

~~about~~ about 1887
Footplate

Reminiscences of 50. years ago by Arthur Marsh.
who is well known from the Cape to Cairo as
the Port Elizabeth Sausage King. when Johannesburg
was Born I was a young Man of twenty five
and My Brother Samuel who passed away
about 4. years ago was then twenty three. We
were not present at its birth but arrived there
a few months later. it was then known as
Ferreiras Camp. there were a few buildings in
progress at the time. but it was simply a
primitive Mining Camp dotted over with tents
wattle and daub Huts and vehicles of all descriptions
in Many instances I noticed that Squares were
built with very light pieces of Quaterring and
Calico tacked around it as a means of Shelter
at that time we were both Married Men and
both of us were Butchers by profession. being
young and energetic and having heard such
glowing reports about these new Gold fields
we decided to try our luck and also to go up
by Donkey Wagon why we selected this Mode of
travelling I really do not know but one thing
I do know is that we discussed and cursed
the thing a good Many times on our travels
and came to the Conclusion that we were the
biggest Donkeys of the lot as the Method of travelling

was altogether too slow and at times made us
 both very impatient. before starting we made
 Commadagga our head Quarters. where we had
 a very nice Cozy Little Wagon built with a tent
 the whole length of it and a flap at each end.
 this Wagon was built by a very old Friend of
 ours the late Mr Cyrus Smith who was then a
 Cart and wagon builder at Commadagga Station
 whilst waiting for the Wagon to be built I
 slipped off up to Mount Stewart to see the late
 Mr Cawood who used to keep an Hotel there in
 the early days I explained to him that I wanted
 16 good Donkeys so He recommended me to a
 Farmer the Name of Rea who was living some
 distance from Mount Stewart I accordingly hired
 a Horse Saddle and Bridle from Mr Cawood and
 set off on my Journey to Mr Rea on arrival there I
 could only manage to pick out 10 Suitable Animals
 from His Lot. But He informed me that I would
 be able to get the other six from His adjoining
 Neighbour which I did. as I did not want to waste
 any time I got Mr Rea to Kraal the Donkeys for
 me and ~~and~~ and I slept at His place that Night
 and started off at day break the Next Morning
 to drive them to Mount Stewart But what a day
 I had. The Heat was terrific the old Horse was

Slow and had no paces. I had neither whips
 nor Spurs. So broke a branch from a tree to try
 and urge him on. as long as I could keep him
 on the trot it was alright but immediately he
 stopped the 10 Donkeys would turn off on the one
 side of the Road and the six on the other side
 and they would start running back again so that
 I had to continually keep hounding them up and
 getting them on the trot until I reached Mount
 Stewart about 5 o'clock in the afternoon not
 having had anything to eat or drink since
 leaving ^{the farm} at day break in the morning
 Gentle readers some of you would be able to
 imagine my feelings and some of you would not
 but I can assure you that I offered up prayers
 from where I was driving the brutes from right
 away to Johannesburg and back again. and Oh
 how I prayed that Quabs would only grow on
 thorn bushes, so that I could just quench my
 thirst again. I was in that sort of a mood that
 if I had only ^{had} a Gun with me I would have shot
 the bally lot of them Horse and all and would
 have walked back to Mount Stewart. To make
 matters worse on my arrival there I found that
 insult had been added to Injury. I had chafed
 so badly in the Saddle that I found ~~that~~ I had

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contracted Half Crowns on both of My sit-downs which necessitated me using a Cushion for about a week afterwards I left the Donkeys in care of Mr Cawood and the Next day left by train for Port Elizabeth. I then sent My Boy to Mount Stewart with instructions to take them on to Comradagga. were in due course He arrived with them in good order. The Harness we had made in Port Elizabeth by a Mr Haupt who as also passed over to the great Majority. He used to have His Harness Making establishment in Queen Street Next to the late Cobb & Company's Stables in the early days. It took us altogether about two weeks getting everything ready cutting Swingle Bars fitting the Harness and providing provisions. Our Commissariat Consisted of a Pig that we Killed and Salted in. also a coop containing 12 Nice Young Cockerels Bag of Meal Bag of salt. Bag of Potatoes. Rocket of Sugar. Rocket of Bush Tea. Tin of Ordinary Tea. Tin of Coffee. The usual Condiments and 3000 lbs weight of dried Fish which we procured from Jeffries Bay this proved to be a good investment as it sold remarkably well on the Road and helped to pay expenses. The eventful day arrived for Starting we had a Photograph taken of ourselves

and the turn out wished our Wives and Friends
 good Bye and off we started. everything went
 along very nicely for about six miles. then when
 going through a rugged bluit our Disselboom
 Broke. Fortunately we had two Spare ones
 and plenty of tools. we outspaned and repaired
 the damage. by the time we finished it was getting
 Dark so we decided not to go on untill the
 Next Morning. we were up at day break and
 found that the Donkeys had disappeared and we
 did not find them untill Middy about 1 o'clock.
 and although these Donkeys were together in a
 Camp for about a Week before we started. when
 ever we outspaned the ten would go off in one
 direction and the six in another and for some
 time we were at a loss to know how to counteract
 the business. when suddenly a Brain wave
 struck me and I said to My Brother and our
 Boy Bill that I thought it would be a good
 plan each time before outspanning just to throw
 a Spoonfull of Salt into their Mouths this had
 the desired effect. and acted like Magic as we
 always used to outspan close to a Dam. and
 after dosing them with the Salt. they would
 not graze to long before they would all come
 back again to get a drink. the old Boy Bill

was delighted and used to sit down and laugh
 when he seen them coming back to drink. He said
 Pass. that was a good plan Bill will have no
 more troubles with de Buggers now. We outspaned
 at a Farmers House close to Middleton Station But
 unfortunately I cannot remember His name it was
 dark when we got there. we had supper with him
 that evening and Breakfast next Morning and He
 gave us some Splendid advice How to treat the
 Donkeys and how to drive them we had a Camel
 whip and a Spambok which He said was no
 good to drive them with as it was altogether too
 heavy. He cut the Camel whip down and made
 two light whips out of it and put some borsolag
 on the end of them. Now He said you must
 not beat the Donkeys just Clap your whip and
 talk to them. The Spambok He said you can leave
 that with Me that will be alright for me to
 beat My Boys with but not to beat the Donkeys
 with. it was simply Marvellous how they pulled
 and never once stuck on the Road before reaching
 Lookhouse ~~it came~~ it came on to ^{rain} and owing to
 the Donkeys being badly chafed. we were delayed
 there for three Days. we mixed up some Brandy
 and Salt and bathed the effected parts which
 soon healed up again we then got some Sheep

Skiv Belts and Lined the Breast Plates of the
 Harness with it. So had no more trouble with
 them in that direction. our Most serious Mishap
 occurred one Saturday ^{night} about nine o'clock going
 through the Vet river to get to Winburg. My Brother
 had gone on earlier in the day to get the Post
 and it was arranged that he would come back
 and wait on the other side of the river until
 I arrived so as to let me know if it would be
 safe to come through. on My arrival. He called
 out that everything was O.K. So the old Roy Bill
 took the team and I sat on the Wagon shouting
 and clapping the Whip. we just got into the
 middle of the River when the two front Donkeys
 missed their footing and down they went. My
 Brother and Myself Stripped off as quickly as
 we could and assisted the Roy to get them up.
 but they were half drowned before we could
 get them out. and eventually we had to do away
 with them. on leaving Winburg from the other
 side we had to again cross the Vet river. the
 drift going out from that side was very steep
 when we arrived there six young farmers with
 3 Wagon loads of Wool were just taking up the
 last load with two spans of oxen attached to the
 Wagon and wanted to know if we required any

assistance we thanked them and told them that
 the Donkeys would pull out alright as soon as
 they got out. we started the Donkeys they got
 about half way up the drift and then stood
 so we just gave them a couple of Minutes rest
 and started them again and they went out splendidly
 the young Chaps Looked on in amazement and the
 one said to the others. By God. but those chaps are
 well trained. to drive Donkeys on the Road a
 transport Driver over took us. He had three Wagons
 Loaded with goods for the Gold Fields. after the
 usual enquires wanting to know who we were
 where we had come from and where we were
 going to and what we had loaded up. and how
 Many days we had been on the Road after answering
 all His Questions He told us that He was also going
 to Joburg. But He said it is a long way from here
 so I will wish ^{you good bye} (as I don't suppose we will see
 each other again as the Donkeys do not travel as
 fast as the Oxen so we wished Him good Bye
 and had forgotten all about Him. when to our surprise
 about two weeks later we came across Him again
 He was busy shoeing His Oxen He said that He
 had made a big Mistake. because they wanted the
 goods at a certain date in Joburg and He had
 driven His Oxen a bit too fast to try and get there

and the consequences was that the oxen had contracted sore feet and had fallen off in condition so that He now had to shoe them and give them a rest before going on again. we commiserated with him in his troubles wished him good luck but did not come across him again the probabilities are that He might have passed us in the night whilst we were peacefully sleeping in our cosy little Wagon dreaming of the nuggets of gold that we were going to pick up in the streets of this newly found Eldorado. we used to do three hours travelling in the early morning and three hours in the evening so as to avoid working the Donkeys in the heat of the day and each time we outspanned we gave them a ration of soaked Mealies which kept them in splendid condition. I had a double Barrell Combination Gun with me and used to keep our Carver well supplied with Birds and Hares and also an occasional Duck as there was plenty of shooting to be had along the roads in those days we used to buy a nice fat Lamb the pick of the Farmers Kraal for 7/6. the Boy cleaned the Head feet and tripe which ^{made} a lovely stew we had a Grid Iron and a three legged Pot and our Menu consisted Mostly of Grills Roasts and Stews. we always had a good supply of Meat Salt Pork Lamb Poultry venison Birds Hares & Fish

our great draw back on the Road was fresh Bread
 But our Boy Bill was a Champion at Making
 what they call askock which consisted of a Mixture
 of unsifted Meal Water Salt and baking powder
 well Kneaded together and allowed to rise & well
 baked under a good Cow Dung fire. not in a Pot
 Bill could always tell if it was sufficiently baked
 by removing the dung on the top of it and tapping
 it with his Kerrie. it had to have a certain ring
 He would then call out the Askock is alright Now
 Pass if any of My readers are contemplating going
 on an extended Picnic tour then I would advise
 them just to try this Askock. as I can recommend
 it from experience as one of the Worlds finest
 Powell regulators that it is possible to get which
 is owing to leaving the bran in the Meal. it took
 us just nine weeks to do the trip as we travelled
 very slowly and did not travel when it rained
 on our arrival there we found everything was very
 expensive. Mealies and Forage was an exhorbitant
 price and as it would not have paid us to feed the
 Donkeys we arranged with a Farmer living some
 distance from the Camp to graze them untill we
 required them at 1/6 each per Month. we then
 began to look round to see what could be done we
 came across a couple of Leanto Shanties rigged up

as Butcher Shops But neither of them required any assistants in fact one of them offered to sell out to us as He had made up His Mind to go to Rhodesia But unfortunately we could not entertain the idea as we had spent the Most of our Money on our rig out going up there. we were offered several jobs but the remuneration was so small that we did not consider them. we were lucky in selling our Wagon to a Syndicate going to Rhodesia for the sum of £97.10/- the Harness we sold to another party for £7.10/- Sales were held daily in Marshall Square so we decided to get the Donkeys back and sell them but the Highest ^{bid} we could get for them was 7/6 each which we declined with thanks. we then got a pass from the Landrost for the Dog and the Donkeys and the Dog took them to My Brother in Law in Kimberly where they realised 30/- each. I Met a Mr Doubell up there whose Brother I knew well in Port Elizabeth. He had a Large Plan with plots of ground Marked out for sale ranging from £25 and upwards every time I Met Him He urged me to go in for a Couple of Plots but some how or another I could not see further than My Nose and so remained adamant what a Fool I was that I did not take His advice and put the Money that I got for the Wagon Donkeys and Harness into a

couple of Plots as I would have more than
 recouped my losses. anyhow you cannot put
 old Heads on to young Shoulders and as the
 old saying goes what as got to be will be and
 what as not got to be will not be. ~~anyhow~~ Neither
 of us ever regretted the venture it was the experience
 of a Life time we both enjoyed the trip. we both
 had good health. and we both put on a little
 over 50 lbs weight each by the time we arrived
 back in Port Elizabeth we remained at Ferrer's
 Camp for a little over two Months and as nothing
 turned up to suit us. we said good Bye to a few
 Friends that we had met there and then booked our
 seats by Mule Wagon to Kimberley where we remained
 for a week and then returned to Port Elizabeth