, three amakhosi, two regents and supporting indunas met at Tugela Ferry to protest to the police. The charges were re-instated.

The courts could take care of one aspect of the cases. But there were deeper, older questions. The Mchunus had taken a life. The Mthembus had lost one. There would have to be payment, in blood or compensation.

The possibility of violence was real. Although the tribes are allies they have bitter memories of clashes in the past. In 1944 more than 6 000 men had fought over the boundary that runs across Mdukatshani, and as recently as December 2007 the Mchunu Nkosi, Simakade, led prayers for peace close to the contested line. A hidden line, somewhere underfoot. Approximate and uncertain.

Qondisani's scorched body was still at the mortuary when three huts were set alight on the Mchunu side of the boundary. The news spread fast. Hut burning was always a prelude to war. The Mthembu had started reprisals.

The Mchunu Nkosi was dismissive. He had the intuitive knowledge of a long reign. The cause of this trouble lay closer to home. "The people who burnt the houses are from our place," he told a meeting at the Mchunu court. The men raised their hands in assent. Bayede! Bayede! Bayede! Bayede! The salute was repeated for emphasis.

There was nothing random about the arson. When Qondisani was dying, a local woman gave him water, and it was her home that was set alight and burnt to the ground.

Stocktheft is traditionally a capital crime, and CAP has lost count of the men – and women – shot as stockthieves in the vicinity of the farm. (One suspect was shot and thrown into the gorge on Mdukatshani. "A beautiful young insiza," said the men who recovered his body).

Private execution may be common at Msinga – but the accused are shot, not hanged and burnt. Qondisani's death was different. An import from the city? The Mchunu Nkosi was heartsick when he summoned the Sibiya men to court for discussions on compensation. The boy had died in the Sibiya area. Sibiya would be liable for costs.

The matter was debated at length in the months that followed. Compensation was a mechanism to prevent recurring violence – but how did you put a value on a human soul? There were practical considerations. Funerals costs. The return-of-the-spirit ceremony. A cleansing of the earth where the boy had died. The costs were added up in cattle, but would be paid in notes.

In February eight Mchunu indunas formally visited the Mthembu court at Tugela Ferry to hand over R5 000.00 – a first instalment to the Mtshali family to cover the costs of the funeral. The indunas conveyed the regret of the tribe, and the heartache of the Mchunu Nkosi. Further instalments would follow.

NB: The rusty mechanism of compensation was last invoked 30 years ago when the Mchunu claimed compensation from the Mthembus following the death of Nkwanayana Mchunu – a CAP committee member. This claim has never been settled.

### **DISCORDANT NOTES**

It was a year with discordant notes of violence.

At Mdukatshani sporadic gunfire at night signalled the return of arguments over a boundary across the river. In July two people died in a shoot-out at the SPAR at Tugela Ferry, while fighting in the Ngqongeni- Ndlela area made CAP staff cautious at times about using the main road between Tugela Ferry and the farm.

In one incident attackers shot mourners at a funeral, killing two and injuring others. Soon afterwards the driver of the government water tanker was shot delivering water

at dusk, although he managed to drive himself to help. Two days later Khamkhulu Mbatha (50) was killed on his tractors on the way to the fields at Ndlela.

The ongoing violence affected one research project in which CAP was involved. In August Barbara Tapela of PLAAS arrived to do in-depth interviews with ten successful farmers on the irrigation plots near Tugela Ferry. Her visit was part of a nationwide study, and the farmers had been selected on a range of criteria. Because of tension made some interviews impossible, and because she had doubts about her personal safety, Barbara curtailed her visit after two days. Gugu Mbatha on the CAP staff subsequently completed the interviews.

In September the Mthembu regent, Ndaba Mvelase, was returning to his home at Tugela Ferry at night when a gunman opened fire at his gate. Ndaba escaped injury but his wife, Rita, spent several weeks in hospital recovering from bullet wounds. (Police made an arrest in connection with the incident).

In January Nkosi Zondi was killed while on a visit to Durban – a case that made headline news across the country. Although police have made arrests the motive for the murder is unknown.

Attacks on pensioners at pay-out points increased during the year, and in October six men robbed pensioners and hawkers at Khumalo's Store, the nearest pay-out point to Mdukatshani. One man was killed in the police follow-up operation.

### **LEAP**

This year the LEAP project focused on the Mthembu tribal area, and after introductory meetings with the Mthembu regent and his council, CAP staff began interviews in the Ngubo and Nkaseni areas. Once again the project was directed by Professor Ben Cousins of PLAAS (Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of Western Cap). Makhosi Mveli was the research co-ordinator.

Meanwhile last year's research in the Mchunu area has started to produce results with the Mchunu Traditional Council working on changing rules that prevent women and single men having access to land.

Although LEAP funding is coming to an end with the withdrawal from South Africa of the Rowntree Trust, LEAP covered the cost of building a stone-and-thatch guestroom for the use of researchers visiting Mdukatshani.

### **ROYAL GOATS**

It took a bit of organising, but it was worth the effort. For the first time in the long history of the Royal Show in Peitermaritzburg, there were indigenous goats on display. The premier, Sbu Ndebele, beamed with delight when he saw them. They were the only part of the Show, he said, that had relevance for blacks.

In the background CAP took a bow. Getting the goats to the Show was just another step in CAP's work to get recognition for indigenous goats. While CAP did the organising – the Department of Agriculture provided the funds to get the goats and their owners to town. When accommodation failed to materialize, borrowed tents were pitched on the Alcock's lawn.

(The work with goats is just one aspect of CAP's fieldwork with emerging farmers, which is reported in detail in separate reports).

### **A QUIET SHELTER**

Buyelele Mchunu could do beads with her eyes shut, or so it seemed if you met her on a footpath, threading beads onto copper as she walked. How did she do it? She was a plain woman who had been widowed twice, and life had made her tentative. She always stayed at the back of a crowd, quietly merging, easily overlooked.

Her work stood out – but she sheltered behind it. She had never wanted recognition. She needed the quietness she wrapped around herself to keep the world at a distance. When her work faltered we knew she was ill. Flu? A chest complaint? She walked herself to hospital, and walked herself back. It was nothing serious. She shook her head.

In August, without warning, she was sent to the Richmond TB Hospital, and two weeks later she had died. She left six sons who all bear her likeness. They have the same swept-back head, the same slender face.

We miss her face at the end of the queue, upturned, silent, listening intently. And we miss the radiance she brought to her work.

### **GOLD TURRETS**

The world recession made it a hard year for crafts, and many of our plans were scuttled or shelved. Termites took over the bead room bins, and turned 30 kgs of new gold beads into turrets of dried mud. The turrets were broken down, the beads washed and sifted, but they have lost their lustre. Our gold is dim.

Two exhibitions were delayed indefinitely, while Jablonex, the great Czech bead firm, started shutting down furnaces because of a drop in demand.

Because of the quality of our work, orders continued to come in (we did a single special bangle for Swarovski), but there wasn't the volume to keep crafters busy. Work was shared around, so that everyone had a turn, but earnings were often token.

Because Christmas orders came in late, our production was not affected by the usual winter exodus to the highveld. There is no thatch grass at Msinga, and local women travel more than 200km to cut grass for their roofs. Between June and September we can lose a third of our crafters to grass-cutting. Thatch is cut on the basis of one

bundle for the woman, one for the farmers, and bead money is often used to pay the hired lorries that carry the grass back to the valley.

### **SCRAP FRENZY**

Mdukatshani has always been a dumping ground for stolen cars. Hijacked in the city, they are driven down into the valley to be hlinza'd (skinned), then set alight. The wrecks are an eyesore, but when scrap metal prices soared in July, most of our wrecks disappeared overnight.

Suddenly everybody was collecting scrap. Illegal scrap dealers set up shop on vacant land, and little piles of rusty metal lay waiting for transport on district roads. We helped local women scrounge for scrap on the farm, while professionals with a welding torch removed tons of abandoned pipe on the derelict farm nextdoor.

Sadly the price plummeted before our last wreck was cleared, and before we had got our own copper waste to town. Our craft prices are based on the expected sale of scrap, so sitting with our scrap has been a hardship. (South African scrap metal is shipped to China).

### **DIE-OFFS AND INVADERS**

Thorn trees are considered tough survivors, but in the past five years a slow die-off has been observed in the bush right across Msinga. The symptoms start with a single dead branch, and inevitably the tree soon follows. What's causing the die-off? And is it important? Botanists have started to take an interest in the questions following a similar die-off in Namibia. Our dying thorns are not alone.

Meanwhile huge swathes of grazing and residential land at Msinga is being invaded by the Australian Pest Pear (*Opuntia stricta*) Despite its name this plant comes from Central and South America, and in spring its beautiful lotus-like flowers cover the ground with yellow carpets. Although we are trying to spray it to extinction on the farm, it has found toeholds on cliff ledges where it continues to seed.

Another invader that seems to be winning is a plant the Zulus call Xhuma – Jump! Well –armed with spine-tipped teeth, *Blepharis natalensis* spreads on bare, hot ground where it appears to inhibit the return of grass, making potential grazing land worthless. We have large areas to work on, and although our experimental hoeing and spraying is producing results, our efforts are limited by funding.

### **THE RESIDENTS**

It was a year when our temperature gauge hit 50 degree Celsius, and crocodiles became a common sight up and down the river. There were two on the island at Sahlumbe, one near the pump, one below the cliffs, two at the corner of the river, a group on the bank where the cattle graze....

Their presence did nothing to disturb the humans who swam, waded, washed and collected water nearby. Crocs are a curiosity – unlike snakes. The heat suited the cobras and black mambas that were found lying in our houses and our beds. It was a record year for snakes bites, and Gosi Lamula, a CAP fieldworkers, was one of the victims. Fortunately his denim jeans were partial protection when a cobra in the cattle kraal struck him twice on the leg.

The news was relayed by SMS. “Today Gosi was beaten by a snake.” After a night in hospital he was treated and discharged.

### **FORMALITIES**

CAP’s multiple muddled identities came a little closer to resolution with the final cancellation of the mortgage bond in May. The bond was originally intended as a safeguard for the project – a guarantee the farm could not be sold without the consent of the Chairmans’ Fund of Anglo American. After more than 30 years, documents lost in fire and flood, and the death of directors on both sides – the transfer of title has formalised CAP’s ownership of the farm. This is a necessary step in negotiations with the Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights.

Another sign of progress was the signal booster system which VODACOM installed in March. On good days, when there’s no wind, it is now possible to make a cellphone call in the immediate vicinity of the Learning Centre.

### **RAINFALL**

A dry autumn, a dry winter and a dry spring brought the smell of death back to the pathways in the bush. Across the river parched dagga gardens were showing signs of stress when police helicopters arrived in October to finish off the crop by spraying. The helicopters were back in January, and this time many growers decided to abandon their gardens, at least until the winter months. (The crop is usually harvested in April and November).

Heavy rains at the end of summer boosted the total for the year to 718,25mm.



