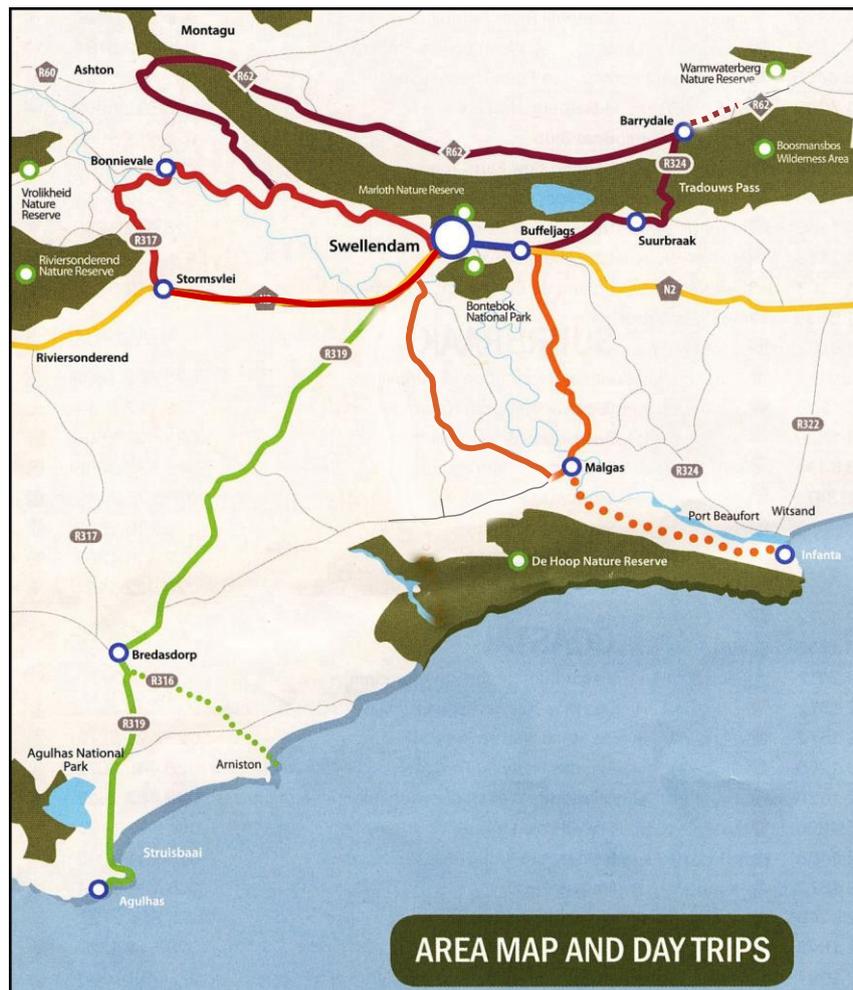


Day Trips Around The Swellendam Area – compiled by Paul Rixom



Buffelsjagsrivier - Blue Route – Return trip about 18 km

From the N2 eastern entrance to Swellendam (34°01.41'S, 20°27.93'E) travel east about 5 km along the N2 and take the right turn (34°02.25'S, 20°30.94'E) into the little community of Buffelsjagsrivier. About 2 km down this road you will cross the Buffelsjag River with the railway bridge to your right and the old "Sugar Bridge" to your left.

The "Sugar Bridge" was built as part of a plan to provide a highway from Cape Town to the Eastern Cape, and opened in 1852 after several years of complex engineering and persistent problems, not the least of which is the tendency of the Buffeljachts river to flood. This was a fearsome proposition, and it was decided that the piers should be made from massive blocks of local sandstone, to better withstand the force of the river.

The solution was to build stone piers topped by a timber deck. There was a quarry nearby which would supply good quality sandstone, but where would timber of sufficient strength and length be obtained? By chance the ship, the Robert, en route from Burma to England with a cargo of teak, was wrecked at the mouth of the Lourens River at the beginning of 1847. The wood was ideal for a bridge deck, and enough timber for this purpose was purchased for £400 at the salvage auction, shipped to Port Beaufort and then hauled to the site by ox wagon, reportedly at the exorbitant transport cost of £800.

The design Engineer saw a problem looming. The stones of the piers might each weigh a ton or two, but they would still be liable to move under the force of a flood if they were not held together with strong mortar. It was decided to use gypsum, better known as Plaster of Paris, as the cementing agent, and so an order was sent to France for a supply from the quarry in Montmartre which was its principal source. Something had to be added to the mix to prevent it from setting too quickly and the handiest retarding agent in the Cape in 1847 was common household sugar.

The good citizens of Swellendam were no doubt fascinated when the materials for the bridge started to arrive on site, casks of Plaster of Paris, large teak beams, special saws to cut the stone blocks and sacks of sugar! Surely these crazy Englishmen, reputedly members of the Royal Engineers (they weren't) were not going to build a bridge out of sugar, the stuff Tant Sannie used for her famous koeksusters! But into the mix went the sparkling crystals, and so the new masterpiece became the "Sugar Bridge"

Local legend has it that one particularly large sandstone block was so heavy that it broke the wheel of the wagon on which it was being carted from the quarry to the bridge site. The stone then slid off the back of the wagon and killed the brake-man, Antonie. The stone was then rolled on tree trunks where it provided a convenient platform for unloading the timber before it was manhandled into position on the deck. On completion of construction some enterprising locals rolled "Antonie's stone" to a high spot on the road where became a local landmark and a well known resting place on the highway. Antonie's Stone can be seen on the mountain side of the National Road at the turn off to the farm Appelbosch.

The Old Sugar Bridge – Buffelsjagrivier



The Sugar Bridge carried traffic along the Garden Route highway for 101 years, until the modern N2 was opened in 1953. The bridge continued to carry local traffic, but the timber was beginning to deteriorate. At one stage there was an outbreak of punctures in village vehicles, until it was found that the heads of the nails in the bridge deck had worn away, leaving sharp spikes which penetrated the tyres. Then in the 1980's a flood damaged one of the piers, and with the deck also deteriorating rapidly, it was decided to close the bridge permanently. The bridge has been declared a National Monument but due to lack of funds has never been restored to its former glory. Hopefully the romance of the Sugar Bridge will survive.

Continue past the Sugar Bridge and the tar road will lead you back to the N2. Turn left back to Swellendam and after a short distance a road turns to the right (34°02.20'S, 20°32.32'E) and leads to the very scenic and photogenic Buffelsjags Dam, nestling against the southern slopes of the mighty Langeberg. All manner of outdoor activities can be pursued at 'Umshanti' on the edge of the dam.

Buffelsjags Dam



Bonnievale – Stormsvlei Loop – Red Route – Approximately 110 km

Leave Swellendam driving west on the R60 (Ashton and Robertson road). A short way out of town there are signs on the right, just before the Klip River, to the beautiful Hermitage valley, home to the Wildebram Berry Estate and the Berry Guest Farm. The berry season is November/December but both establishments sell delicious liqueurs, jams, pickles, chutneys etc. all year round. About 5 km out of town, on the right, is Rheenendal water mill.

Rheenendal Water Mill – De Molen Restaurant



Frederick Jacobus van Eeden started building this mill in 1870. Parts of the equipment had to be brought from Europe and the mill commenced its grain milling operation in 1880. The mill continued to produce flour until 1937 when it was converted into a sub-station for generating electricity, which it did until 1969. However on the 29th September 1969 the Tulbagh earthquake, which measured 6.3 on the Richter scale, caused serious structural damage, but most of the original parts survived and can be seen today. It now operates as a restaurant.

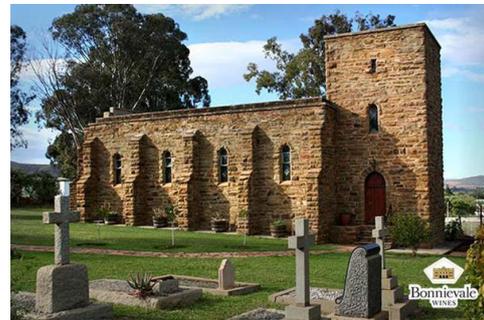
The R60 road before the Bonnievale turnoff provides some beautiful landscape photographs



About 23 km down the R60 from Swellendam we take the left hand tar road (33^o57.65'S, 20^o40.44'E) to Bonnievale known as 'The Valley of Cheese and Wine.' There are two cheese factories, Parmalat and Mooivallei Suiwel, and also two Co-operative Wine Cellars, 4 Estates and 2 private wine producers in the area. The Robertson Wine Route, which includes all the wine cellars in the Bonnievale area, has in recent years won great acclaim in South Africa and around the world, for the production of outstanding white and red wines.

The founder of Bonnievale was Christopher Forest Rigg who was born in Scotland in 1861 and moved with his family to Barberton at the time of the gold rush. He later saw the possibility of irrigation in this part of the Breede River valley. He acquired land and laid out a canal system and then sold various irrigated farms. Of his three children, two died in infancy and the third was Mary Myrtle Rigg who was understandably adored by her parents. Sadly she died of meningitis at the age of seven years, and as she requested on her deathbed, her bereaved parents built a charming little Gothic style church as a memorial to her.

Bonnievale Irrigation Canal and the Mary Myrtle Church



The stone was quarried close by, a two inch thick lead roof was added, the main door was imported from Zanzibar, the tiles came from Italy, and church furniture came from Thesen's in Knysna. At the entrance above the main door there is a statuette in the likeness of Mary Myrtle. The church is the only church in the world known to be built at the request of a child.

At one time serving as a half-way railway crossing-point between Robertson and Swellendam, the station was simply called 'Vale'. In 1917 the name was changed to Bonnievale in memory of Rigg's grandfather's home in Scotland.

Travelling south on the R317 we come to Stormsvlei, on the south bank of the Riviersonderend near the N2. Stormsvlei is situated on the old Dutch East Indies (VOC) loan farm Avontuur which was granted in 1732. The farm was described as being 'above the Compagniesdrift'. This old crossing through the Sonderend Rivier, about 300 meters upstream of the present bridge, was therefore already a recognized route to the Breede River Valley.

When the Sonderend River was in spate, travellers had to bide their time in their wagons or, in later years, at the old Stormsvlei Inn which overlooked the crossing. Because of its strategic position the settlement was a hive of activity. Poor roads took their toll on wagons, carts and carriages, which had to be constantly repaired and the horses shod. Many of the owners of stopovers on the wagon route provided such services in addition to accommodation. The Stormsvlei crossing was particularly busy over the festive season when holiday makers from the Breede River Valley and Klein Karoo passed through on their way to the sea.

Stormsvlei in the early 1900s was a hub of activities with many families living in the hamlet and surrounding area. Apart from the Le Roux & Kennedy Smithy, wagon-maker's shop and mill, there was also a school, church hall, the Stormsvlei Cash Store, a butchery, a post office, garages, an inn

and later a proper new hotel (this is where the Restaurant & Farm Stall is now situated) where dances were held once a month.

In 1921 Stormsvlei was 'electrified' even before Swellendam, with 110-volt electricity generated by an old engine charging Edison batteries. Also in 1921 a special building, was erected to accommodate the postal agency.

Exactly when the SA Police established a presence at Stormsvlei has not been established. From correspondence, however, we do know that the police took possession of quarters there on 22 May 1918. It is remembered as a significant station with a staff of three who patrolled the area on horseback, hence the large stables. The present owner of the premises, Dr Morley Thomson, recalls that a motorcycle with a sidecar later replaced the horses.

The old inn, which was later designated a 'hotel', was a rambling structure that had grown haphazardly over time. Its facilities were sub-standard and so a later owner, Johan de Villiers, decided to give the settlement a new lease of life by building a modern hotel and at the same time to boost his lucrative off-sales business. It was built around 1920 on de Villier's holding of 47 morgen. As the nearby Riviersonderend was laid out in 1925 as a 'dry' village, anyone from Riviersonderend wanting to quench their thirst had to go to the pub at Stormsvlei, which was also known as Stokkiesbaai.

In 1955 the hotel was bought by Jimmy Blackenberg. He was married to Mitzi, an Austrian. They had four daughters, Emmie, Mary, and twins Erica & Monica. When Jimmy died 10 years later, Mitzi, or Tant Mietjie as she was known by then, ran the hotel all by herself for the next twenty years and in time would become a legend.

Jimmy & Mietjie's middle daughter Mary, and her husband Willem Spies took over the hotel in 1985. Ten years later the hotel ceased to provide accommodation, but retained its off-sales outlet. In February 2010, Jeanne Collinson (a Swellendammer) and her husband Steve Collinson (a Londoner) relocated to Stormsvlei from London, England. Steve has worked for over 20 years as a chef and pastry chef in various well known restaurants and clubs in London. They continue the culinary tradition set by Tant Mietjie including award winning chocolate brownies at the Stormsvlei Farmstall and Restaurant.

Stormsvlei Farmstall and Restaurant and Stormsvlei Church Hall



Joining the N2 and returning east, Swellendam is about 37 km away.

Suurbraak – Barrydale – Montagu – Ashton Loop – Purple Route – Approximately 170 km

From Swellendam's eastern entrance turning ($34^{\circ}01.41'S$, $20^{\circ}27.93'E$) on the N2 it is 10 km east before the R324 turning to the left ($34^{\circ}02.50'S$, $20^{\circ}33.77'E$) and a further 10 km to Suurbraak. It was called 'Xairu' by the Attwqua Tribe, which means 'beautiful or paradise'. Suurbraak, got its name from the thick racket ferns that still grow abundantly in the wetland area.

Suurbraak was established as a mission station in 1812 by the London Mission Society and later in 1875 was taken over by the 'Algemene Sending Kerk'. The original church, parsonage and school date back to 1828 and the cluster of cottages, which line either side of the road were constructed in 1883. This beautifully situated village, sheltered by giant oaks, lies at the foot of the Langeberg Mountains, on the southern end of the Tradouw Pass. The mountains are rich in fynbos and bird life and cattle paths act as mountain trails for hikers, mountain bikers, and bird-watchers alike.

The isolation of Suurbraak is one of its charms but this sheer lack of opportunity has forced the youth to seek employment elsewhere and has limited the financial resources of the people, both young and old. Many still cook on wood stoves and the people live close to the land using farming methods that belong to the past. The smaller farms are still ploughed using horse drawn ploughs. Agricultural work is often done manually with most households owning at least one cow and a few donkeys or horses. Donkey and horse-drawn carts are often seen in the streets.

Mat making, hide curing and blacksmithing have all sadly died out, as has candle and soap making. Furniture making, however, and in particular chairs and the traditional methods of bodging, has remained. Garden furniture and crafts are also fashioned from alien vegetation.

Mission Buildings and a Cottage in Suurbraak



Just 5km past Suurbraak the R324 turns left ($34^{\circ}00.59'S$, $20^{\circ}42.48'E$) and north into the Tradouw Pass. It is thought that the Koisian originally discovered this ancient route. The unusual word 'tradau' means 'the way of the women' and it is believed to be derived from the Khoi words 'tra' signifying 'women' and 'dau' denoting 'way through'.

The Tradouw Pass has a rich history dating back to 1840, when John Barry (a member of the powerful Barry family and after whom the nearby town of Barrydale was named) opened up the small harbour of Port Beaufort on the north bank of the mouth of the Breede River. In 1858 local farmers had petitioned government to build a road to the interior to help them get their goods to the port. By 1867 their efforts were rewarded when parliament approved funds of one thousand Pounds Sterling for the road and the Divisional Council appointed Thomas Bain to do the job with the help of 300 convict labourers.

Bain moved into one of the Barry family homes named "Lismore" and proceeded with the project. It was opened in October 1873 by Sir Henry Barkly and named the 'Southey Pass', after a former Colonial Secretary, but the locals preferred the original Tradouw Pass version and so it has remained despite the whims of officialdom.

The road has suffered severe flood damage in its 130 plus years of existence with several rebuilds being required. In 1979 a major rebuild took place which was not only a huge engineering success, but also an environmental one. Much of Bain's original stonework has been preserved and near the bottom of the pass at the modern, curved Andries Uys bridge over the Gats River, you will still find Thomas Bain's original timber 12 meter span bridge on the right hand side.

The Tradouw Pass is 17 km long and gains a height of 220m going north. It is considered by many road builders as Bain's best pass in terms of technical ingenuity. The pass is kept immaculately clean and several well positioned lay-byes have been constructed providing spectacular views down into the gorge of the Buffelsjags River with its onyx coloured rock pools and waterfalls. This is one of the top ten passes of the Western Cape.

Tradouw Pass



At the northern end of the Tradouw Pass lies the small town of Barrydale. Rumour has it that Barrydale lies at the intersection of invisible underground magnetic lines, called ley-lines, and this is what has given the place its natural air of goodwill.

After 1700 settlers were attracted to the remote corners of the Overberg, and began searching for new land to farm. The area around Barrydale was particularly desirable as it has an ample supply of water and fertile soil. The pathways and tracks through Tradouw Poort proved too steep for them to be turned into wagon routes and the journey via Cogman's Kloof was both tedious and time consuming for those wishing to sell their produce in Swellendam. In 1873 the Tradouw Pass was opened.

In time the farmers who settled on the lands in the valley at the top of the Tradouw Pass decided they wanted their own church and the chosen spot was at the point where the R62 and R324 meet. In 1878 land was purchased from the Coller brothers and the Dutch Reformed Community of Barrydale came into being on 8 September 1880, prior to which it had been under the jurisdiction of Swellendam.

The village was named after James Barry, an early settler in the Overberg, who was not only a trader but acted as lawyer, agent and auctioneer, deputy sheriff and commandant of militia. He became a member of the legislative Council when representative government was granted to the Cape in

1854. In the early days of Barrydale there was a little in the village apart from nagmaal houses used by the farmers coming to the village to attend church. However, there was a school.

After the collapse of the 'Barrydale Empire', William Sterner, who arrived as a 'smous', became Barrydale's financial success story owning the general dealer shop, the hotel, the draper, the shoemaker and the gunsmith. Barrydale grew over the years and by 1921 the Municipality was established. The Barrydale Kooperatie Wynkelder was formed in 1940 and a distillery set up. The farmers were encouraged to plant vineyards, and orchards, growing fruit for canning and export. Barrydale, like all little Little Karoo villages, has known times of hardship and prosperity.

Barrydale and the Barrydale Karoo Hotel



Today Barrydale is the centre of a prosperous farming district, it enjoys perfect year round weather and its wonderful scenic setting attracts a steadily growing number of visitors. A lot of what there is in terms of eating and shopping is along the R62 which runs through the northern section of the town, however in the quieter side streets there are more interesting places to visit such as the Barrydale Karoo Hotel, at 30 Van Riebeck Street, which has been trading since 1888, and should not be missed.

In 1998 Peter and Nola Frazer, owners of a farm called The Manger in Lemoenshoek (20 km from Barrydale, towards Ladismith on the R62), followed an inspiration to build an outdoor Labyrinth. They chose to replicate the eleven-circuit Labyrinth embedded in the floor of Charters 12th century Cathedral in France. The farm offers a stunning view of the Langeberg Mountains and the Labyrinth is surrounded by a beautiful garden, home to an interesting variety of plants. A Labyrinth is a meditational tool that dates back to the Northern European Bronze Age. Its layout has one well-defined path that leads to the centre and back out again by the same path. Through its specific construction, using ancient geometry, it offers stable space to quieten and clear the mind and walkers use it in their search for healing and heightened self-awareness. It is necessary to make an appointment to walk the Labyrinth as it attracts pilgrims from everywhere. There is no charge for this, however, donations are welcomed and go towards upkeep and helping with the Centre for Rehabilitation of Wildlife at The Manger. Contact them on 028-572-1643 or e-mail: frazierp@iafrica.com

Also on the farm is the Peace Pagoda. At sunrise on 7th December 2000 an eminent 90-year-old Burmese monk Sayadaw U Thila Wunta, consecrated the South African Peace Pagoda, a gift he had long wanted to bestow on Africa, thus completing his dream and mission to promote peace and harmony in every continent of the world. Peter and Nola had been approached to provide space for the Peace Pagoda at The Manger, and the building of this seven-meter tall gold structure, crowned with a spherical crystal and copper umbrella, was achieved in three weeks by Sayadaw and three Burmese Monks, a team of twenty Canadians and several local people. The Manger is privileged to

host the Labyrinth and South African Peace Pagoda, the Labyrinth helping create inner peace and harmony, and the Pagoda creating external universal peace and harmony.

The Labyrinth and Peace Pagoda on the farm The Manger



Leaving Barrydale and travelling west along the R62 for 63 km, with the Langeberg to the south will take us to the small town of Montagu (33^o47.34'S, 20^o07.39'E)

In 1841 Montagu was laid out on the farm Uitvlugt and in 1852 John Montagu the Colonial Secretary of the Cape visited the infant town. In 1855 the first school was opened and two years later a contract was signed for the building of a church designed by George Burkett. In 1873 the Montagu Hot Springs began charging a 'ticky' for using the baths. Their use obviously goes back to time immemorial with traces of early man having been found in the nearby caves. The importance of the baths to the general public is reflected in the conditions written into the title deeds protecting them for public use and allowing the public to outspan on the land.

Montagu banknotes were printed and issued from 1861 to the demise of the bank in 1868. The bank was in the building now occupied by attorneys on Bath Street. Samples of the notes are on display. Montagu was cut off from the main trek routes due to the seemingly impenetrable nature of Cogmans Kloof and it wasn't until Thomas Bain built the pass and the tunnel in 1877 that trade began to develop the area. Between 1902 and 1985 the Brink Brother's enterprises were of major significance to the town. Their activities included general dealers, bottling works, canning factory, dried fruit production and a department store.

In 1936 Montagu was declared a health resort. This resulted in an influx of wealthy people purchasing holiday houses. In 1941 the Montagu Muscadel Co-Operative was formed with fifteen members present at the first meeting. The development can be gauged by the fact that in 1944, 800 tons of grapes were processed, in 1991 the figure had grown to 11,000 tons.

In 1950 Montagu hosted the first South African Wine Festival. With much trepidation and debate the committee members assured the protesters that "Drinkers will not be able to make themselves drunk during the periods the wine will be served. We will not have dishonour brought to our product." All went well.

In 1954 the Montagu Nature Garden was inaugurated by a group of ladies who regularly gathered to work in the gardens, as they still do to this day. During the period July to October, each Tuesday morning the ladies provide tea and snacks to all who care to join them. In April 1995 President Mandela in his first informal engagement following his inauguration, opened the twenty-first Muscadel Wine Festival.

Montagu Village and the Hot Springs Complex



The farming area, 'Koo', lies north of the town and is famous for the quality of its apples, pears, apricots and peaches. Nearby rock formations make it one of the country's major rock climbing venues. The 1266 m high Bloupunt peak overlooks the village and offers several hiking trails, as well as kloofing and mountain biking trails further afield.

Leaving Montagu and travelling a short distance south-west on the R62 we enter Cogmans Kloof Pass through the Langeberg.

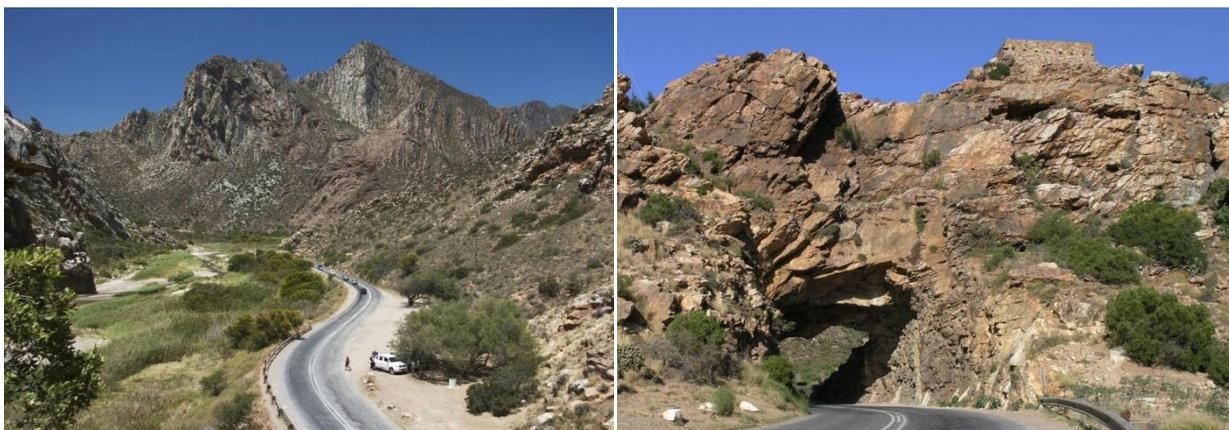
The Cogmans were a Khoikhoi chiefdom. Early history of white settlement indicates that farms beyond the Langeberg were granted from 1725 onwards. The link to the main settlement for transporting their produce was difficult and open to flooding. The original track was a precarious one running alongside the riverbed incorporating 8 hazardous drifts. Some of these drifts were of thick and heavy sand while others were of rough beds of rock and boulders. To round the Kalkoenkrantz, (Turkey Crag), where the old British Boer Fort can now be seen, wagons had no other option but to travel in the riverbed itself.

In 1861, a Parliamentary Select Committee authorized the building of a road using convict labour, but as convicts were in short supply, no work was possible. Six years later, the unfortunate drowning of 12 people prompted some action and a survey of the land was undertaken. A 5.5 km stretch of road was approved and work began in 1867. Construction using what is termed as 'distressed labour' soon lost momentum. The work was arduous and the previously unemployed labourers were not up to the demands of such physical work. Work stopped in 1870.

Thomas Bain, son of Andrew Geddes Bain, surveyed the pass and work was restarted in 1873 and completed in 1877. Included in the task was an unlined tunnel through the hard rock of the Kalkoenkrantz. Remember that dynamite was still new at that time and blasting was done with gunpowder, which was far more inferior and volatile. This section of work only addressed the 5.5 km stretch of road, but the crossing of the Kingna River at the entrance to Montagu remained a problem, as it was liable to serious flooding in the harsh Cape Winters. A bridge was constructed in 1915.

The old British fort atop Kalkoenkrantz was built in 1899 by stonemason William Robertson at a site selected by Lieutenant Colonel Sidney, Commandant of the Royal Field Artillery. The fort was garrisoned by a company of the Gordon Highlanders who were survivors of the Magersfontein battle. They were commanded by a Lieutenant Forbes. They were camped on the original road construction site below Kalkoenkrantz, the site which is now the parking area below the fort on the Montagu side.

Cogmans Kloof Pass and the British Boer War Fort atop the Kalkoenkrantz



Tarring of the strip of road took place in 1931. Traffic volumes as well as the size of vehicles were increasing and Bain's tunnel at Kalkoenkrantz was proving to be insufficient. The tunnel was straightened and the Loftus Bridge carried the roadway across the river, as did the Boy Retief Bridge further down. The area is still susceptible to flooding and in 1981, at the same time Laingsburg was tragically flooded, the Montagu area also suffered serious flooding. The approach to the Boy Retief Bridge was washed away. Again in 2003 and more recently the area experienced serious flooding with the approaches to both bridges suffering major damage.

At Kalkoenkrantz, set back from the road, on the other side of the river is a most beautiful gorge. The cliffs are sheer and high and they remind you of the organ pipes in a classical cathedral such as St Paul's. It is a truly breathtaking sight. There are a number of viewing sights and the magnitude of this pass's beauty is only grasped when one takes the time out to walk and look around, and also to look up. By looking up, one appreciates the depth of the gorge and the folded complexity of the rock formations.

A short distance after leaving Cogmans Kloof we can turn left (south-east) on the R60 ($33^{\circ}94.85'S$, $20^{\circ}04.85'E$) to return to Swellendam which is 57 km away.

If you wish, you can venture a further 3 km past the Swellendam turning to the small town of Ashton ($33^{\circ}50.13'S$, $20^{\circ}02.99'E$). Lying in the Robertson Wine Valley, sandwiched between the Breede River and the foothills of the Langeberg Mountains, Ashton is famous for its fruit, wine and rose nurseries, and is home to two large fruit canneries and five wineries. Ashton originally served as a residential area for the employees of one of the largest factory co-operatives in the southern hemisphere, which produced canned fruit, jams and vegetables. Now it is the home of 'Koo' and 'All Gold' canned fruits. The valley has minimal rainfall and fairly harsh weather conditions that include hot, dry days and cold nights, perfect for the lime-rich soil of the region to yield some world-class and unique tasting wines. Ashton Cellars and Arabella Wines are close by.

Returning to Swellendam on the R60, on the left and about 22 km from the R62 junction one can see the lovely Jan Harmsgat five star country house and farm. In 1674, east of the current town of Bonnievale, on a farm nestled under the towering Langeberg Mountains, Johannes Harman Jansz Potgieter was born. Johannes married in 1714, and the farm appears on the grant of 1723 as Jan Harmansz Schat (treasure) from which it was apparently corrupted to Jan Harmsgat.

In 1731 we find the grazing rights being granted to a famous hunter, Jacobus Botha. His hunting career was brought to an end a couple of years later, when he shot a lion, and the lioness (which he had not seen) attacked and mauled him, leaving him for dead. Botha recovered but was never able

to hunt again, and in 1734 Governor de la Fontaine made a freehold grant to Botha, for services rendered, of the farm Jan Harmans Gat which he was then occupying. The farm was described as "vier uur te perd van die dorp Swellendam" Jacobus Botha lived to the age of 90, dying in 1782, and his 12 sons gave him 190 grandchildren.

Jan Harmsgat Country House



In 1789 the farm passed into the hands of Hermanus Steyn de Jonge. In 1765 he had married the widow Margaretha van Staden, and by the time the farm was occupied by him, he was already a man of some stature in the area. In addition to farming, he also did some Trustee work and sat on the District Council of Swellendam.

In 1795 the farmers of the Swellendam district rebelled against their Dutch masters, and declared themselves independent of the Cape Government. Hermanus Steyn was chosen as the president of the new Republic, which lasted only a short while before the British assumed control of the Cape Colony, and Swellendam again reverted to its original status. Hermanus Steyn lies buried on the farm, in a small plot marked by a granite gravestone, which can be seen a few hundred meters from the main house.

The 680 hectare farm straddles the lush mountainous belt with its orchards of fruit, nut and olive trees being the source of its highly acclaimed preserves and produce. Indigenous wildlife such as Black Wildebeest, Springbuck, Grey Rheebuck and Ostriches are to be seen here, along with many smaller creatures and birds.

The R60 continues for about 35 km back to Swellendam, through beautiful scenery of canola fields and the Langeberg to the north.

Malgas Loop – Orange Route – Approximately 95km

Drive south-west out of Swellendam on the N2, cross over the Breede River, with lovely views particularly to the right of the road, and then take the next road to the left (south) (34°04.62'S, 20°24.34'E) which will be signposted to Malgas and Infanta. This is a good sand road. After 1.8 km another sand road branches to the left, keep straight on, and after 13.5 km there will be a small road to the right (34°11.63'S, 20°25.04'E) leading to a little farm church atop a hill. Drive along this approach road to get closer to this very photogenic little building, which looks beautiful with the gum trees and the farm road rising up to it.

Return back to the main sand road and continue south through beautiful farm scenery for about 28 km following signs to Malgas at 4 road junctions (34°15.59'S, 20°26.23'E), (34°17.24'S, 20°28.80'E), (34°19.06'S, 20°33.98'E) and finally (34°18.96'S, 20°34.84'E) to the village at (34°18.14'S, 20°35.35'E).

Little Farm Church on the Malgas Road



Malgas has a population of about 50 souls and consists of a small settlement scattered along the sand road with a 155-year-old church, a hotel and a very old general dealer. But the place is best known for its pont river crossing. The Malgas pont is famous for being the last hand-drawn pont of its kind in the country. There are at least two other ponts in the country, one at the Kei River and the other at Sendelingsdrift in the Richtersveld on the Orange River, but these are motorised. It has been in use since 1860 and operates only during daylight hours.

The Malgas Pont over the Breede River



In the 1850s when the merchant house of Barry (of Barrydale) and Nephews dominated trade in the Overberg area, it was found that three full weeks were needed for wagons to transport goods to Cape Town. The Breede River was navigable in its lower reaches and the enterprising firm acquired a fleet of small sailing vessels and built a store at Malgas. However sailing vessels had problems entering the Breede River mouth with its sandbanks and dangerous south-easterly winds.

To overcome this problem, the Barrys had a special steamer built on the Clyde. Named the Kadie, this little 150 ton coaster arrived on her maiden voyage at the river mouth on 26th September 1859 and successfully negotiated the sand bar and steamed up river to Malgas. For the next six years the Kadie carried to Cape Town cargoes of butter, bitter aloes, wool, sheep and grain and brought back trade goods to stock the Barry stores. The Kadie crossed the sand bar on 240 voyages, but then on 17th November 1865 she struck the rocks on the west bank of the river and was totally wrecked. Other steamers took its place until the advent of the railway line which made the route redundant. When Malgas fell into disuse as a port, the authorities decided there wasn't sufficient traffic to justify the building of a bridge and so the pont lived on.

While in Malgas visit the old general dealers 'Malagas Algemene Handelaar' owned and run by Oom Nicolaas and Tannie Hendrika. It's has been in the Van As family for 100 years, and still has that lovely old general dealer feel about it, with ancient wooden shelves that display a range of goods, both new and old. There is also a beautiful yellowwood ceiling and counter.

Nicolaas Van As at the 'Malagas Algemene Handelaar' and the Malagas Hotel



Malgas was originally called Malagas (probably a reference to Malagassy, or Madagascar, from where many slaves to the Cape originated). Apparently as a result of mail ending up in Malaga, Spain, the named was changed to Malgas, which is incidentally the Afrikaans name for the Cape Cormorant. The hotel still uses the name Malagas.

If you wish to continue to the sea an 82 km return trip, along the southern bank of the Breede will take you to the small seaside resort of Infanta on St. Sebastian Bay. It takes its name from Cape Infanta several kilometres to the south. The cape was in turn probably named after captain João Infante, who commanded one of Bartolomeu Dias's caravels. Southern Right Whales come in very close to Infanta during the July and August peak calving season.

About 3 kms after crossing over the pont at Malgas a left hand sand road ($34^{\circ}17.14'S$, $20^{\circ}35.96'E$) signposted to Swellendam, will guide you north for 32 kms, through lovely farming country, to Buffelsjagsrivier and a further 10 kms along the N2 will return you to Swellendam.

Bredasdorp – Struis Bay - Agulhas – Green Route – Approximately 210 km return.

To get to Bredasdorp, drive 11 km out of Swellendam on the N2 going south-west and turn left (south) ($34^{\circ}06.47's$, $20^{\circ}21.05'E$) on the R319. Bredasdorp is 58 km along the R319 ($34^{\circ}32.00'S$, $20^{\circ}02.52'E$)

The town of Bredasdorp was founded with the building of a Dutch Reformed Church in 1838 on the farm Langefontein. The town was named after Michiel van Breda, the first Mayor of Cape Town, who was also known as the father of South Africa's merino sheep industry. Van Breda and Pieter Voltelyn van der Byl could not agree on a location for the church; as a result two churches were built, and two towns, Bredasdorp and Napier, were established.

Bredasdorp is home to the excellent Shipwreck Museum, which was opened in 1975 and tells the stories of the 150 ships that were wrecked along the nearby Agulhas Reef. The oldest shipwreck occurred in 1673 and since then ships representing a host of different nationalities have washed up on the rocky shore. Since the ships and many of the precious artefacts would be taken with the current to shore, a horse-drawn wagon would be sent from Cape Town to collect the valuables that would subsequently be auctioned. The Strandvelders regularly attended these auctions, where they

bought up furniture and entire ranges of household goods from exotic parts of the world. In fact, local legend has it, that there's hardly a home or a farmstead in the area that does not own some relic of an old-time local shipwreck. Timbers from the doomed ships were put to good use in building houses. Nothing went to waste. Greed eventually led auctioneers to falsely imitate the lighthouse and lure unknowing seamen to their untimely death for an early auction. One can find these stories in the museum as well as the many artefacts that have been preserved, such as portholes, jewellery, coins, figureheads, anchors and canons. The building that the Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum occupies has served many purposes since it was built as a church in the 1860s. It has been a church hall, school, cinema, skating rink and shop.

The Shipwreck Museum in Bredasdorp



The excellent Peter Slingsby map, the 'Overberg and Whale Coast', available at the congress, is not only a very well researched map to explore the area, but also plots all the shipwrecks on this part of the Overberg coast. Other places of interest in Bredasdorp include the Heuningberg Nature Reserve, many historical churches and various art galleries and craft shops.

Another 30 km south on the R319 takes you to Struisbaai. The Cape Photographers congress was very successfully held here in April 2010. The town is an old fishing village which has a beautiful natural harbour. Some development has taken place since then but Struisbaai is still relatively untouched by the rigours of overdevelopment. Many fishermen still reside in this settlement but it is now known better for its leisure activities, which include fishing, horseriding, hiking and diving.

The exact origins of the name of Struisbaai, is however, still a subject of much debate. The various historical stories uncover 3 different origins for the name of the town. The first being accredited to the thatch or straw (strooi in Afrikaans) roofs of the fisherman cottages scattered along the coast. Another is the ostriches ("struisvogel" in Dutch) that used to be raised in this area, while others believe the name was derived from an old Dutch word meaning "huge" given due to the long stretches of beach. The last origin seems more plausible as Struisbaai holds the longest beach in the Southern Hemisphere which stretches for a total of 14 kms.

The small harbour is very photogenic and the main attraction is 'Parrie' the stingray. Initially lured to the Struisbaai harbour because of the morsels thrown over the boat by returning fisherman, Parrie has now been a regular for several years. He has grown so accustomed to the locals that he can now be approached by people and be fed. Although it is always good to keep an eye on the swaying tail, he is in fact a very friendly creature that has become both a tourist attraction and something of a town mascot. Parrie was once caught by the Two Oceans Aquarium but the locals demonstrated a fierce loyalty and got him returned to his home. Now there are a few more stingrays that have

joined their famous friend but they are relatively shy. Parrie on the other hand is happy to greet anyone (especially if they come with food in hand!) and you can generally spot him as he is the largest of the group.

Struisbaai Harbour and 'Parrie' the giant stingray



Only 5km down the road you come to the small seaside community of L'Agulhas and the southern most point in Africa, Cape Agulhas (34°49.70'S, 20°00.60'E). The cape was named by Portuguese navigators, who called it Cabo das Agulhas — Portuguese for "Cape of Needles" — after noticing that around the year 1500 the direction of magnetic north coincided with true north in the region. It is the geographic southern tip of Africa and the official dividing point between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. However with regard to ocean currents the position where the warm Agulhas current meets the cold Benguela current fluctuates seasonally between Cape Agulhas and Cape Point.

The sea off Cape Agulhas is notorious for winter storms and mammoth rogue waves, which can sink even large ships. The coast here is littered with wrecks: Arniston (1815), Geortyrder (1849), Elise (1879), Cooranga (1964), Gwendola (1968) Federal Lakes (1975), and Gouritz (1981), are just a few of the vessels lost in the proximity. The most recent visible shipwreck near the lighthouse is the remains of the 'Meisho Maru 38' a Japanese trawler which floundered here on 16th November 1982.

The remains of the Meisho Maru (wrecked 1982) and the Lighthouse at Cape Agulhas



In 1847 the government of the Cape Colony agreed to fund the construction of the lighthouse at a cost of £15,871. Building work began in April of that year and was completed in December 1848, and the light was first lit on 1 March 1849. Originally it was fuelled by the tail-fat of sheep, but in 1905 an oil-burning lantern was installed. In March 1910 the lens was replaced with a first-order Fresnel lens. In 1929 the oil burner was replaced by a petroleum vapour burner, which was in turn replaced in 1936 by a four-kilowatt electric lamp powered by a diesel generator. In 1968 the lighthouse was taken out of service, and the light moved to an aluminium tower, as it was discovered that the sandstone walls were crumbling due to excessive weathering. Restoration and reconstruction was

performed by the Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum and the local council, and the lighthouse was re-commissioned in 1988.

The lighthouse consists of a round tower, 27m high and painted red with a white band, it is attached to a keeper's house which now contains a museum and restaurant. The design of the building was inspired by the Pharos of Alexandria. The focal plane of the light is 31m above high water and the range of the 7.5 mega candle power light is 56 km. It rotates, giving off one white flash every five seconds. It was the third lighthouse to be built in South Africa, and the second-oldest still operating, after Green Point in Cape Town.

Ancient people also left their mark on the landscape. For example, archaeological middens remind contemporary man of a successful hunter-gathering culture that was in harmony with its natural environment; and a cultural heritage that dates back thousands of years to when the Khoi-khoi people trapped fish using ingeniously constructed tidal traps. This windswept, ruggedly beautiful coastal plain at the southernmost tip of Africa, with its rich cultural and natural heritage, was proclaimed as the Agulhas National Park on the 23rd of September 1999. The park started as a 4 ha portion of land at the southern tip and has grown through the additions of 36 portions, bringing the area of the Park to 20 959 ha.

The return trip to Swellendam is about 105 km back north up the R319, but if you have time you can travel south-east from Bredasdorp along the R316 for 23 kms and you will arrive at the small seaside village of Arniston. Prior to the tragic loss of the ship called the Arniston, it was known as Waenhuiskrans, meaning literally 'Wagon house cliff', after the local sea cave said to be large enough to accommodate a wagon and a span of oxen.

In May 1815, a British East Indiaman, the Arniston, was rounding the Cape in convoy on a journey to repatriate wounded English soldiers from Ceylon. The ship lacked a chronometer, an expensive instrument at the time, and consequently had to rely on other ships in the fleet to calculate its longitude. After being separated from the convoy in heavy seas, the captain of the Arniston was obliged to rely solely on dead reckoning to navigate. Thinking incorrectly that he was 160 km west of the Cape of Good Hope, the captain steered north for St Helena and ran the ship on to the rocks at Waenhuiskrans. Only 6 of the 378 souls on board survived the shipwreck. The survivors spent several days on the beach before being discovered by a farmer's son. A memorial, a replica of which can be seen today, was erected on the beach by the wife of Colonel Giels, whose four unaccompanied children were lost in the tragedy.

Waenhuiskrans Sea Cave and Kassiesbaai Fishing Village



At first only a fishing community, Arniston has become a holiday destination and its hinterland a region for viticulture. The fishing village, Kassiesbaai, characterized by its lime-washed and thatched

houses, remains unspoiled and has been declared a national monument in its entirety. Fishermen still go to sea in boats of the style that would have been familiar to locals in the early nineteenth century, although now under contract to larger commercial enterprises.

The sea cave is about 1.5 km south of the village and is believed to be the biggest coastal cave with no supporting pillar. It is submerged at high tide and pounded by surf in between, but low tide reveals a small entrance, giving the visitor the chance to steal a few moments in this magical space.

There is a beautiful book called 'Overberg Tapestry' written by Leslie Howard with outstanding photographs by Keith Phillips, which is currently out of print. However, we do hope to obtain some copies for the congress. At the end of the book there is a poem by Leslie Howard entitled 'Overberg Evening' which she has kindly given her permission to include in this little guide.

Overberg Evening

***You came unbidden in the summer
stealing through the gate
with the last rays
and the mountains on fire
fading as we watched
sharing the light
in the sounding silence that
rang, clear as cuckoos, with
guinea fowl music in the whispering
grass.***

***In the west, apricot skies
signalling another night
of hooting owls and moonlit patches
the dark awake with
summer scents and nightjars.***

***In the winter
scuds of clouds fly past,
disgorging rain in lashes.***

***The wash of sunset
now a memory.***

***A rainbow in the west
arches our passage
through
the flying mountains.***

***There is candlelight,
and fire shared –
with wine and bread.***

***I know a place
of calm and rest
where glimpses of
sunlight
proclaim a shelter
from all storms and grief
in the gathering dark
of an Overberg evening.***