

CLYDE DANIELS – ANOTHER BOSCHENDAL ENTREPRENEUR

Anyone driving, cycling or walking through the western sector of Boschendal estate near Franschoek, which today is occupied mainly by the fast growing Aberdeen Angus herd, a merino sheep flock and 4000 free range chickens (providing some 1,500 eggs per day and 2500 broiler chickens per month), will come across a cluster of old farm buildings in which, among other activities, a relatively new enterprise, backed and supported by Boschendal, is now in full swing and beginning to make a name for itself.

This new venture, trading under the name CLASSIC FURNITURE is run by Clyde Daniels with the help of two trainees and its purpose is to make specialist furniture and other wooden items, usually in response to orders received.

Although born not far away at Stellenbosch, Clyde, one of five children of a reasonably prosperous builder, moved with the family to Johannesburg when he was only nine years old – and it was not until seven years ago that he was able after a very long absence finally to get back to the Boland, the countryside he infinitely prefers to any up north and rent a house at Pniel.

While in Johannesburg Clyde fulfilled his schoolboy ambition to train as a cabinet maker cum wood- carver, completing his trade tests successfully after only three years. He apparently showed a tremendous proficiency in this line of work and was able even to make ornate casings for antique and other clocks—which he found intensely satisfying but was never able to earn a living from.

Penn and Nicholson, the firm to which he was apprenticed and a later employee, were known for their ‘classical’ furniture items, replicas of such styles such as Chippendale and the more solid Victorian pieces. For years turning out such work did keep Clyde busy. To

shorten a very long story, however, Clyde eventually returned to the Boland, suffering from prostate cancer which he successfully overcame, and was able to support himself and his family on a variety of carpentry and cabinet work, most of which took place on the area's famous wine estates. It was, in fact, the chief chef at Delaire, who recommended Clyde to Rob Lundie, CEO of Boschendal, as a carpenter capable of handling almost any wood-related task.

Those who have kept in touch with Boschendal's recent history will know that Lundie has led his team into a wide variety of new enterprises, one of the most important of which has been the expansion of the estate's hospitality facilities such as the Werf Restaurant, the Farmshop & Deli, the gift shop, the wine tasting and picnic facilities. Lundie also set about revamping 25 farm cottages to provide comfortable, chic overnight accommodation for Boschendal's visitors.

True to his declared policy of sourcing what was needed for these facilities from the farm itself or from near-at-hand local suppliers, Lundie established Clyde in the farm premises mentioned above and commissioned him to supply tables, chairs, benches, cupboards, partitions, screens, counters and 101 other items such as wooden bowls, cheese, bread and meat boards and even wooden coasters, all which are now installed or used in the facilities mentioned. Most of the furniture made is given a simple farmhouse look, in keeping with the Cape Dutch and Cape Vernacular styles of the estate's buildings. Clyde and his apprentices are also on occasions, very useful to the estate in repairing wooden fixtures such as stable doors and ceilings. Much of the woodwork that visitors see in the new Olive Press conference centre also came from Clyde.

It is now clear that Lundie, himself a dedicated entrepreneur who throughout his life has been self-employed, saw from the start the possibility of establishing Clyde as a majority shareholder in his own business – as he had already done with other suppliers and servicers to Boschendal. To this end he made available to the carpentry initiative a back-up of administrative, accounting and clerical services from Boschendal's own team. Clyde readily admits that he could never have managed these aspects of the business on his own and without them the new enterprise could not have flourished.

Today, therefore, those visiting Boschendal or getting in touch with its management can, if they so wish, place orders for this top-of-the-range cabinet making and carpentry team.

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