Front cover: An aerial view of Kommetjie, taken in 1998 by Patricia Evans.

This picture won 1st prize in the photographic competition organized by the Kommetjie “Friends of the Library”

A CENTURY OF KOMMETJIE

This book is dedicated to the memory of the late Ann Seeliger, our inspiration, mentor & preserver of so much of the local history,

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
FOREWORD
MAP OF KOMMETJIE
EXTRACT - SUPPLEMENT TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN NEWS
EARLY VIEWS OF THE KOM
KOMMETJIE-MUIZENBERG BUS SERVICE
THE FARM HISTORY
STREET NAMES IN KOMMETJIE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 1998 the Friends of the Kommetjie Library organised a photographic competition to raise funds for the library. Members of the community responded enthusiastically and the concept of compiling this book arose from the quality and diversity of entries received.

A task group was appointed to research information and interview local residents. Two members in particular, Annaleen Erasmus and Patrick Davis, deserve special mention for their time spent in collating much of the historical content.

Many individuals assisted, most notably by locating, identifying and providing photographs. We are especially grateful to the following: Joan Barendse, Molly & Brian Binedell, Babes Calder, Annie Collins, Florence Campbell, James de Villiers, Ray de Villiers, Des Froud, Marjorie Forbes, Robert Grendon, Eddie & Des Huskisson, Yvonne Kruger, Henri Maree, Dawn & Rene Maree, Gea Smith, Leonore Teubes, Sarel & Rene Theron, Denise & Junior van der Horst, Karlheinz & Mickey van der Poll, Johanna Williams, Pauline Jackson, Japie Daniels, Shirley Bosman.

Jane Sanda and Denise Joubert, co-organisers of the photographic competition.

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Molly Davis for her promotional efforts.

Completion of this publication would not have been possible without the assistance and expertise of the following:

Pat Brennan, Joy Broad & Nancy Okes for editing & reviewing the text, wholly or in part.
Stephen Davis, for his invaluable assistance towards designing the layout of the book & taking it to the stage of computerisation.
Pieter Joubert for final editing & scanning some of the contents.
FOREWORD

Kommetjie’s name comes from the natural rock pool on the coast next to the launching pad of the boat club. Legend has it that the “Kom” was used centuries ago by the original inhabitants of these shores for the trapping of fish at high tide. Translated, Kommetjie means “Little basin”.

The compilers of this photographic history have taken as their theme the street names of the town. As the village evolved, these family names were chosen to honour those far-sighted people who had contributed to its development, and it is through the photographs of them and their families that we get a glimpse of the history of this little town.

The photographs cover a century of the growth of Kommetjie itself, and include reference to its real beginning, way back in 1743, when the farm Slangkop was given to the widow Diemer on condition that it was used to grow vegetables for the ships of the Dutch East India Company calling at Simon’s Town.

From these early beginnings arose the town of Kommetjie, her sister town of Ocean View and the farm now known as Imhoff’s Gift.

Nancy Okes
EARLY VIEWS OF THE KOM

The view across the island from where Protea Road meets the Kom.

The houses of the Benning, Teubes, Rubbi and Seeliger families are visible in the background.

Modern Day view of the Kom
SKILPADVLEI - so called after the terrapins (waterskilpad) which once proliferated there, situated between Benning Drive & Arum Avenue. Grassed over now but in 1954 the vlei overflowed and flooded the beach end of Arum Avenue, cutting deep gorges through the dunes on both sides of the Seeliger property.

A view of Old Kommetjie from Slangkop taken circa 1915.

Note the vegetable gardens of Mr Izak de Villiers of “Bergzicht” in the foreground.
THE KOMMETJIE - MUIZENBERG BUS SERVICE (1902 - 1905)

The Kommetjie - Muizenberg route was covered by the first ever bus service on the Cape Peninsula, quite possibly the first ever service in South Africa. The vehicle was owned by Kommetjie Estates Ltd., the owners of the whole Kommetjie area at the time. The first directors of the company included the well-known building contractor, Anton J. Benning, who was regarded by many as the “Father” of Kommetjie. The bus service ran between Fish Hoek and Kommetjie during the week, transporting both passengers and supplies.

On the return journey to Fish Hoek it was invariably laden with a cargo of fish, caught from as far as Witsand, from where the boats often operated. During weekends, the journey extended to Kalk Bay and Muizenberg, to cater for day trippers, who would enjoy the Atlantic and the beautiful beaches of Kommetjie and Noordhoek. The journey from St. James to Kommetjie took one and a quarter hours to complete.

The bus was of French manufacture, and bore the signboard “Kommetjie Estates Ltd.” For Mr. Seville, the driver/mechanic, it was a constant headache. Frequent breakdowns and the hassles of sand dunes, in which the bus often became stuck, led to the demise of this venture. All too often the passengers had to push the bus through the soft sands of Fish Hoek. They were reluctant to pay after having made such an effort and high costs for continual repairs resulted in financial disaster.

After a little more than three years, the service discontinued in 1905.

Transport reverted to ox-wagon and horse-cart, until roads were improved to allow regular traffic. Thereafter it was proposed that the railway be extended from Fish Hoek to Kommetjie, the line to end at the Slangkop Lighthouse. It was hoped that this would establish Kommetjie as a holiday resort. Land along Lighthouse Road was set aside for this purpose, but the line never materialised. (Extract from “Coastal Memories” by Michael Walker)
“Modern transport” on the Main Road, now Kommetjie Rd (circa 1928).

The Kommetjie Estates bus circa 1904
THE FARM IMHOFF’S GIFT

1 - Homestead
2 - Slave quarters
3 – Cowshed
4 - Stables
5 – Barn
6 - Stables
7 - Silo
8 – Barn
9 - Threshing floor (1 of 2 in the Cape Peninsula, the other being located at Mostert’s Mill)

THE FARM HISTORY

Front view of the farmhouse facing Noordhoek.
Annie van der Horst stands in the foreground.
The courtyard facing Ocean View.
Several shops, as well as a farm stall, coffee shop and restaurant now operate there.

The van der Horst family.
J.G. van der Horst seen at the back in the striped jacket.
The interesting ship’s figureheads were lost in a fire in 1958.

Johannes Gerhardus Pieter van der HORST (1876-1950).

Well-known Cape Town attorney and secretary to Graaff’s Trust, director of Imperial Cold Storage, director of Fletcher and Cartwright and chairman of S.A. Mutual. He married the principal of Tamboerskloof School, Annie Hardman. They transformed Imhoff’s Gift into one of the show farms of the Peninsula.

The farm was originally called Slangkop, but later changed to Imhoff’s Gift. In 1743 the land was granted by Baron Gustav Wilhelm van Imhoff, Commissioner Extraordinaire of the Dutch East India Company, to Christina Diemer, the widow of Frederik Roussouw, owner of Zwaanswyk (Steenberg). A condition of the grant was that vegetables had to be grown and supplied to the VOC for their ships in False Bay at Simon’s Town. Later owners included Rocher, Hablutzel, Hugo and Kirsten.
It was Heinrich Pieter Hablutzel who sold land to Anton Benning in 1902, on which Kommetjie was established. Since 1912 it has been owned by the van der Horst family. Imhoff’s Gift gave birth to Kommetjie in 1903 and to Ocean View in 1965. Van der Horst Street was named after J.G. van der Horst.

**IMHOFF'S GIFT HOMESTEAD**

This is a U-shaped house, with plain straight-sided gables at the end of the facade, but no main gable -nor is there any sign of there ever having been one. The house contains a four-panelled louvred screen, and a curious fanlight over the front door.

There are old slave quarters, and other outbuildings.

The piers on each side of the steps leading up to the front door have been arranged to receive two ship’s figureheads, each representing a uniformed personage, half length. The origin of the one is known: it came from the Royal Albert, which was broken up in Simon’s Town Harbour, and it is said to be a likeness of the Prince Consort.

The other is said to be the Dutch Admiral Tromp - the father of the great Tromp, of the legendary broom tied to his masthead wherewith to sweep the English from the seas.

Historically, however, it was the great Tromp’s son who also became an Admiral, while his father did not rise beyond Commander: but whether starting its career as Commander or Admiral, the figurehead certainly ended it humbly, as jetsam picked up on Noordhoek beach.
View towards the East of Imhoff homestead facing Fish Hoek.
Sheila, mother Annie van der Horst and Joan

View from slopes of present day Ocean View, then part of Imhoff’s Gift.

Background, Wildevoelvlei and Chapman’s Peak.
STREET NAMES IN KOMMETJIE

In all, eighteen streets were named after people who made either a noteworthy contribution to the village or who were well-known community figures. Newcomers to Kommetjie often enquire as to the people after whom streets were named and what they looked like. Photographs and information are available of about fifteen of these. Pictures of Baron Van Imhoff and Lord Charles Somerset were obtained from historical records but unfortunately, no pictorial record of the widow Diemer exists.

* LORD CHARLES SOMERSET

Governor of the Cape from 1814-1827, had a shooting lodge “Honeysuckle was granted the land from near Fish Hoek to Kommetjie by Baron van Imhoff cottage” at the Kom, which was later incorporated into the Dreyer house on in 1743. It later became known as Imhoff’s Gift.

* The site of the present “Palm Villa”. 
ANTHONY FREDERIK JACOBUS BENNING (1868-1937)

The Benning family.

Standing: Anna Benning (nee Bosch), Victor:
Anton, Anthony, Inez (Mrs. Burger), Pauline (Mrs. Van der Poll).

Anton Benning was one of the first directors of the Kommetjie Estates, which owned the local area in 1902. He maintained the controlling interest until his death, when this passed to J.G. van der Horst. Benning was born in Beaufort West of Dutch parents and was a truly remarkable man. He left Marist Brothers School at the age of twelve and became apprenticed to a carpenter.

In order to gain more experience and capital, he moved about the country, working in Prince Albert, Knysna and the Johannesburg goldfields. He returned to Cape Town at the age of nineteen to open up a business as a Master Builder and Contractor in Long Street. His best known building is the Supreme Court in Queen Victoria Street, completed in 1914.

In due course Benning entered public life, becoming a founder member of Nasionale Pers, the Afrikaanse Handelshuis and Sanlam, of which he was a director. While serving on the Cape Town City Council as chairman of the Waterworks Committee, he foresaw the need for the Wemmershoek Scheme and for the development of Table Bay harbour, “The Benning Foreshore Scheme”.

In his will, this self-made man made provision in the Benning Trust for bursaries for needy children to enable them to matriculate.
As it appears today, one of the first four houses in Kommetjie, built for the Benning family.

THE TEUBES FAMILY *(circa 1910)*

The dresses worn by the girls were made from the material which washed ashore from a ship, wrecked off the Kommetjie coast.

*From left to right: Kathleen, Mr. Kenne Teubes, Lenore, Mrs. Frances Teubes, J.H. (Chap) Teubes*

*Front: Eudore and Reenen*
The Teubes house today.

KENNE NICHOLAS TEUBES (1872-1963)

K.N. Teubes, Government Surveyor and his friends Anton Benning, Ernst Seeliger and Joseph Rubbi were amongst the first to buy plots in Kommetjie in 1904. The Teubes home, on the corner of van der Horst and Beach Roads was one of the first four houses designed by Ernst Seeliger and built by Joseph Rubbi. Kenne studied at the South African College in Cape Town for a B.A. surveyor’s degree. He married Frances van Reenen.

The family had a governess, Miss Kleyn, who taught the children in their home in Kommetjie. When the Slangkop school was established, she became the principal from 1913-1919.

JOHANN CARL ERNST SEELIGER (1863-1938)

Ernst Seeliger was born in Cape Town in 1863, one of nine children. After a rather erratic period of schooling, he qualified as a carpenter and signed up on a ship to work his passage to Europe, hoping to study and realize his dream of becoming an architect. His penchant for design and practical work compensated for his modest schooling and stood him in good stead when it came to examinations.
He qualified as an architect in Berlin in 1889 (the first South African architect of note). The following year, on his return from Berlin, he set up his practice in Cape Town. The Seeliger family were very actively involved in all aspects of church work and worship, thus it was inevitable that they should meet a young teacher, Anna Fischer, who had arrived from Stuttgart, Germany. She and Ernst were married in 1894. He took his bride to his newly constructed home in Camp Street where they brought up six children, Joachim, Hiltrude, Use, Ann, Laura and Ursula. Ann recalled how they all enjoyed their excursions to Kommetjie and their holiday home “Lorelei”.

![Image of Ann Seeliger](image_url)

**Ann Seeliger, a beloved resident of the village her whole life, breathed her last sitting on the stoep overlooking her favourite view, the Kom.**

Ernst worked with many fine architects such as Herbert Baker, John Parker, H. Rowe-Rowe and F. Cherry in designing some of Cape Town’s fine buildings, giving the city the character which it largely still has today.

Examples are “Die Burger Newspaper Building” and the old Technical College in Buitenkant Street. He also designed prominent homes, probably the best known being the “Hohenhort” in Constantia in 1907.

Professionally he was active throughout the Colony, having designed an hotel in De Aar, training college in Robertson, a Town Hall in Somerset Strand and the Paul Weiss-Haus (later to be commemorated on a stamp) in Luderitz, Namibia. It was he who drew the plans for the Kommetjie Christian Church as well as the four original stone houses, one of which he kept for himself, calling it “Lorelei”.

Ernst Seeliger was a member of the Institute of Architects for 49 years, a period that saw great changes in his profession. Ann Seeliger recalled her father studying the “new” invention of reinforced concrete, which presented new challenges for him. Architects have long been said to leave their mark more than most and Ernst Seeliger amply fills that role.
The Seeliger house “Lorelei” as it is today.

JOSEPH RUBBI (1873-1946)

Joseph Rubbi was born in a village near Padua, Italy in 1873. In 1889 he left his country of birth to seek a new life and better prospects, eventually arriving in South Africa. He worked on the mines in the Transvaal until 1895 and then moved to Cape Town.

A carpenter by trade, he saw great prospects in building and construction, soon becoming one of the leading constructors in the city. The first major job which he undertook was the building of the Salesian Institute in Somerset Road, also the Old Mutual “sky-scraper” in Darling St.

On a visit back to Italy, he married his childhood sweetheart, Ines Mattiello. They returned to Cape Town where they spent the rest of their lives. Joseph had made friends with Ernst Seeliger, Anton Benning and Kenne Teubes, for whom he built the first four houses in Kommetjie on the beachfront, designed by Ernst Seeliger and constructed from Table Mountain Sandstone. The plots were bought from another mutual friend, Johannes van der Horst.
The Rubbi couple came to Kommetjie whenever they could get away from the city; it became their second home. Joseph delighted in his mountain walks and the view, while Ines loved her horses. When Joseph died, Ines chose a site for his grave on the slopes of Slangkop, from where one can see the splendid views he had so much admired.

“Tamarisk”, the Rubbi house as it is today.

WILLEM HENDRIK KIRSTEN (1875-1951)

Willie and his wife, Annie, came from the Zilvermyn farm (Kirsten farm) to Kommetjie. He bought the boarding house and shop in 1911 from Gustav Lund, who had owned it since 1905. In the early years of Kommetjie, the boardinghouse became very popular as it was the only residential
accommodation for holiday makers. Later it was used by the crews who built the lighthouse and by the personnel from the wireless station. Famous guests included Gen. Jan Smuts and the historian Prof. Eric Walker.

With the assistance of Willie and Gert van der Poll, Willie built the first gravel road from Kommetjie to Sunnydale, planting the flowering gums along the way and constructing the bridge over the Bokramspruit. In about 1920, he sold the business to Adolf Napparel, who eventually built the hotel where the Stepping Stones Clinic now stands.

![The Kirsten boarding house.](image)

**Izak and Magrieta (Collins) de Villiers. (1870-1946)**

Izak and his brother James were both vegetable and stock farmers in the Sunnydale area at the turn of the 20th century. Izak moved to Kommetjie and started vegetable farming in the area between Imhoff Rd and the place where the lighthouse was later built.

Besides supplying the local area, he also delivered produce to ships in Simon’s Town. He built “Bergzicht” in Lighthouse Road, which has hardly changed over the years. He also owned and occupied the house presently used as a pre-primary school, opposite the Post Office. Izak was the
father of Annie Collins of Rubbi Road and Mrs Babes Calder who lived on the corner of Kirsten and Teubes Rds.

JAMES WILLIAM SEALE DE VILLIERS (1874-1969).
After farming at Klein Drakenstein and Koelenhof, he and his wife Sannie (Bosnian) retired to Kommetjie before 1940 and built “Sunkist” at the bottom of Protea Road.

JAN PETRUS JOHANN DE VILLIERS (1903 - 1976),
son of James, built “Homely” on the corner of Lighthouse and Protea Roads.
He was the father of James de Villiers, who currently lives in Dreyer Rd.

THE FORSYTH FAMILY

Back: Geoffrey, Dorothy (Caine), Eileen (Hepworth) and Molly (Neville).
Front: Robert Lane, Dr. Forsyth, Marjory (Forbes), Mrs. Marie Forsyth and Lionel.
DR. ROBERT FORSYTH (1866-1958)

The owner of “Blueberry Cottage”, built by Anton Benning before World War II. Dr. Forsyth was the member of Parliament for the Labour Party in the Gardens during the 1920’s and frequently hosted his parliamentary friends at the cottage. He encouraged development in Kommetjie and became the Chairman of the local Ratepayer’s association.

An early view of “Blueberry Cottage”

JACOB DANIELS (1900-1983)

Jacob Daniels was born in Noordhoek, but moved to Kommetjie with Jan de Villiers, who farmed vegetables along the Bokramspruit. He was employed by Kommetjie Estates as the local water bailiff, to maintain the windmills and later the electric pump which supplied Kommetjie’s reticulated water.

The Estates built a house for him in Jacob Avenue, where he and his wife raised their eleven children. He farmed vegetables where the Beachcomber development now stands and also became the beach supervisor from the Bokramspruit to Klein Slangkop and beyond. In about 1970 under the
Group Areas Act, he and his family had to move to Ocean View, where he continued to farm successfully with vegetables on land granted to him by Junior van der Horst. Most of his descendants still live there today.

Herbert James Huskisson (1877-1958)

He and his brother Shuckbrough owned land at the sea end of Disa and Protea Avenues. Since the early years of Kommetjie, the Huskisson family of Noordhoek camped out at the Kom during the long summer holidays. They were descendants of Joseph Huskisson who farmed in Noordhoek. The sons, Herbert James and Shuckbrough Corbett were the first to own property in Kommetjie. Huskisson descendants still living here include brothers Eddie and Des, Rykie Brink, Jeanette Wynne, Des Froud, Elizabeth Cloete and Yvonne Kruger.
SHUCKBROUGH CORBETT HUSKISSION (1870-1951)

JOHANNES FREDERICK DREYER

The Dreyer Family lived in the house “Buitenzorg”, situated on the Kom where “Palm Villa” now stands. Johannes was passionately fond of horses, which he kept in Kommetjie.

THE DREYER HOUSE,
which incorporated the Somerset hunting lodge.
“PALM VILLA”,
owned by Gea Smith (van der Poll), built on the site where the Dreyer house was demolished.

SOMERSET’S HUNTING LODGE
Once Simon’s Town became the officially recognised harbour for the fleet during the winter months, the Governors spent more time there. One of their favourite amusements was hunting and Lord Charles Somerset built a small shooting box or “Lodge” above the Kom.

SERVAAS DANIEL MAREE (1887-1979)

Together with his wife Hettie and daughter, Yvonne.
Servaas came from Villiersdorp and worked at the Slangkop Wireless Station as a Morse code expert. During World War I Fasie had Momento built in Dreyer Avenue, still there today. There are two sons, Rene (Constantia) and Marcel (Helderberg).

**WILLIAM HENRY OSBORNE (1879-1947)**

He was born in England and emigrated to South Africa in 1902. He married Julia de Villiers and worked for the Post Office in Cape Town. They retired to Kommetjie before World War II. During the war, he assisted in guarding the lighthouse and Wireless Station. Their home, which stood near the top of Osborne Road, was burned down. They then moved to Lighthouse Road.

**HENNIE (JAN HENDRIK) MAREE (1897-1958)**

*Hennie (Jan Hendrik Frouenvelder Kleyn) Maree,*

*brother of Servaas and owner of the garage and bus service between Kommetjie and Fish Hoek.*

Hennie and “Babes” (Johanna Dorothea Christina de Villiers) owned a shop at the corner of Huskisson Road and Somerset Way (the present pre-primary school). After Hennie’s death, Babes
remarried George Calder and continued running the shop also catering for Ocean View which had no shops at that time.

She passed away in October 2001 at age 92. Of the Maree children Cecilia, Elizabeth, Henri and Macdalene (Fairy), the latter two still live in Kommetjie.

THE VAN DER POLL FAMILY

Standing: Gerhardus (Gert), Jacobus (Koos) and Bernardus.
Seated: Willie, Bertha (Mrs Zoutendyk), Millie (Mrs de Villiers) and Izak.

This well-known family in the Fish Hoek valley (and later in Kommetjie) had their origins at Zilwermyn Farm where their father, Gerhardus Willem van der Poll (1867-1932) was born. He married Maria Wilhelmina Petronella de Villiers of the “Dassenberg” farm in Noordhoek. They became owners of the farm “Brakkloof”, where the first brickworks preceded the present Serena Kaolin factory.

The last van der Polls to own the brickworks were his son Bernard and grandson Karlheinz. Gerhardus, with Willie Kirsten, his step-brother, contracted and built the first road to Kommetjie from Sunnydale, lining it with flowering Blue Gum trees. In the early days of Kommetjie, the van der Poll family frequented the south side of the Kom, where they camped and picnicked. The descendants of Bernard, Karlheinz and his sister Gea Smith of “Palm Villa”, still live at the sea end of Dreyer Road. Izak owned a cottage near the junction of Forsyth and Benning Roads which became engulfed by the sand dunes.

Between 1911 and 1913 Minnie van der Poll was the second teacher, after Alice Seabrook, at Slangkop Public School, where her brothers Koos and Bernard also enrolled as pupils. Later Willie became the first male principal in 1938. Izak also became a teacher and ended his career as deputy-principal of Simon’s Town Secondary School.
“Bill” Andrew began his career as a Morse Code expert at the Slangkop radio station in 1911 and continued to “operate” until his retirement in 1956, at the age of 70, after 45 years of “sparking”. His house stood in the triangle of Lighthouse and Kommetjie Road, but was demolished when the Kommetjie Road was widened.

*With his wife Alice and daughter Eileen, circa 1915.*

**THE VILLAGE GIRLS IN THEIR SUNDAY BEST ON THE BEACH**

*(Kommetjie circa 1915)*

*Gertuida Roussouw, Kathleen, Magdalena Roussouw, Kathleen Eudore, Doris, Emma, Unknown, Francis Kirsten, Teubes, Loxton deVilliers, Visitor, (Tinkie)*
“The 4 houses on the beach front of Messrs Seeliger, Rubbi, Benning & Teubes, as photographed from the rear in 1905.” (Extract from Kommetjie CP - A Conspectus by John Midgley)

In 1904 Ernst Seeliger, an architect, and 3 of his friends, viz Anton Benning & Joseph Rubbi - both leading builders in the City - and Kenne Teubes, the Govt Surveyor, were among the first to buy plots in Kommetjie.

Corrugated iron building was Lund’s shop.
Left - boarding house (circa 1912 )

WRECKS AROUND KOMMETJIE

The remains of the Kakapo circa 1950.
The first wreck that comes to mind is that of the Kakapo, which steamed full ahead up onto Noordhoek beach in May 1900, the crew thinking that they had rounded Cape Point. The crew did not even have to lower boats, but merely walked up the beach. The boiler, a few hull ribs and the rudder post sticking up out of the sand are the only reminders of this major navigational error.

In 1905, the Clan Monroe went aground on the rocks off Kommetjie at a point near the position of the present lighthouse. Fortunately, there was no loss of life at the time of the disaster, but it is believed that one of the crew later lost his life during the salvage operations. His grave was discovered on a “koppie” just below a point where the lighthouse now stands.

The warning “maroon” or rocket which alerted those in the area of the shipwreck and a lifebelt from the Clan Monroe are now on display at Slangkop Lighthouse. In 1909, the SS Maori went up on the rocks off Danger Point.

One of the lifeboats was rowed across the bay towards Kommetjie, but was swamped in the surf near the mouth of the Bokramspruit. The lifeboat carried sixteen persons, of whom six were drowned. Two other bodies were later washed up on the beach and were buried on the “koppie” next to the victim of the Clan Monroe disaster. The other bodies were never recovered.

In September 1909, the SS Umhlali was wrecked on Albatross Rock, the only recorded fatality being a baby who was washed out of its mother’s arms. The Kommetjie shore was littered with flotsam.

Ann Seeliger told us that as young children they ran into the surf to scoop out thousands of candles that were floating there. One of the contributing factors of the building of the Slangkop Lighthouse was the proximity of Albatross Rock, so named after the SS Albatross which foundered there in 1863. Eleven ships were wrecked there from 1786 to 1865.
The 5371 ton, Shaw Savill and Albion liner, Maori left Table Bay during an August storm in 1909, bound for New Zealand. There were 53 men on board. The vessel made its way down the coast towards Cape Point. Visibility was near impossible and just after midnight, the Maori slammed into the rocks that lurk just beneath the surface at Duiker Point. Her hull was torn open and twisted so that she faced towards the open sea, her poop deck just a stone’s throw from the massive boulders on the shores of the Karbonkelberg. The master ordered the lifeboats out and men clambered for safety where they could. Three boats got away that night, two of them were lost. Some of the men in the third boat made it to safety.

The men made their way to the farm of Mr Bester at Slangkop. When the news of the wreck of the Maori reached Hout Bay, a fisherman and his son climbed along the treacherous coast to reach Duiker Point, and it must have been after dark when they reached the site of the wreck. At first they could not see any signs of life on the Maori, but after making a fire for warmth, saw a flicker of light from the Maori and realised that the men were in grave danger. The fisherman immediately sent his son back to Hout Bay for help.

The Maori was fast upon the rocks, enormous waves crashed over the vessel. The foremost came up vertically, out of the swell further out to sea, on the mast was the figure of a man. More men could be seen on the high portions of the poop deck. It was quite obvious to the fishermen that any man attempting to cross the water to safety would die. They had a hand line with them and after many attempts were able to get this across the bows of the ship. A safety rope was soon rigged from ship to shore. As the waves bore down upon the vessel and the rocks beside the shore, the first two men made it to the waiting fishermen, the third lost in the raging swell, never to be seen again.

It is interesting to note the communication system that was established between the rescuers at Duiker Point. Naval volunteers were posted along the route from the wreck to Hout Bay, to pass the news from person to person. The postmistress kept a vigil at the telephone line, passing on whatever news there was, to the authorities in Cape Town and played an important role in removing the
suspense that prevailed over the city and suburbs and indeed throughout South Africa, and by means of this communication, the first cable message was dispatched to England, where the relatives of the men were awaiting tidings.

*Extracts from the “The Wreck of the Maori” by Roger L Melvill, The Cape Chronicle*

**THE KAKAPO**

In the early 60’s she enjoyed one final moment of glory, when the producer of the film “Ryan’s Daughter” decided to shoot some sections of the film on the Noordhoek beach and dressed her up for the occasion. By touching up the sides and adding a funnel of paper mache, she was made to look like a ship that had just gone aground, and so she was left until wind and weather took their toll once more.

![The Kakapo, shortly after beaching on Long Beach in May 1900.](image)

The “Kakapo” was on her maiden voyage from England to Australia, when she stopped in Cape Town for coal and was then caught in a North-Westerly gales while rounding Danger Point. There seems to be no explanation as to why she drifted onto the sand on Noordhoek beach on 26 May 1900.

The “happening” being referred to as mysterious, since the Captain refused to comment. We were told that he had mistaken Danger Point for Cape Point and thus made too early a turn, but whether that was only hearsay, I cannot tell. *(Extract from Ann Seeliger’s story of Kommetjie).*
THE S.S. CLAN MONROE

The seas can be dangerously high and rough along this coast, especially around Slangkop Point (where the lighthouse now stands) and Danger Point, across the bay. During the winter months when the North-West wind often blows at gale force, several ships were wrecked before the lighthouse was built and eventually came into use.

The first of these wrecks in our time, was the “Clan Monroe”, the remains of which are often still searched for trophies by amateur divers. She ran aground in July 1905 and settled on the shelf of rocks just below where the lighthouse now stands.

The ship sat high and dry on the rock shelf for several years before it finally sank. At first, virtually the whole ship was visible at low tide, more and more of it disappearing underwater as the tide rose. We used it as a rough tide table, no such sophisticated facilities being available then, least of all a daily newspaper with reports of weather and tide.

As the ship slowly sank and only the upper structures remained visible, the amount of the “black box” we could see at a distance at any particular time, indicated the state of the tide. (Extract from Ann Seeliger’s story of Kommetjie)
SLANGKOP LIGHTHOUSE

The Slangkop Lighthouse just after completion.

Slangkop lighthouse was erected in 1914, just before World War I, but owing to the hostilities, was not commissioned until afterwards in 1919.

The lighthouse is reputed to be the tallest tower of its kind on the South African coast, at 134 feet above sea level. It is the only cast iron lighthouse in South Africa, each casing segment weighing about 500kg.

They are riveted together to make up the tower. The actual light, (about 16 million candle power), is visible for a distance of 33 miles to seaward and guards a very dangerous stretch of coastline between Cape Town and Cape Point. The cost to the Cape Colony in building the lighthouse amounted to fourteen thousand, three hundred and fifty eight pounds, nine shillings and one penny.

The Slangkop Lighthouse today.
The Kom, viewed as it appears today, with Lighthouse Road on the right and the Sea Fisheries office (old Wireless station) in the foreground, taken from the lighthouse platform.

Peter Dennett, the lighthouse keeper, pictured here atop the tower.

Blockhouse built for the defence of the Radio Station during World War I.
In November 2000, the lamps in the Slangkop Lighthouse were changed from incandescent to metal halogen and the resultant colour of the beam changed from yellow to white. While this had very little effect on the range of the light, the beam has a more penetrative effect in bad weather, sea mist and fog. The main reason for the change is economy, incandescent elements costing some R400 and lasting three months, as opposed to the halogen elements which cost R150 each and last for up to two years.

The current official responsible for the lighthouse, Peter Dennett, is the son of the previous proprietor of the Kommetjie garage. The view taken from the platform after a climb of 145 steps up a spiral staircase and five landings within the tower, is spectacular and affords tourists a unique opportunity to see a special part of the Peninsula.

Radio Station as seen through the window in the Lighthouse.

KOMMETJIE RADIO STATION

Slangkop Wireless Station.

The radio station was built by Anton Benning for the G.P.O. in 1911. Before World War I, because of concern about its defence, it was suggested that the masts, (since dismantled), be surrounded by
electrified wires carrying 20,000 volts to protect them against enemy action. This was not carried out, there being too many practical difficulties, as pointed out by Captain C. S. Ackermann, R.E. to the Under Secretary of Defence at Cape Town in 1911. At the same time, he suggested building a blockhouse to defend the main buildings, still to be seen on one side of the station.

In 1913, the end of what is now Lighthouse Road was given a small curve, to allow a barbed wire fence to be entangled around the base of the mast on the mountain side of the station. During the First World War, Slangkop Radio (G.P.O. Station), was also used by the Naval C. in C. for the South Atlantic Navy Command.

After the First World War, the radio station was moved from its site at Slangkop Head, to a position about two km South East, on what is now Wireless Road. This move was necessitated by poor reception under the Slangkop Mountain, caused by the presence of manganese deposits. The wireless station remained in Wireless Road throughout World War II, the Royal Navy working together with the G.P.O. until 1960, after which the Royal Naval personnel were replaced by operators from the South African Navy. At this time, the G.P.O. equipment and personnel moved to Milnerton.

![Wireless Station staff quarters](image)

**KOMMETJIE DURING WW II**

![The remains of the radar and observation post on Slangkop.](image)
An army observation post was established at Slangkop during 1942, known as U.D.E.S. Cobra (Union Defence Experimental Station). The post was intended for visual observation and as a radar post for air and sea surveillance. It was a vital link in the chain of coastal defence between Karbonkelberg (Fort Collins) and Rooikrans near Cape Point. At that time, there was no road on Slangkop, so all of the building material and provisions were transported by cableway due to the steepness of the Slangkop slopes.

There were two minesweepers, namely the H.M.S.A.S. Kommetjie and H.M.S.A.S. Imhoff, which saw wartime service. Because there were very few residents in Kommetjie at that time, these ships were adopted by the S.A.W.A.S. (South African Women’s Auxiliary Service) as was the custom for wartime ships. The “Kommetjie” was adopted by S.A.W.A.S. Palapye (Botswana) and the “Imhoff” by S.A.W.A.S. Parys. Palapye was then in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

H.M.S.A.S. Kommetjie was built in Oslo, Norway in 1930 as a whale catcher for Irvin and Johnson and was converted to minesweeping duties in 1940. “Kommetjie” was laid up in 1944 and reverted to whaling in Durban in 1946. She carried out coastal whaling for more than fifteen years before being sold for scrap in 1961, after more than thirty years service.

**COBRA BATTERY**

One of our late residents, Dorothy Caine (nee Forsyth), was the first person to drive up to the Cobra Battery. During W.W. II, when she was a driver with the WAAS, her commanding officer gave orders for a Bedford truck full of furniture to be delivered to the battery.

Mrs. Caine, not knowing that the men normally pulled everything up to the battery from the road by ropes and pulleys, drove up the track from the Ocean View side of the mountain and delivered the furniture to the door. As it was New Year’s Day, the soldiers immediately offered her a brandy, but she thought it wise to refuse as she had to drive back down the mountain, which was a lot harder than the ascent.

*The shell of the lookout and radar platform at Slangkop.*
KOMMETJIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The doors of the first school in Kommetjie opened in March 1908. The actual location of the first school is not known, only that one of the buildings on Imhoff’s Gift farm was used. The first teacher was Alice Seabrook, who enrolled eleven pupils, all in the sub-standards. In 1922, a building was constructed across the road from the entrance to the farm and became the new Slangkop school. In 1960 the pupils were transferred to new premises in Kommetjie itself. After a series of principals, Mr. Ben Coetzee became the principal in 1982. At that time there were only thirty two pupils and three staff members.

During Mr. Coetzee’s tenure as principal, many improvements were made. Six prefabricated classrooms, a new media centre and a computer centre with ten computers were added. Also the sports grounds were re-developed. In September 1996 Mr. Coetzee retired from teaching, leaving two hundred and eight pupils, eight teachers, a secretary and three general workers. Mr. Adriaan de Waal, the new principal has continued the improvements started by his predecessor, with new
administration offices, tuckshop, staffroom, changing rooms, showers and a new entrance to the school, linking it to the Community Hall, all paid for out of the school funds.

KOMMETJIE LIBRARY

De Villiers’ shop, later Post Office and Library.

The first librarian was Mrs. Chamberlain and on her retirement in 1959, Mrs. Dorothy Caine took over, moving to the new library when that was built. She began on a voluntary basis, driving to Cape Town once a week to collect new books. Later she received a sum of three pounds for her services. The new Kommetjie Library in Somerset Way was built in 1971.

On Dorothy’s retirement in 1979, she was succeeded by Doreen Anderson and Anthea Hopley. Today the library boasts a chief librarian, Jane Grieve, librarians Joy Broad, Lilac Loubser, Dorothy Owen and Glynis Craemer.

In 1998 two wings were added to the library due largely to the efforts of a very active “Friends of the Library” group, ably led by Denise Joubert. The architect responsible, Suzi du Toit, carried out Roelof Uytenbogaardt’s original ideas after his death. The extended library’s frontage was enhanced by a project of the “Friends” to have the garden landscaped by Jean Nuttall on a voluntary basis.

Seats were donated by the architect who designed the building extensions. The new library is a far cry from its humble beginnings in de Villiers’ shop and reflects credit on the tireless efforts of the people of Kommetjie who support this wonderful amenity.

This view shows the indigenous gardens landscaped by Jean Nuttall, where functions are held.
PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Pre-Primary school today.

Before being the pre-primary school, this building was the de Villiers shop, after which it became the post office and library. The pre-primary school has been operating for about twelve years now, started by Mrs Archer who was an ex-primary school teacher. The present teacher, Stella New, has been there for seven years and caters for approximately sixty children.

KOMMETJIE POSTAL SERVICE

The “Post House”.

One of the first buildings in Kommetjie, Gustav Lund’s shop, served as a post office in the early years although it is not known what other services were provided at that time. The de Villiers shop later became host to a postal agency capable of handling mail only. The nearest Post Office was in Kalk Bay and their mail car visited Kommetjie bi-weekly in winter and tri-weekly in summer.

After W.W. II, the first real government Post Office was built just across the street and served its purpose until August 1996, when it was closed again by the authorities as part of a national rationalization program. The building, by then already sold to private enterprise, had become known as the “Post House” housing various businesses.

In order to continue the much required postal services, a postal agency was again introduced and so the wheel has turned back to the humble beginnings except that today the Kommetjie Post Shoppe offers much more than just handling the mail two or three times a week. The establishment is ably run by Rene Theron and his son, Sarel.
The Kommetjie Hotel in the early days.

The first building in Kommetjie, apart from Lord Somerset’s shooting box, was owned by Gustav Lund. He came to Kommetjie in 1905 from the old Orange Free State after the Anglo-Boer War.

His shop, post office and bakery stood on the site of the present Swan Lodge, and later became a board-and-lodging establishment. Lund and his assistant, Peter de Kock, had to obtain their supplies by bicycle from Kalk Bay, as Fish Hoek had few shops in those days.

In 1911 Willem Kirsten took over the Boarding House, where a number of the wireless station personnel stayed. Willie and his wife Annie successfully ran the boarding house until 1921, when Adolf Napparel bought it.

He had previously owned the Wiener Bakery in Cape Town. Napparel demolished the old building and with Ernst Seeliger as architect, erected a residential hotel, the present Swan Lodge, with a bakery behind it.

This was later taken over by the Compass bakery. When Napparel applied for a liquor licence for his residential hotel, he found that there was a restriction against such a licence being granted on the site. On the advice of General Smuts, he opted to build a new hotel on the opposite side of the road, using Ernst Seeliger once again as architect. This Kommetjie Hotel remained in use managed by a Mr. Steindl and later Mr. Engelke. The present owner, Mr D Delbridge, bought the hotel in 1993 and in
1998 agreed to the premises being used as the Stepping Stones Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre.

In the 1950’s Swan Lodge was still being used as a boarding house, run by a Mrs. Stanford, after which it was sold by auction. Mr. and Mrs. Jos Engelbrecht, (he a retired policeman and she a social worker) bought the building and it became an old-age home for destitute people.

It is thought that the bakery was taken over by a Mr. Tuzee, and Swan Lodge was again turned into a residential hotel run by a Mrs. Daniels. The present owner, Pierre Oosthuizen, bought the complex in 1971 and still offers holiday accommodation for visitors.

**STEPPING STONES** is a unique centre situated in Kommetjie. It is headed by psychologist Peter Powis and senior addiction counsellor, Carry Bekker. Peter Powis is a well-known clinical psychologist who was also director of the Cape Town Drug Counselling Centre.

Carry Bekker started the first Minnesota Model inpatient programme in South Africa over 5 years ago. They are assisted by a multi-disciplinary team of addition counsellors and others who have specialised in the field.

Stepping Stones offers a truly international programme and has attracted patients from Canada, USA, Europe and the Far East, as well as Africa.

The beauty of the setting next to the sea and below the mountains adds a dimension which facilitates healing on the physical, psychological and spiritual levels through meditation, relaxation and physical exercise.

“**TAKA-TAKA**”, now a fully licensed, authentic Greek Restaurant, offering a variety of dishes and even the sage tea and Greek coffee imported from Greece. George & Gloria Gavanellis and their 3 children arrived in Kommetjie in 1985 and started Papados Superette, the name being taken from the village of Papados in Greece, where George was born.
While George was managing the Greek Club in Cape Town in 1994, his son Stratis opened the Taka-Taka Coffee Shop, until his father took over once more and expanded the restaurant.

**COMFORT ZONE COFFEE LOUNGE**

-a popular meeting place for residents, run by Trish van der Berg.

**FISHERMAN’S PUB** - a favourite watering hole for many local fishermen, especially during the “open” Crayfish Season (Nov-May).
In 1946 Joseph Rubbi, one of the founders of Kommetjie, died, having expressed a wish to be buried at Kommetjie - on the high, as he put it. His wife sought the permission of J.G. van der Horst, owner of the farm and long standing friend of Joseph, to inter his body on the slopes of Slangkop near the rock which had been his favourite spot for years.

Ines, his wife, decided to have a vault erected to house her husband’s remains and purchased an area surrounding the grave, measuring 190 by 150 feet. An underground vault was built by the Rubbi Building Company, now owned by Rubbi’s nephew. As the vault could not be seen from ground level, Ines had an elaborate tomb erected over it. It comprised three terraces of Table Mountain Sandstone and cost, even in those days, some ten thousand pounds to complete.

After the tomb was completed, Ines decided to have a chapel built on the property in memory of her husband. A Yugoslav architect was commissioned to design the chapel. His original concept did not include a bell tower and when Ines returned from a visit to Italy, having bought three bells, a tower had to be added to the incomplete building.

As a result, the tower is too tall and narrow, so the bells could not be properly installed or rung simultaneously. In any event, they had been poorly cast and were below standard. They were replaced by a single bell of good quality, cast in Holland in 1985.

Many of the interior decorations of the chapel are made from imported Italian marble and were set in place by an Italian especially brought in for the task. The mosaic of the Madonna and Child on the right hand wall originally adorned the wall of Ines Rubbi’s bedroom. The art was done by a student of the school of Andrea del Sarto (Florence 1486-1530) and James Eddie of Plumstead.

The text on the exterior of the front wall reads “Christo Resurgenti et divo Joseph D”. (dedicated to the rising Christ and St. Joseph). The chapel was officially opened on 15th May 1948, but for many years it was only used during the summer holidays when Ines was, able to bring a priest from Cape Town to say Mass for holiday makers.

An early view from Slangkop of the St. Joseph Chapel.

ST. NORBERT’S CATHOLIC CHURCH

In 1996, Fr. Smeets (12/6/1922-26/2/2001; l) and Br. Scheepers (r) retired to the Norbertine House in Worcester where Br. Scheepers is apparently still busy doing building maintenance.

In 1964 Fr. V.W. Smeets arrived in Kommetjie from Belgium to establish a Priory. He was accommodated by Mrs. Binedell in Protea Road until the priory was built in 1967/68. Fr Smeets and Brother Norbert Scheepers started the project, the latter being the builder. As the son of a builder in George, Brother had learned all aspects of the trade.

The first wing of the Priory was completed in 1968. As Kommetjie grew, so did the congregation, thus a new church was planned. The Archdiocese of Cape Town purchased ground behind and in front of the chapel, making provision for a larger church in the future. In 1968 the people of Glencairn and Simon’s Town were moved under the Group Areas Act to Ocean View (previously known as Slangkop). By 1970 Br. Norbert had built a church dedicated to St. Andrew for the Ocean View community.

The seemingly tireless Brother started the foundations for the new church in Kommetjie in 1986, the main building to be undertaken the following year. The massive Rubbi tomb was dismantled with the family’s permission. The sandstone from the terraces was used to erect the new church, comprising an ablution block and Columbarium at ground level and sacristy and church hall on the first floor with the church itself above that. The whole edifice was built over the Rubbi grave. The vault with its
two coffins remains intact; the main tombstone was incorporated into the back wall of the church above the Rubbi resting place. Br. Scheepers, assisted by one labourer, Wilson, and later by Joseph Mhlala, completed the church after four years of hard work, every brick, stone and tile put in place by hand.

The church was solemnly blessed by the Superior General of the Norbertine Order on 6th January 1991. In 1984 another priest, Fr. Kavelaars, who had come to South Africa with Fr. Smeets, joined the priory at Kommetjie and took over the duties in Ocean View and to this day still serves the community there.

THE KOMMETJIE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In 1911 the wireless station was built in Lighthouse Road. This brought the first salaried workers to Kommetjie. Soon, some of these men got married and one of them, Fasie Maree, seeing the families growing up, organized regular monthly visits by the Ministers from the Dutch Reformed Churches in Kalk Bay or Simon’s Town. Services were conducted at first in the Maree’s home by these ministers, Mr. M.L. de Villiers, the composer of “Die Stem”, being one of them. The congregation gradually became so large that more space for these services was needed. In the 1920s Mr. J.G. van der Horst provided a site above the Kom for a small church, the present Kommetjie Christian Church. Ernst Seeliger was once again approached to be the architect for yet another of Kommetjie’s buildings. The inauguration took place on 5th September 1925. When Fish Hoek developed sufficiently to establish its own Dutch Reformed Church, the Kommetjie building fell into disuse and stood empty for a long time. Mr. van der Horst offered to sell the premises to the Dutch Reformed Church but the offer was turned down.

It was sold to the Voortrekker Youth Movement for use as a training centre and was utilized for several years. In about 1960, the Kommetjie Christian Fellowship, who had been holding their Sunday School services in various homes (including Dr. Forsyth’s and the basement of Mrs. van der Poll’s house) acquired the building for use as an Interdenominational Church. Services were organized by the Bible Institute at Kalk Bay and the first full time minister was Dr. Rigby, succeeded by Don Nell, Emile Wolfaardt and presently Pastor Mike Lombard.
KOMMETJIE DISASTER MANAGEMENT VOLUNTEER CORPS

In 1992, at the local Ratepayers Association AGM, it was identified that there was a serious need for some kind of emergency service capability in Kommetjie, because of its geographical position. Mr. Pat Davis was given the task of initially organizing the formulation of a volunteer fire unit. After two meetings, with the Western Cape Regional Services Civil Protection Corps officials in attendance, fourteen civic-minded people volunteered to join “Kommetjie Fire”.

In September 1992 the Chief of the Regional Services Fire Department, Mr. Pete Harries, presented the “Kommetjie Fire” with a 4x4 Isuzu LDV fitted with a 500 litre tank and a high pressure pump “Fyre-Fyter” unit. The vehicle also carried ten lengths of 63,5mm hose, a standpipe and a branch. By December

1999, this unit had travelled 132 000 km on fire and rescue tasks. These included: The Sun Valley-Noordhoek fire in 1993, Capri in 1994, the Franschhoek fire, the Helderberg Fire (teams were dropped on the mountain by helicopter), Elsies Peak fire and the subsequent mud slides, the oil spill at the refinery in Glencairn, the hurricane through Manenburg and most recently, the Great Peninsula fire early in 2000.

The Corps currently has fourteen members trained in fire fighting and first aid. We also boast 3 BAA’s (Basic Ambulance Attendants) who also do duty on the EMS ambulance based at False Bay Hospital. We also have a very efficient Care and Comfort section of ten members who look after our needs in an emergency, assist people displaced by disaster and of course organise our fund raising.
THE KOMMETJIE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS GROUP

The KEAG office at Imhoff’s Gift.

Popularly known as KEAG, this worthwhile and important venture was started by Jenni Trethowan and Wally Petersen in October 1991 as a result of an emotional public debate pertaining to the baboon problem in and around Kommetjie. We are indeed indebted to both of them for their unflagging commitment to this organization. From a small group of volunteers concerned primarily with parochial matters, KEAG quickly grew and started interacting with neighbouring communities and then moved into areas further afield.

Initial schemes such as the greening projects in Masiphumelele and Ocean View have evolved into permaculture training programmes which have nationwide relevance. Our “Food for Waste” schemes were the beginnings of a successful recycling depot. The Fynbos Restoration Project has created employment, educating hundreds of learners and importantly, has ensured that Slangkop mountain (with the exception of privately owned land) is now clear of alien invasive trees.

KEAG has played a vital role in many environmental crises such as the toxic bloom of blue-green algae in Wildevoelvlei, the saving of oil-soaked penguins and the prevention of inappropriate development on Slangkop mountain. Finally, the reason KEAG started - the baboons - well, after a long eight year struggle, the baboons gained some degree of safety when proclaimed a protected species, but the real battle was won when funding was procured to employ a team of monitors who now endeavour to keep the baboons on the mountains and out of the village and harm’s way.

Fulvio Grandin, Karin Parkin, Jenni Trethowan and Wally Petersen.
Kommetjie residents have every reason to be proud of the dedicated team at KEAG - they have gained a great degree of respect and renown as one of the most successful environmental groups in the Western Cape.

BABOON MATTERS

A detailed study funded by WWF-SA, that looked into the development of a management strategy for the protection of the Chacma Baboon on the Peninsula, determined that employing baboon monitors would be the most effective solution to keeping the baboons out of residential areas.

Since the completion of the study, baboon monitors have worked consistently in the field, following the baboons and helping to reduce baboon/human conflict by ensuring that the troops keep away from residential areas.

The Baboon Monitor Programme is managed by Thembela Jantjies. He has seven full time monitors working beneath him, two of whom have been recruited recently to work with the Da Gama Park troop.
The concept of baboon chasers is not new. Many rural communities in Africa use people to guard crops from raiding baboons. Some even erect huts for the guard to sit while on duty. However, following a baboon troop for the whole day and preventing them from getting close to the food source is a novel strategy. In residential areas baboons find more and better quality food and have a more reliable and accessible supply of water while needing to walk and forage less than in the mountains. Thus it is necessary to employ a range of methods to decrease the benefits and increase the costs of foraging in residential areas.

Monitors find baboons at their sleep site each morning and follow them on foot, often over considerable distances, until they reach their evening sleep site. When baboons attempt to approach residential areas they are prevented from doing so by the monitors forming a line in front of the troop and if necessary, running at the baboons shouting and clapping. If this is ineffective and the baboons manage to enter the residential area, they are chased out.

Monitors work in shifts, so they are present every day of the month including weekends and public holidays. They also record all attempted raiding events, all raids and where the baboons went during the day. This allows the monitors to carry out a very important research function, which is of value to organisations such as the South African National Parks.

For more information contact baboon Matters on (021) 783 3882 or email jennit@mweb.co.za or envirolink@iafrica.com

KOMMETJIE SEA FISHERIES DEPARTMENT

In 1981 Mr. J. De Witt, a Sea Fisheries Inspector, was appointed to Kommetjie. There was at that time no permanent office or base for this function in the village, so he stayed in a caravan situated on the lighthouse premises. A house was later provided in De Villiers Road, where he both worked and lived. During the season a few non-permanent inspectors were employed to assist with various duties.

The area covered from this office stretches all the way to Cape Point and includes the entire Nature Reserve. Owing to strict restrictions on abalone (perlemoen) and crayfish, and the increase in poaching activities in recent years, the staff has been increased to five permanent inspectors who, due to the hazardous nature of the work, are often assisted by the South African police.
IMHOFF CARAVAN PARK

The main entrance to Imhoff Park on Wireless Road.
OFFICIALLY OPENED. Dr. J. NEETHLING 19th July 1991

In the early 1970’s, Kommetjie Estates sold ground to the Divisional Council for the establishment of a caravan park at the end of Wireless Road. It appears that this is part of the same ground where Mr Jacob Daniels had grown his vegetables in earlier times.

The Parks and Recreational Spaces authorities, as they were previously known, built two ablution blocks, an office building and a house for the manager of the park. The first overseer of this new holiday attraction was Mr. Peter Kihn and his wife Auline, who worked hard and established a very picturesque and popular resort. In 1993 following the death of Mr. Kihn, Mr. G. Anderson and his wife Anne became the new managers. With the help of Anne’s parents, the park has maintained its high standards and popularity.

Inspector Keith Thompson
at the Sea Fisheries Dept, office at the old wireless station in Lighthouse Road.
KOMMETJIE BOAT CLUB

Fisherman and residents under the leadership of Mr. Hildrich Singe were concerned about the loss of lives at sea and the condition of some of the boats launching at Fisherman’s Beach. Most boats carried no safety equipment at all and with the number of boats increasing each year, the residents were worried about the impact this would have on the crayfish resources.

In May 1987, Mr. Singe called a meeting and those present agreed on the necessity of forming a boat club. The Kommetjie Boat Club was officially formed in July 1987, with Mr. Hildrich Singe as Chairman. Mr. Willie Maree was appointed as Safety Officer. In July 1998, the club affiliated with the Western Province Deep Sea Angling Association. Willie Maree also completed the necessary courses and was appointed as the Authorized Agent for the South African Deep Sea Angling Association. This enabled him to inspect craft for seaworthiness and gave him the authority to stop any unseaworthy craft from proceeding to sea.

An early morning launch at the Kom.

Due to the low tide, the narrow channel leading out from the launching ramp can clearly be seen in the background.
In 1989 the late Mr. John Wiley called a meeting with the Boat Club Committee. At this meeting, he advised the Club to apply officially for control of Fisherman’s Beach for conservation purposes as this was one of the Club’s aims. Because of the amount of crayfish poaching, he threatened to have the Kommetjie area declared a sanctuary should the club fail to get control. The Club then made application to lease Fisherman’s Beach from the Western Cape Regional Services Council on 24th July 1989. After much frustration and many meetings, the Minister of Local Government, Housing and Works finally approved the lease and instructed the Kommetjie Local Council to proceed with the lease on 13th December 1990. The Club is today still in control.

Willie Maree was elected as Chairman in 1992 and still holds that position. We are proud of our safety record which can be attributed to our strict control. Only a craft with a valid seaworthy certificate and a registration number is allowed to launch.

*The daily chore during the crayfish season*

*Crayfish, a wonderful harvest from our rocky coastline.*
Both young and old enjoy fishing, one of the main leisure activities.

SURFING IN KOMMETJIE
The coastline around Kommetjie provides some of the best surfing conditions in South Africa, with eleven top class surf spots concentrated in the seven kilometre stretch between Chapman’s Peak and Soetwater.

Situated on the west coast of the Peninsula, the first land mass encountered by the huge swells generated during an uninterrupted 4000 kilometre journey across the South Atlantic Ocean from Cape Horn on the southern tip of South America, the area enjoys consistent, high quality surf in environmentally pristine conditions.

First surfed in the 1950s by John Whitmore, the doyen of South African surfing, and his friends, Long Beach and the fabled Outer Kom adjacent to the Slangkop lighthouse are renowned worldwide as the venues for local, national and international surfing events.

Sunset Reef, a wedge-shaped reef lying a kilometre off Klein Slangkoppunt between Long Beach and Noordhoek Beach, provides some of the biggest rideable surf on the planet, attracting a dedicated group of big-wave surfers who revel in conditions that have seen waves over seven metres high being ridden. The beachbreaks of the Hoek, below Chapman’s Peak and the Dunes near the wreck of the Kakapo, are well-known for their hollow waves.

Fanned by the offshore south-easterly winds these breakers enable hard-core adherents to spend more time “in the tube” the ultimate surfing manoeuvre.

Thousands of surfers from all wave riding disciplines, be they bodyboarders, waveski riders, longboarders, kneeboarders or shortboarders have learned how to cope with the powerful South Atlantic swells at Long Beach, one of the most consistent surf breaks on the Peninsula. With its parking, toilet facilities and positioning in the middle of this laid-back seaside village, Long Beach is often crowded and hosts numerous contests.

The coastline changes to rugged rocks with offshore kelp beds south of Long Beach, creating reefs and points that channel the powerful swells into ideal rideable waves, such as the Outer and Inner Kom and 365’s, a break in Soetwater that is said to get 5 degrees rounder than 360 degrees. All in all, Kommetjie offers wave riders one of the world’s best surfing areas. Thank heavens for the cold water, otherwise the place would be a zoo!
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Traditional festive marchers and singers from the neighbouring Ocean View community, form part of the character of the village.

Enjoying a walk with their dogs

KOMMETJIE CRICKET CLUB

The Kommetjie Cricket Club was founded in 1938 through the energies of George Towler, together with the help of Dave Nourse, who was one of South Africa’s greatest batsmen during the early part of the century. What is strange is that a cricketer of his stature should have taken such an interest in an obscure club in a remote part of the Peninsula.

This and other questions do not seem to have been answered in the history of the club as presented to the Fish Hoek Valley Museum.
The 1938 Kommetjie CC first eleven with David Nourse wearing the cap in the back row, fourth from the right

The playing area of gravel was situated close to the Post Office and was described as “A flat area with a great many weeds and the perennial curse of the mole holes”.

The land was made available by the late Mr. J. G. van der Horst, who was invited to bowl the first delivery at the inaugural game.

Many prominent names appear in the records of visiting players who enjoyed playing at the club. Ronnie Delport, a former W.P. captain recalls a pleasant match at Kommetjie, after which a delightful ‘braai’ was enjoyed by all. The club must have been a haven of hospitality on the dull Sundays of the past.

(Extract taken from Chippy Wood’s article which appeared in the False Bay Echo of 1st July 1998.)

FAUNA IN KOMMETJIE

KOMMETJIE - A TOP NOTCH BIRDING SPOT

The greater Kommetjie area offers excellent bird-watching opportunities for both amateur and professional and over 130 species can be seen. “The Kom” is one of the best and most accessible spots on the western Cape Peninsula from which to view seabirds. All that is needed is a warm jacket and powerful binoculars or a telescope. During the winter, when the strong onshore northwesterners blow, many pelagic seabirds can be seen from the rocks. These include Black-browed, Shy and Yellow-nosed albatrosses, Northern and Southern giant petrels, White-chinned Petrels, Sooty
shearwaters and Sub-antarctic skuas. Cape gannets are always visible and at least ten rarer pelagic species have been recorded from this promontory.

The rocky coastline itself is host to a myriad of other interesting birds. All four species of marine Cormorant: Bank, Crowned, White-breasted and Cape occur and are generally seen roosting in dispersed groups close to the waterline. Kommetjie is the best place to see the Antarctic tern, which can be observed on the rocks during the winter months and, more special, the transient Arctic tern which visits in early summer. This latter species flies virtually around the globe each year, en route to and from its wintering grounds in the southern oceans.

The sandy shores are host to the endemic African black oyster catcher. These beautiful birds are under threat from dogs, horses and vehicles on the beaches and have a high conservation priority. There are in fact more Southern Right Whales than there are Oyster catchers.

Moving away from the coastline, interesting species such as the Ground woodpecker, Cape sugarbird, Orange-breasted sunbird and the occasional Black eagle and Peregrine falcon can be seen on the surrounding mountains. The nearby Wildevoelvlei is host to many wetland birds, including the Fish eagle and Lesser flamingo.

Kommetjie offers rich rewards to the patient birdwatcher. The fact that a bird such as the Arctic Tern stops over each year must certainly say something about the beauty of our area.
Regular visitors to Kommetjie are our neighbours, the baboons. Two different troops frequent the area, one of which often sleeps on the cliffs of Slangkop Mountain. These baboons are remnants of a far larger population and are amongst the real survivors remaining on the Cape Peninsula.

Sadly, an ever-shrinking natural environment has meant that there are virtually no baboons left on the Cape Peninsula that do not come into contact with humans on a daily basis. This has led to a number of very unsavoury incidents in the past, with entire troops being exterminated and many individual animals being shot and killed.

The essence of the problem is that baboons are highly intelligent and have quickly learned that easy food is available from human sources. The result of this unwarranted persecution has meant that there is now a paucity of adult males. On reaching a certain age the males leave their troop of birth and move off to try and find a new troop. In the course of their travels they come into contact and conflict with people, often with fatal results. As a consequence, the male to female sex ratio on the Cape Peninsula is 1:8 as opposed to the normal 1:3. This means that there is a very real danger that the population could eventually collapse.

Kommetjie is on the edge of the Cape Peninsula National Park and therefore we should expect to receive odd visits from animals such as baboons. These fascinating mammals are an integral part of the ecosystem; we should do everything possible to ensure that they can continue to co-exist with us.

To add to the problem of their ever-decreasing natural environment, the baboons have also had to survive the ravages of bush fire, which forces them to scavenge for food in human settlements.
This picture was taken shortly after the Great Peninsula Fire of January 2000.

**SPOTTED NOCTURNAL VISITORS**

Many of our residents take great joy in the occasional nocturnal visits of small spotted animals called Genets, the most generalized and primitive of the living carnivores. These impressive animals are highly proficient hunters and their diet includes rodents, birds, snakes, lizards, insects, fruit and nectar. They are mostly solitary animals with a mother and young being the most complex social unit.

The young are weaned at six months and reach maturity at two years. Genets are extremely good climbers and are quite at home in trees. During the day they take refuge in holes in trees or in the ground.
There are two species of Genet found in South Africa and interestingly enough, both are to be found in the Cape Peninsula. The more commonly seen species is the Large-spotted Genet which has larger spots and a black-tipped tail, as opposed to the lesser seen Small-spotted Genet which has a white-tipped tail.

**THE CAPE CLAWLESS OTTER**

This rarely seen otter is well adapted to life on land and in the water. Otters are confined to remote and protected areas such as the coastline, rivers and lakes.

These secretive and nocturnal animals are occasionally encountered at the mouth of the Bokramspruit and on Long Beach, where they hunt crabs and slow-moving fish. Although not a marine mammal, they are sometimes seen out at sea, especially in riverine estuaries, as pictured here at Kommetjie.

When hunting underwater, the otter relies on its sight and long sensitive whiskers to detect movement and vibration. As its name implies, it has no claws on its blunt digits and unlike other otters, the feet are only slightly webbed. An otter’s tail is the main means of propulsion when swimming.

Observant and discreet members of the community here in Kommetjie have noticed that there are a few generations of otters present in the vicinity of Bokramspruit. These lovely creatures, like the mongoose, have a distinct family hierarchy.
As the community develops and encroaches upon more and more of the natural habitat, the otters are in a dangerous predicament, being threatened by pollution and the ever-increasing number of roaming dogs in the village. A thought should be spared for these delightful residents of the area!

THE CAPE GREY MONGOOSE

Another of our local residents is the Cape Grey Mongoose. They are quite at home in the areas of coastal fynbos which have escaped the developers and are highly adaptable hunters, preying on young chicks such as francolins and dikkops, snails, gerbils and even tortoises and snakes. They are skilled climbers and often are seen raiding bird’s nests in search of eggs in the low scrub.

Mongooses are highly sociable animals with a noticeable family hierarchy. The Alpha male and female jointly raise their young, normally one or two at a time and generally do not bring them out of the burrow until they are a few weeks old.

Fiercely territorial, they constantly mark their area, often fighting off any intruders. The dense fynbos areas offer adequate cover from their natural enemies, the raptors, which include kites and hawks. Whereas they possess a keen sense of smell and have excellent hearing, their sight is not developed to the same degree. As a result, they are cautious and constantly alert when exposing themselves to attack from the sky.

They flourish in the Imhoff Park, where braai places offer great pickings and their natural food sources have remained relatively undisturbed over the years.

Mongooses remain an important part of the natural fauna balance and are truly a delight to observe, whether playing in the fynbos, basking in the late afternoon sun or stalking their prey.
TORTOISES

Distinctive markings on the Angulate Tortoise.

Toothless, voiceless, half deaf and unbelievably slow, the tortoise has plodded its way through 300 million years of evolution, when tens of thousands of other species have become extinct. When you next see a tortoise jerking its way across the road, look upon it with respect, for it saw the dinosaurs come and go!

The Kommetjie tortoise population was unfortunately decimated during the vast mountain fires of January 2000. Few, if any, were able to escape the fire. There are those who believe that a tortoise can jump out of its shell and run to escape a fire... sadly this is a myth. The top speed of this ancient family of animals is only about 0,3 km per hour! Until the vegetation has renewed itself on Slangkop range, very few of these creatures will be seen in the wild.

Flower petals are part of the staple diet.

Apart from the Mountain Tortoise, the Angulate species appears to abound in the coastal fynbos and is often encountered in the Imhoff caravan park. As with other animals, the preservation of fynbos within the park has afforded some degree of protection. The tortoise berry bush, once prolific in the Kommetjie area, is still to be found in the stands of fynbos at the park.

Residents of the park monitor the various individuals here, where berries and flower petals are mouth-watering fare in the undisturbed habitat.
**MOLE SNAKE** - *Pseudaspis cana* (Molslang) - non-venomous

**CAPE COBRA** - *Naja nivea* - (Kaapse Geelslang)

**PUFF ADDER** - *Bids arietans* - (Pofadder)

**MOLERATS** Family name Bathyergidae, are apparently more closely related to the Porcupines than any other mammal. The Cape Dune Molerat is the largest of the five South African species. It can measure up to 33cm long and weigh up to 750g.
FLORA IN KOMMETJIE

THE GROUND PROTEA (*Leucospermum hypophyllum*)

This creeper adds wonderful summer colour to the sandy areas of fynbos, although it is becoming another victim of ever-increasing development.

THE TORTOISE BERRY (*Nylandtia spinosa*)

This thorny bush provides a tasty treat for the many tortoises found in the fynbos. The early residents of Kommetjie also used it as food when supplies ran low. It used to grow in profusion at Skilpadsvlei on the southern side of Benning Drive.

SPRING FLOWERS create a beautiful carpet during August/September.

Above: Bokbaai vygies - *Dorotheanthus bellidiformis*
Below: Daisies - *Dimorphotheca pluvialis*

*Springtime brightens the veld, where carpets of flowers produce a blaze of colour.*

*Gladiolus carinatus “Afrikaner”*

*Succulent flora provides a beautiful addition to the peaceful setting.*
REMOVAL OF KOM WALL

Over the years, well-meaning efforts by both inhabitants and Councillors to improve on this natural swimming pool for children, have had dire consequences. It started with a low wall erected across the Kom before 1920 which proved to be a mistake as kelp and seaweed collected in the pool, giving off an unpleasant smell, resulting in the making of gaps in the wall to ensure a better flow of water.
In the 1950’s officials, in an effort to “improve” the Kom, decided to enlarge the pool by dredging it and at the same time building a higher wall. With the increasing number of houses without water-borne sewerage, polluted ground water drained into the pool, adding an evil smelling annoyance to everybody. Nobody swam there anymore and Council labourers had to clean it twice a month.

Various suggestions for further improvements were futile and in May 1996, the bold step was taken by the Kommetjie Ratepayers Association under chairmanship of Alan White, to demolish the entire wall, enabling uninterrupted ebb and flow of the sea.

**STORM DAMAGE - 1984 & 2002**

*Extract from Ann Seeliger’s manuscript “The Story of Kommetjie”.*

In May 1984 Kommetjie experienced the worst storm in my memory. For one and a half days, the North Wester blew at more than gale force and created a great deal of havoc. The sea was so rough and so high that it washed right over the carpark at the Kom, piling up wet sand and mountains of kelp.
Seventeen of the boats lying on the beach at Fisherman’s Bay were wrecked. General damage was considerable. Most houses had bad leaks and sections of roofs, fences and gates were ripped off.

Kakapo, Long Beach, 26 May, 2002

During and after the storm, May, 2002
JEUGHERINNERINGE
KOMMETJIE

Kommetjie, ons Hartland,
Paradys van ons jeug;
Daar onder die rotswand,
Arieteen en kreef.

Die son in die Weste,
wat so skitter en blink
op polsende bamboes
en al lokkende winkle.

Na harders in treknet
en galjoen in die skuit-
die stemme wat uitroep:
‘Kom uit, Kinders, kom uit!’

Baljaar op die duine,
obmakies en spring,
koes, koeit deur die bosse;
blikkapoel aan die gung.

Al langs die see hardloop,
met die viegels wat waal,
en seuns wat wil poogie
of bokspring en rondwaai

tondat die geklingel
van die klokkie wat laut,
s’t ’Ele’s op tafel,
kom tuis. Kinders, kom tuis!’

Die geure van ver af
stig die kinders aan ‘t raai...
O, dis harders, vars, vars
op die kote gebraai!

Dan saak daar ‘n stilte
op ‘n dag van genoot;
net die see wat stil suis
en klein branders wat kloots.

As voëls se gekwetter
of jou pa se geklop
jou smaakgessende wek
met: ‘Staan op, Kinders, staan op;’

dan spring jy oorst, suug,
so verwaagting en vreug.
na wat daar sondag ook
mag wees om te beleef.

Piekniek in die berge
of by die Kakapo,
wandel in die vlieë,
waar riet en blom bekooi.

Bessies, alle kleure,
die mooiste soek en proe.
Uitjies diep uitgeweke,
veelnessies beloër.

Spartel in die branders,
swem en duik in die Kom,
die stemme wat duiwes;
‘O kom, Kinders, o kom.

geniet deur die lewe.
“Uit herinneringe se wil”,
eygo’s van Kommetjie:
Wies bly, Kinders, wees bly!’

Eudore Teubes 1984