



GROMOR (PTY) LTD
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P.O. Box 89, Cato Ridge 3680 • Tel: 031 782 0002, 031 782 3105
Fax: 031 782 1431, 086 641 2589
Cell: 083 946 6079, E-mail: gromor@iafrica.com
www.gromor.co.za

GROMOR SEPTEMBER 2015 NEWSLETTER

One of GROMOR's longstanding customers Robin Joseph Cook, is about to undertake a commemorative ride in remembrance of his grandfather's ride, whilst serving as a trooper with Marshall's Horse, during the Boer War. Robin's grandfather was 17 years of age when he signed up with the 1st City Volunteers, Grahamstown, before being transferred in February 1901 to Marshall's Horse, where he was deployed to a detachment of 13 officers with 150 men under them. Freshly mounted and newly armed they were loaded on to a train and made their way to Cradock, where the unit came under the command of Lieut-Col Crabbe and went in pursuit of the Boer General P.H. Kritzinger. Kritzinger evaded them, but in one skirmish Lieutenant Turpin was killed and six troopers were wounded.

Robin's grandfather received the Queen's South Africa Medal with a Cape Colony Clasp, for his efforts.

Robin and his wife Elaine (who will give vehicle support) with their two horses Foxtrot and Pippa that they adopted from the Kloof SPCA, will on the 17th September leave for Cradock in the Eastern Cape. Robin's research indicates that it was from the Cradock Fish River Bridge that Marshall's Unit went in pursuit of Kritzinger's retreating Boer Unit, following them as far as Hofmeyer, a distance of ±430km. This is the route Robin intends riding on horseback.

Robin's grandmother, Maria Getruida du Toit aged four at the time, was removed together with her Boer family from their farm and taken to a concentration camp, before the farm was burnt.

(The only thing that Robin's greatgrandmother was able to salvage was her Singer Sewing Machine, which is still in the Cook family.)

Being on opposite sides, I would be interested to hear how Robin's grandfather and Getruida's relationship developed. Speaking to Robin, I was reminded of my own grandmother, who came to South Africa from Norway as a 4 year old girl, together with her widowed mother, 5 sisters and 2 brothers in 1892. They came to grow tea at Kearsney on the KZN North Coast, a venture that failed. In the end all the daughters grew up and were married off, whilst the eldest brother joined the Umvoti Rifles and was killed at the siege of Ladysmith in the Boer war. My great grandmother eventually packed up and moved back to Norway leaving all the children and grandchildren behind - sometimes I can understand! Just kidding!

Because the Boer War was long ago, it is often thought of as a small skirmish, which it certainly was not!

By the end of the war there were about 250 000 British troops in service.

The English, under Lord Kitchener built over 8000 blockhouses, manned by 60 000 soldiers.

Thousands of kilometres of wire fencing was erected to hinder Boer guerrilla tactics.

The British increased their mobile units from 38 to 70, using ±670 000 horses, mules and donkeys, with ±400,000 of them dying during the war.

Concentration Camps started by Lord Roberts were increased from 34 to 47, populated by ±145,000 inmates, mainly women and children, of which ±31 000 died.

±30 000 Boer farms were burnt and ±40 towns partially destroyed.

SOIL ORGANIC MATTER

The drop in SOIL ORGANIC MATTER in both agricultural lands and gardens is alarming! Soil organic matter holds moisture and nutrients, whilst sustaining soil life, essential for a healthy soil and plant growth.

A hundred years ago ORGANIC MATTER in our soil's probably averaged 10%. Today it's closer to 1½%. Under 2½% is not sustainable. 100kg of soil with 4% SOIL ORGANIC MATTER holds ±180ℓ WATER, whilst 100kg of the same soil with 2% SOIL ORGANIC MATTER holds ±60ℓ water. In addition to moisture retention and soil life, it also plays a major role in the soil's capacity to hold PLANT NUTRIENTS.

SOIL LIFE, which lives on SOIL ORGANIC MATTER, is incredibly complex.

- ±500, 000 bacteria fit onto a pinhead and good soil should contain a billion per T-spoon.
- This subterranean "livestock" often outweighs the livestock above the ground, calculated at 5 head/ha
The key workforce in soil includes bacteria, fungi, algae, protozoa, nematodes and earthworms. With the exception of earthworms, the other organisms are often purely associated with being harmful, which is a total misconception
A core concept in biological agriculture is to look after this workforce and it will look after you!

Taking a closer look at the "Mighty Earthworm", we learn that they comprise of over 7000 species, involved in:

- Aggregating soil particles and moving both organic matter and microbes throughout the soil.
- Decomposing organic matter
- N, P, K, Ca, Mg etc. are elements often solely associated with INORGANIC (chemical) fertilizers, but earthworms have an incredible capacity to concentrate these nutrients to subsequently be used in plant growth. Their castings (Vermicast) contain ±5 x more N, ±10 x more K, ±1,5 x more Ca, ±3 x more Mg etc., than the surrounding soil.
- If you consistently find 25 earthworms per shovel of soil, which one should in a healthy soil, they would be contributing an incredible ±300 tons of castings per ha.
- Earthworms have a calciferous gland which adds Calcium Carbonate (CaCO₃) to the soil. This, together with their ability to transport minerals from the subsoil to the root zone, helps supply plant roots with nutrients, as well as countering the problem of SOIL ACIDITY so rife in KZN soils.
- Earthworms compost ORGANIC MATTER in the soil ±4 x faster than it would get composted in a normal compost heap.

APPLY GROMOR COMPOST (1 x 30dm³ bag/5-10m²) and GROMOR ACCELERATOR PELLETS (150g/m²) now, to increase your SOIL'S ORGANIC MATTER level and FEED your plants!

Regards,

GROMOR (PTY) LTD

R. HAGEN

PS: After retirement from the Presidency, Mandela travelled extensively throughout the World addressing World leaders and governments. Being over 80, it was very strenuous for him. He was clear on the principles he wished to convey, but did often confer with Prof. Gerwel and ask him to edit the speeches for him.

On one such occasion Madiba was scheduled to address the Palestinian parliament. Prof. Gerwel edited the proposed speech in S.A and e-mailed it to Madiba in Palestine. Somehow a virus crept into the closing paragraph and being short of time, no one checked it. The climax of the speech turned out to be a totally unrelated mathematical formula "for every two equals four minus seven times eight. I thank you!" Madiba read it all out and whilst the accompanying SA delegation were puzzled, the entire Palestinian parliament rose to their feet in resounding applause!

PPS: TELKOM is a joke being regularly out of order. GROMOR'S alternative number is 083 946 6079.