

## HENNOPS HIKING TRAIL

A weekend spent at this venue offers the hiker two trails that can be done at a leisurely pace and eliminates the need of rushing through the trail as is usual with a day walk.

The trail description has been well documented by Jacana and the map of both the Krokodilberg and the Zebra trails are more than adequate. The East Rand Hiking Club have frequently done these trails and from reports appearing in the Club newsletter, the experiences have been most enjoyable.

The intention of this article is to try and enhance your enjoyment and understanding of the area as well as including historical; background and the personal reminiscences of the present owner, George Hausleitner.

The following extracts are taken from an article that appeared in *Sports Afield* (April 1984) written by Tom Brown.

Give yourself a test. Pause for a moment and answer these simple questions: What type of cloud was in the sky the last time you were out? Which way was the wind blowing? How many kinds of wild flowers did you see? How many different birds did you identify? Did you watch out for scrub hares, tortoises, field mice or take any interest in the myriad of insects that can be encountered? If your awareness is as sharp as it could be, you'll have no trouble answering these questions.

Relearning the art of seeing the world around us is quite simple, although it takes practice and requires breaking some bad habits. And relearn is the correct word. Most of us observed much more as children than we do as adults.

The first step in awakening senses to rediscover that wondering child in ourselves - and to do so we need to stop anticipating what we are going to see and feel before it occurs. This blocks awareness.

Another block to awareness is the obsession many of us have with naming or labelling things. I've seen bird watchers who spot a bird, immediately look it up in field guides, tick it off and no longer pay attention to the bird and never learn what it was doing.

The pressure of 'time' and 'destination' are further blocks to awareness. I can't count the number of hikers I've encountered who were heading for a distant campground with just enough time to get there before dark. It seldom seems to occur to them to allow time to wander a bit, to take a moment to see what's around them.

Most of us have visually stuffed our surroundings into niches. The result is automatic vision, which strangles awareness and limits us to seeing only a fraction of what there is to be seen.

For full awareness we must rebel against what our subconscious tells us is the 'normal' way to see what is before us. Nature seems to unfold to people who watch and wait.

When I encountered some hikers I asked them what they'd seen. 'Oh, just a few birds', they said. They seemed wholly focused on their destination.

Next time you take a walk, no matter where it is, open up and dive in. Take in all the sights, sounds and sensations. Wander in this frame of mind and you will open a new dimension to your life.

It would be good to remember the advice of one of the earlier East Rand Hiking Club members, Bill Smith - 'stop and smell the flowers'.

### Historical Interest

Marker No. 3 - Veld Hospital. Although this area was not a theatre of war during the Anglo-Boer conflict, according to residents in the early 1920's there had been minor skirmishes between the conflicting parties and both the British and the Boers had used the cave.

Marker No. 4 - Suspension Bridge. The first bridge was built by the owner's grandfather in 1932 and was washed away with the floods a year later. It was then reinforced and, except for necessary repairs, is still in good repair.

Marker No. 5 - Hardekraal. Although the Wits University did an archaeological dig in the 1990's no information was given to the owner. Probably of late Stone Age, research into this kraal site is still in progress.

Marker No. 6 - Pruimpie se Gat. This story is legend passed on from the earlier farmers in the late 1800's. Reputed to be a small man he could possibly have been a San who was left behind when Mzilikatze warriors roamed the area.

Marker No. 7 - Kees se Uitkykpunt. Kees is a colloquial name for a baboon and good views of the Hennops Valley and the Marlothi Aloe can be seen on the opposite hillside.

Marker No. 9 - Jan se Klip. Amongst those who originally blazed the trail with George Hausleitner was an ex-Springbok swimmer, Jan Sterk. At this point there is a panoramic view of the short valley and Marlothi' forest'. Jan rested here in the shade of what was then a large combretum tree. As mentioned in the brochure, the

Marlothi aloes were removed in earlier years to Rustenburg. Here they were dried and mixed with tobacco to produce snuff.

The markers, Nos. 11 and 12 on the map of the Krokodilberg Route are reminders of the vanishing past. The early years of the last century saw a great demand for quicklime, and the limestone quarry and the limekiln are good examples of the industry.

Walter Barker of the Tree Society kindly offered the following information on the geological features in this region.

While the rock in the area is a form of limestone, the term dolomite by which it is known designates a moderately high magnesia content, not a pure calcium limestone. The primary rock is over two billion years old but in former solution cavities one finds fairly pure calcite. It is these secondary deposits which were worked until the mid twentieth century. It was a labour intensive operation owing to the nature of the deposits, The mining was primarily hand labour but the rock was removed as speedily as possible with fairly primitive methods, The calcite fragments were sorted out by hand and transported to the kilns for burning to drive off the carbon dioxide in the rock, creating quicklime. Not only did the fuel contribute to the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, but also carbon dioxide previously bound in the earth's crust and being over forty percent of the rocks mass, was released. Lime being widely used by industry, this process is a major contributor to the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

These secondary deposits have achieved worldwide recognition, not for their mineral value, but as the source of fossils, including Mrs Ples, which would not have been discovered had it not been for the mining.

The limekiln at the bottom of the descent always attracts a great deal of attention and it is interesting to understand how the quicklime was manufactured. The following description is taken from *Sagittarius Dec. 1986* and except for the improvement in the building structures, the process would have followed in a similar way. This particular process took place at Pella in Namaqualand between 1883 and 1940.

### **Manufacturing Lime**

The limekilns at Pella were of the type known as "kooloond" or "asoond". This was a cylindrical stack rising to a height of 4 or 5 metres with a diameter of 2 to 3 metres. The walls, made of granite or schist packed together with clay, narrowed towards the top to form a funnel.

At one side of the base a 30 to 50 cm square opening (called the "bek" or mouth) gave access to a 30 cm wide trench (the "sloot" or "poort"), which ran to the back of the kiln. Strips of iron, often from old wagon-tyres, were placed across the trench to form a grate.

The first step in charging the kiln involved packing small dry bushes in the grate, followed by a 30 cm layer of twigs and thin branches to cover the floor of the kiln. The mouth was then closed with rocks and the kiln was filled from above through the chimney, wooden ladders being used to gain access to the interior. Logs were laid over the kindling until a quarter of the kiln was full, followed by a layer of limestone, which had been broken into small pieces about 5 cm across. The second half of the depth of the stack was filled with two equal layers of logs and limestone of similar size. The kiln was then ready to be fired.

The tasks of quarrying the limestone, crushing the stones to a usable size, gathering firewood and charging the kiln usually took two to three weeks. Three wagonloads of fuel and five loads of stones were deemed necessary for the economical operation of a kiln.

The kiln was generally fired at dawn on the day after the charging had been completed. The fire had to be watched for a couple of hours after lighting the kindling to ensure that it spread up into the first layer of logs. Smoke and flames billowing from the mouth indicated a smothered fire, and a day would be lost through having to clear the lower portion of the kiln, collect more bushes and twigs, and then repack the grate. Special skill was essential for successfully packing the limestone and selected firewood.

When the first flames emerged from the top of the stack, more limestone was piled in through the chimney to smother the fire slightly so that it would spread evenly through the lower levels. From then on the kiln was tended continuously. As the charge subsided with the consumption of the firewood, the ashes were raked out of the trench, fresh fuel was added and more limestone was thrown down the chimney to maintain an even distribution of heat.

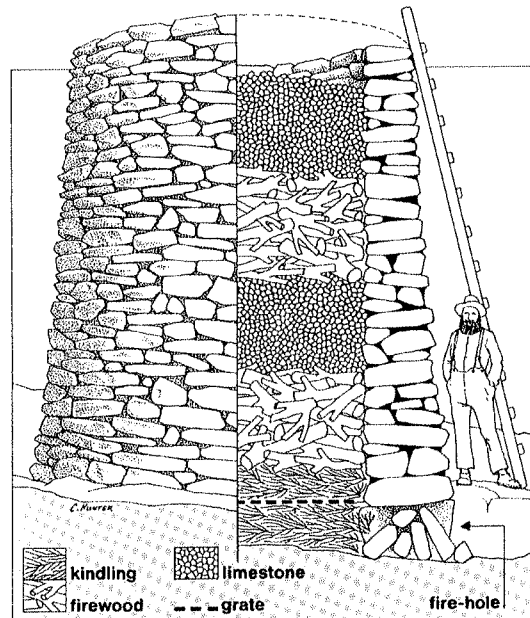
The limestone glowed red-hot during the firing which, if successful, took 2 days and 2 nights to complete ("die kalkoond is gaar"). The kiln was allowed to cool for further day and night before the mouth was opened. All the stones, white and brittle in the form of quick-lime, would by then have settled into a pile on the floor, from where they were raked out with spades.

The next stage in the process was to slake ("blus") the quick-lime. In the early days the stones were spread out next to the kiln in the "blushok", a 2 metre-wide platform surrounded by a dry-stone wall. They were then sprinkled with water which in a few minutes caused their disintegration into a fine white powder.

Later the quick-lime was placed in perforated buckets and suspended in a drum of water. Though the stones were cold, the water was boiling hot at the end of the hydration process. The stones were then thrown into the "blushok" where pulverization occurred.

All that then remained was to sieve and bag the slaked lime. Sieving through hessian to remove impurities was done in a "sifhok", a smaller replica of its neighbour the "blushok". Sieving and bagging were usually done for short lengths of time only at

night, because in the daytime heat the irritation of the caustic dust in the eyes and nose was unbearable.



Section through a full kiln of average size. The reconstruction is based on data received from informants at Pella.

On the Zebra trail you will encounter two small quarries. These were not commercial enterprises but were used for building projects around the farm

### General Information

As the popularity of the Hartbeespoort Dam grew it became necessary to build a more direct route from Johannesburg. Road 511 was developed in the 1940's. This necessitated the construction of three bridges over the Hennops River. The first two were pillar and span bridges but the third (at the Picnic Spot) was more complicated due to geological features. The 'stamvader' George Hausleitner, due to his building expertise, helped to provide an answer and the bridge was built with an arch foundation.

Prior to the building of the road, three weirs were constructed below the suspension bridge and three furrows were dug to provide water to the farmers below the pass (there are also three kilometres of furrows on the property).

A drift over the Hennops River near the weirs gave access to them and their wagons for their journeys to the market in Pretoria. The second drift on their journey can be seen on the farm near the private 4x4 camp and is still in use. The long trip to Pretoria brought the farmers to an outspan in Church Street (opposite the Quagga Centre) from where they continued early the next morning to the market.

The Water Affairs Dept. built the dam at the start of the trail at the Hadedda Camp in 1921 and the Hausleitner family were responsible for taking daily readings for

many years until new electronic equipment was installed. The original cable car crossing was built in 1938 and has now been replaced with a more modern design

The owner built the present low-water bridge to the Loerie Camp in the mid 1970's after the old one was washed away during floods.

The story of Mr. Hennops and the rhinoceros reminds one how wild this area was in the mid 1800's. The date of this incident is not known but the name Hennops River appears on F. Jeppe's map of the Transvaal drawn up in 1879.

For those who can spend a long weekend at the resort, bring along your mountain bikes and enjoy the cycle trails which have been laid out. The owner has also provided a list of birds and trees to be found in the area on the Hadedda Camp notice board, but don't forget your books to identify the many flowering plants, especially during Spring, when they have not yet been covered by the tall grasses.

*'There is more to life than Surface'*

*Kate Turkington (Radio 702).*