

Strawberry farmer

Farming, and especially strawberry farming, played a vital role in the forming of this little village. Apart from being a means of survival, it also gave the early residents of Raithby purpose, a common goal, a reason to stand and determination to dream dreams. Dreams that would over decades find itself sculptured in a beautiful reality. Farming was what they knew best, so much so that very prominent strawberry farmers in the Stellenbosch region (even today) learned the fine trades and tricks of the trade from the locals.

The residence and the local farmers cultivated wonderful relationships since the very foundation of the town's existence. Even today these relationships, passed down from generation to generation remains.

Those days were tough and other job opportunities were little. Stories are told of how the locals had to catch Guinea fowl for meat and lived from their own crops. The Moddergat river and pits dug by hand (remains and functional today) was the main source of water.

Horses were mainly used to plough the land and to take the harvest to the market in Cape town took roughly 2 days by horse and wagon or by bicycle. This would however put bread on the table and even with only a little income prioritised education for the children and their children's children.

"Aarbeie hou van suur klam grond" is what oom Hannes would say walking through his neatly planted strawberries. Early residents would also farm with pigs, vineyards, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, etc.

In the olden days they used to make baskets from bamboo with 'drawers' (sticks put through that made layers) that the strawberries could lay in single layers and kept it fresh and without damage. That also got sold.

Then there was also a special clay that was founded in Raithby. People believed it was good for your skin and for healing purposes and rubbed it on their skins. They came from afar to get hold of this and even exported it to far places. This was in the early 1900's.

In the Moddergat river there is also an endangered frog specie. Believed to be the Cape Caco frog. Cobra's are also found frequently. They like the moist and black ground and water.

There could have been so many stories to be told, but for some reason the previous generation just didn't tell their children much about the history of the town, so we had to do some research to know more.

The sad thing is that in all likelihood this would probably be the last generation that will be farming the land. Local resident farmers do not have the necessary recourses i.e. implements for ploughing and reaping from the land.

As told by Hannes Titus

Uncle Hannes' strawberry land:

