



YOU

CAN

FIND

ANYTHING ON

# VOORTREKKER ROAD...

Really, you can. You can find your ancestors at Maitland Cemetery and salvation at Command of Faith Ministries. Modern-day Voortekkers dragging carts of scrap metal behind blinkered horses and row upon row of caricature car salesmen peddling near-identical Toyotas and Tatas. You can find your bearings by looking up at ever-present Lion's Head and...

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**...YOU CAN FIND SECOND-HAND HOSPITAL BEDS** at Antique Warehouse in Bellville or the wheel from a 1928 Studebaker at Johnny Clifton Motor Spares in Salt River. Johnny himself could also be described as vintage and he has great fun getting us to guess which one's him in the photos from his stock car driving days. 'I'm the one who looks like Elvis Presley. You laugh,' he says, 'But one day you'll also be buggered like me.'

I'd be thrilled if I aged half as well as he has. He leads us through his stuffy labyrinth of carefully catalogued car parts, cracking jokes as he walks. 'I've been in the same spot 40-odd years,' he says. 'In the old days we used to buy cars, 40 or 50 a month, and strip them for spares but nowadays we sell more new parts than old. I'm trying to weed the second-hand out.' This is hard to believe. We follow Johnny up a metal staircase into the attic where, under an uninsulated corrugated iron roof, old car doors and bonnets bake in the mid-afternoon heat. 'I raced stock cars for many years; it took me all over the country – PE, Welkom, Worcester, Goodwood. And I made good money from it too...'

**YOU CAN FIND LIVES ON HOLD** at Hardekraaltjie Outspan (hardekraaltjie.com), a caravan park on the very spot where the Voortrekkers used to bring their oxen to graze. We find Andries lying on an old carpet, straining to tighten a nut on the undercarriage of his red 1983 Honda Prelude. He's a train driver from Strand who's midway through a two-month secondment to Metrorail in Cape Town. 'I really love it here,' he says. 'The other day I made a point of telling the lady how happy I was with the bathrooms.'

Craig Stobbs and his wife Sanette have just sold their house and they're waiting to take occupation of the new place. 'I would show you around, but...'. Craig points to a tent piled high with cardboard boxes. He tells us about his work designing aquariums and breeding discus, a tropical fish that – we soon discover – is native to Vietnam, the Amazon and Germany, of all places. 'I was retrenched and Sanette said I should do what I love. My mom had a fish shop and I've been aquascaping since I was a 14. I'm a Christian so I called my company Reborn Aquatics.' One adult fish can sell for thousands of rands, but you have to know what you're doing, explains Craig. 'I make my own food from ox heart and shrimp and I run peat moss through the filters to reduce water hardness. My fish are all in a friend's shop while we're here.' ➔

**ABOVE**  
**'My brothers ask me when I'm gonna pack up, but I've done two life sentences already,' says Johnny Clifton of Johnny Clifton Motor Spares**

**BELOW**  
**'This is a holiday for us,' says Craig Stobbs. 'For some of the other people here it's home'**





When we ask to take a photo, Sanette disappears into the tent and Craig calls his stepdaughter, Rolan Luyt, from across the lawn to take her place. As we're leaving Craig calls out: 'If you want to talk to a real long-term resident try that caravan over there.'

One glance at the scrupulously ordered setup tells us that whoever lives here means business. We're greeted by a young guy in a freshly ironed sky blue shirt, smoking on the stoep. 'Kenroy,' he says, thrusting out a hand. 'I'm just visiting. The lady who lives here is inside, looking after a neighbour's baby.' Kenroy is en route to China, where he plans to teach English with his brothers. He and his parents have stopped off in Cape Town for a few days so he can get his visa – which explains the smart shirt.

Once Kenroy has finished his cig, he invites us inside. There we find Marguerite van Zyl in a puffy pleather armchair, watching Kyknet on satellite TV. Her bare feet rest on the shadecloth carpet and the baby lies on her chest, almost entirely covered by a tassled grey blanket. 'When my husband passed away I had trouble keeping up with the loan repayments and eventually I lost my house,' she says. 'I didn't want the kids to have to change schools so I bought a caravan and moved here instead. Sometimes it's embarrassing to tell people you live in a caravan, but the kids are safer here than just about anywhere in South Africa and they've got ducks, geese, a playground... Besides, it's not forever.'

**YOU CAN DRINK TO SUCCESS OR YOU CAN DROWN YOUR SORROWS** at places with names such as Red Devils Sports Bar, Stino's Pub and Victoria Lounge. When we walk into Monaco VIP Lounge ([facebook.com/Monaco-VIP-Lounge-and-](https://www.facebook.com/Monaco-VIP-Lounge-and-) ➔



ABOVE

'I'm a bachelor so I often eat at the Spur. I didn't bring my braai with me, but I will next time,' says Andries the train driver

BELOW

'At our house we had an alarm, burglar bars, everything... But here we don't need any of that,' says Marguerite van Zyl

**SOMETIMES IT'S EMBARRASSING TO TELL PEOPLE YOU LIVE IN A CARAVAN, BUT THE KIDS ARE SAFER HERE THAN JUST ABOUT ANYWHERE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THEY'VE GOT DUCKS, GEESE, A PLAYGROUND... BESIDES, IT'S NOT FOREVER**





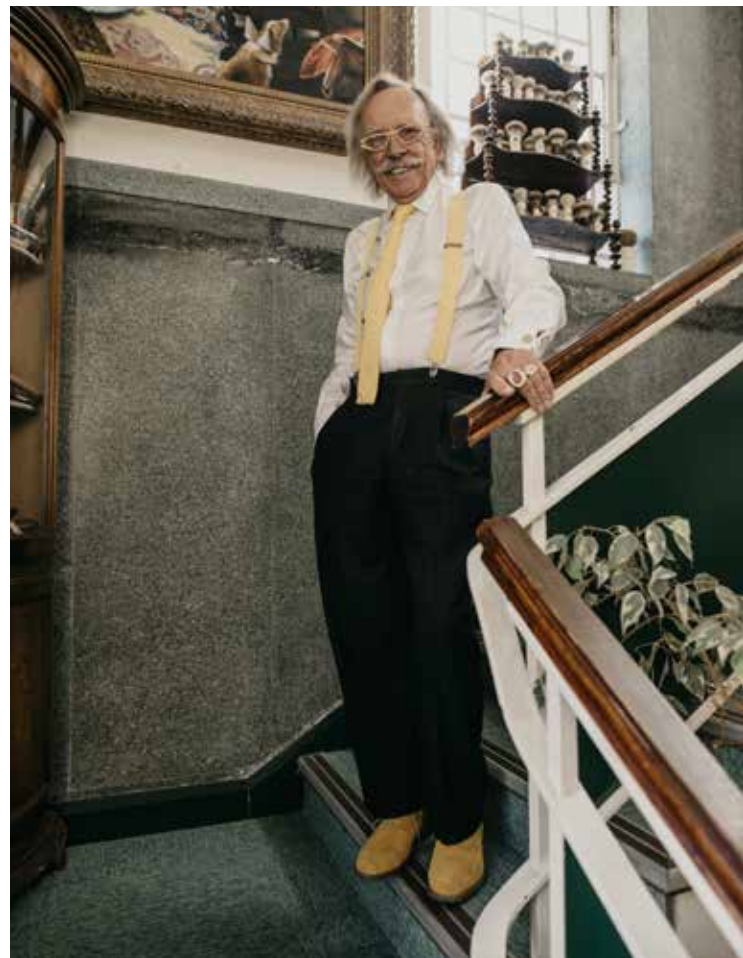
Restaurant-1858496644393213) it feels more like 2am than 2pm. In the gloom we can just about make out two people sitting in a red upholstered booth, next to a mosaicked table lined with empty Castle quarts. Behind the bar a musclebound guy wearing a vest and a thick silver chain looms. After we show our ID documents and press cards, Patrick Lihinack finally opens up to us. 'Now I know who you are,' he says in a thick Francophone accent, 'I can tell you my story. I'm actually the owner of the place.'

Patrick's wariness makes more sense when we discover that when he arrived in Cape Town from Cameroon ten years ago he had absolutely nothing. 'I bought an accident-damaged car at SMD in Blackheath and fixed it up. As soon as I sold it I bought another and then another...' Before long he had teamed up with a Cameroonian panel-beater and they made a proper business out of it. And then one day he changed tack and opened the West African restaurant that is next door to Monaco. 'This place was standing empty for a long time,' he remembers, 'and I'd always wanted my own nightclub. Getting the liquor licence took a long time, but it was worth it.' We ask what's behind the rope cordon. 'VIP section... If you buy a bottle of whisky you can see for yourself,' he laughs. Maybe next time.

**YOU CAN FIND CHANDELIERS AND VINTAGE CORKSCREWS**

(600 of them) and old woodworking tools at Maitland Pawn Shop aka The Lamp Workshop ([facebook.com/TheLampWorkshop1](https://www.facebook.com/TheLampWorkshop1)). 'I took a holiday once,' says owner Johan van Rensburg. 'I went to Knysna in 1998. My staff tell me it's time I took another one.' Johan has been working in the shop since he was 14 (he remembers a time when the pond in the park across the road still had fish in it) and he recently inherited it from the previous owner, Eric Smith, who opened the business in 1987. Before that it was a bank, built – as the stately round-topped windows show – in 1907.

Now, more than a century later, most of the treasure is hanging from the ceiling, not hidden in the vaults. Johan points out a vast brass chandelier that used to hang in the Grand Hotel in Grahamstown. ➤



FROM ABOVE  
Thursday is Ladies' Night at Patrick Lihinack's Monaco VIP lounge. It gets busier. Johan van Rensburg's corkscrew collection at the Lamp Workshop. Bob Landsdowne of City of London Brushmakers is known for a certain sartorial splendour



**ABOVE**  
'You'll only ever have to buy one pair of these. They're made to outlast you,' says Bob Landsdowne of City of London Brushmakers

**BELOW**  
'If you think this is a lot of papers,' says private eye Francois Balt. 'You should look in the back. I never throw anything away'

'I drove all the way to the auctioneers in PE to pick it up,' he remembers. 'A client once offered me 50 grand for it, but I said no.'

**YOU CAN FIND A BUSINESS THAT'S OLDER THAN THE USA.**

City of London Brushmakers ([englishshavingshop.com](http://englishshavingshop.com)) first opened its doors in 1762 before moving to its handsome Voortrekker Road premises at the end of the last century. Although Bob Landsdowne, the yellow-braced, signet-ringed impresario, hasn't been around for all 255 years, he still knows a thing or two about making beautiful gentleman's accessories by hand.

On the day we visit, Bob and his team are making bespoke crocodile leather shoes not the (life-changing) badger hair shaving brushes for which they are most famous. 'There's nothing on Earth that's nicer,' says Bob while buffing an elegant brown Oxford. 'A pair of these'll outlast you, no question. Every stitch is handsewn. Let me explain what that means, because you seem stupid... If you now walk into a puddle your feet won't get wet because they can't get wet. There's nowhere for the water to go because they've been sewn twice.'

Crocodile skins, we learn, are sold according to their width, not their length and a single skin – enough for one, maybe two, shoes – can go for several thousand rand. Demand far outstrips supply and most skins jet off to South Korea and Italy before the South African market can get a look in. Bob is one of very few exceptions to this rule. 'What you're holding is a shoe,' he says. 'Have a look at every detail.'

**YOU CAN FIND A CHEATING SPOUSE OR A FRAUDSTER ON THE RUN**

at Francois Balt Investigations, Parow's very own FBI (geddit?). A tiny sign beckons us into an arcade and up a flight of black and turquoise tiled stairs. 'The guy you want is back there,' says the crewcut receptionist. In a room thick with smoke and papers and bulldog clips we find a wizened, balding man in an olive cardigan. 'Balt,' he says. 'Francois. How do you do?'

'Back in the 1970s I was one of the founding members of the police narcotics squad,' he says between drags on his Camel filter. 'I'd







**LEFT**  
Kids' classes at Karate-Zen dojo are hugely popular. A Springbok coach has something to do with it

**RIGHT**  
The Portuguese community keeps Jeffery Mpatho at Broadway Confectionery and Deli busy – it's *the* place on the strip for everything from *pasteis de bacalhau* to *feijoada*

put on a long black wig and go into the Bo Kaap on a motorbike in search of weed. We bust a lot of dealers that way.' After nine years on the force an attorney asked him to do some PI work and now, nearly 40 years later, he's the oldest surviving PI in Cape Town.

Francois won't let us photograph his face ('I still do undercover work.') but he is happy to talk about his work (many hours of smoking in parked cars mixed with moments of excitement), his cycling career (why is he not wearing a helmet in most of his Argus photos?) and to show us his archives (a room filled with manila folders). 'I love my job,' he says. 'It's not where you live. It's how you live.'

**YOU CAN FIND FOOD FROM HOME, WHEREVER HOME MAY BE.** Cape Town's original and best *pasteis de nata* come from Broadway Confectionery and Deli (facebook.com/broadwaycapetown) in Maitland. 'My dad came from Madeira in the late 1950s and worked a string of jobs before finally opening this place in December 1977,' says Ricky Correia. 'He'd always dreamed of owning a bakery and to this day everything, even the white bread we make our toasted sandwiches with, is homemade.' Maitland has changed – Ricky no longer lives there and the Jewish community has also scattered – but Broadway remains an institution for the

Portuguese community who come to stock up on specialities such as *pasteis de bacalhau*, shrimp rissoles, *feijoada*, and *bacalhau escabeche*. 'You should come here on a Saturday morning,' says Ricky. 'There's a Portuguese biker club, the Amigos Portugueses, who normally pull in at around 10 o'clock... It's quite a sight.'

A bit further down the road we are drawn to the weird concrete and neon façade of Harlequin Restaurant (harlequinrestaurant.co.za). 'Most of the original Italian crowd are in heaven now,' says Americo Zuccato, who's been involved with Harlequin since the 1980s. 'But we still have our regulars.' As I struggle to eat my way through a delicious but extremely angry bowl of *penne arrabiata* I hear more Italian than English. And when we visit Bac African Café, which specialises in Nigerian dishes such as *jollof* rice and *ogbono* soup, we feel similarly alien.

**YOU CAN FIND SENSEIS AND LAWN BOWLS COACHES.** It's 10.43 on a Monday morning, so it is with hope rather than expectation that we ring the doorbell of Karate-Zen dojo (karate-zen.co.za) in Goodwood. But lo and behold, the intercom crackles into life and we're invited up to the surprisingly spacious training room on the third floor. Salaama (fourth dan) and Laeeq (fifth dan) Rhoda

— BY THE NUMBERS —

Numbers from the Voortrekker Road Corridor Improvement District (VRCID) (vrcid.co.za) prove what we have known all along. You can find anything on Voortrekker Road...

**0.6**  
percentage of the VRCID taken up by residential properties

**6**  
number of suburbs crossed by Voortrekker Road

**17.2**  
length of Voortrekker Road in kilometres

**84.5**  
percentage of businesses that are locally owned

**850**  
number of businesses registered with the VRCID





met at a tournament when they were both 13 and they've been inseparable ever since.

A wall of windows overlooking Voortekker Road gives way to a floor plastered with red and green mats and shelves laden with trophies. 'It's creepy now,' says Salaama, who is one of the coaches of the national team. 'You

should come at about 5.30 when all the kiddies are here.' While we're agreeing on the best time to see a class in action, Laeeq, who's wearing a hoody in spite of the weather, saunters over. 'I won't shake your hand,' he croaks, 'I've been refereeing at a tournament in Morocco and I must have picked up something on the plane.'

'Do you know anyone who lives on Voortrekker Road?' I ask. 'We've spoken to loads of people who work here but no one who actually lives on it.'

'We do,' they laugh. 'Just next door.' Their flat, with its piles of neatly folded laundry and brimful toy-baskets, reminds me of the temporary order that descends on my home when the kids are at school. But my home doesn't have a massive rooftop balcony with fantastic views of Table Mountain and Lion's Head through the washing line. So this is what it's like to live on Voortrekker Road...

Later that afternoon, as the sun is creeping towards the horizon, we pull in at Bellville Bowls Club (bellvillebowls.co.za). We park between an Astroturf (parents on smartphones waiting for their kids to finish hockey practice) and a public swimming pool (barbed wire, padlocks and Egyptian geese on the high board) and walk past the faded check tablecloths of the club tearoom and out to the greens. Things are winding up for the day but on the far side of the

**'NOW THAT I'M OLD I CAN'T RUN ANYMORE,' HE EXPLAINS. HE'S ONLY BEEN PLAYING A YEAR BUT HE'S ALREADY MADE IT ON TO THE CLUB'S C TEAM. 'DIS BAIE LEKKER (IT'S VERY NICE)'**

anymore,' he explains. He's only been playing a year but he's already made it on to the Club's C Team. '*Dis baie lekker* (It's very nice).'

I tell him that I'll be 40 soon and before I know it I'm receiving an impromptu bowls lesson, rush hour traffic grumbling beside us and jumbo jets buzzing overhead. 'Aim there,' he says, pointing at a red stake miles to the right of where my ball should be headed. 'And keep your knees together.' I do as I'm told and the ball scoots across the grass before turning – just as Elliot had predicted – towards my target at the last minute. For a moment I think I'm going to hit the jackpot but there's too much weight on it and the ball clatters into the barrier at the back of the green.

Elliot is living proof that you can find anything on Voortrekker Road if you look hard enough. ■

furthest green one man in highly polished docksiders is still practising hard. Elliot April is from Mount Fletcher in the Transkei but he prefers Afrikaans to English. He's been working at the club as a gardener since 2005 but when he turned 40, he decided to start playing the game too. 'Now that I'm old I can't run



CPT

FIND IT AT [BA.COM](http://BA.COM) British Airways flies daily to Cape Town from Jo'burg, Durban, PE and London.

The Bellville Bowls Club has been Voortrekker Road's very own BBC since 1945. Join Elliot April for a game on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 2pm

