

Riversdale

Riversdale is an old town, dating back to the Hesse-gua Khoi Khoi who settled there some 2 000 years ago. (The area which includes Heidelberg, Slagvlei, Riversdale, Albertinia, Gauritz and Stillbaai is now known as Hessequa.) Their name means "people of the trees" but they were cattle farmers with their fat-tailed sheep and long-horned cattle, and they first had contact with the farmers from the Cape in 1667 when Hieronymus Cruse came to search for cattle. Twenty years later Louk Schryver, also looking to barter cattle, made friends with Goukou of the Hessequa,

and more and more cattle posts were established in the Overberg as it pushed east. Farmers settled and a church was needed. In 1837 the farm Doornkraal was bought as a church and around it a town grew.

The congregation asked the civil commissioner of Swellendam for permission to use his name. Sir Harry Rivers agreed. First it was to be called Riversville, but he suggested Riversdale. On 30 August 1838 it was proclaimed a town. In 1849 it became a municipality.

It remains a small town, gentle and faithful to its farming and church origins – and it has schools. The best known is the agricultural school, Oakdale – Hoër Landboueskool Oakdale, which is on the fringes of the town.



Oakdale Agricultural High School



FOUNDED: 1928
MOTTO: HAND EN HOOF
(HAND AND HEAD)
ADDRESS: RIVERSDALE
WWW.OAKDALE.CO.ZA



School History

The school was founded in 1928, just three years after electricity reached the town. The Department of Agriculture had bought the farm Oakdale to develop a training farm for soldiers returning from World War I. It was never used for that purpose, but in 1927 it was decided that the farm was suitable for the establishment of an agricultural school and 200 merino ewes, eight mules and four jersey cows were bought to set up the farm.

In 1928 the school opened with six pupils — three from the Transvaal and three from the Orange Free State. They settled into the farmhouse and the farm outhouses. Gradually the school grew. In 1930 a hostel was built with accommodation for 42 boys and the farmhouse became the school. During World War II, the farmhouse and the hostel were extended. By 1947 the hostel could accommodate 108 pupils. A second hostel was built in 1957 and a third in 2000.

Oakdale is one of 48 agricultural schools in South Africa and the oldest. It is not a big school, having just some 360 pupils, but they are all boarders and learner farmers. As such they enjoy the physical side of life.



Rugby at Oakdale

Part of that physicality expresses itself in rugby. The school runs 16 teams, which means that 70% of the pupils play rugby. The school's biggest problem is getting enough matches for their teams.

They have two big farming derbies — one against Marlow Landbou of Cradock, and one against Boland Landbou of Agter-Paarl, their Interschools match. The teams turn out with great enthusiasm. They started playing Boland Landbou in 1987 and Marlow in 2001. Coaches from 1987 have been Paul Reynecke, Willie Janse van Rensburg, Frans Marais and André Otto. Frans Marais, who had a long provincial career as a centre, is one of three rugby-playing brothers who became teachers.

Many Oakdale boys have been to Craven Week. The following have been chosen for South African Schools: SA Schools: Kobus Caldo (1998, 1999), Pedrie Wannenburg (1999), Callie Wannenburg (2001), Jan-Hendrik Joubert (2001), Antonie Gronum (2003), Johan Volschenk (2004) and Conrad Britz (2005). This is a remarkable number for a small school.

Each year the school runs a successful tournament for schools' first teams around Easter. In 2007, 24 teams took part, coming from all over South Africa. It has also run a Sevens tournament, which it won in 2007, and an Under-16 tournament. That year Oakdale took 38 boys on a tour to Argentina. The two teams played three matches each.

Old Boys recently involved in provincial rugby are Meyer Bosman, Cobus Caldo, Henk Eksteen (who went to play for Narbonne in France, the son of Ossie Eksteen who played for South Western Districts), Curlian Genis, Antonie Gronum, Gavin Hume (who went to play for Perpignan in France), Corné Meyer, Bertus Mulder, Marco Myburgh, Dirk Snyman, Johann Muller, the Wannenburg brothers, Callie and Pedrie, Jan Volschenk and JC Janse van Rensburg.

Internationals

South Africa:
Johann Muller
Pedrie Wannenburg
Meyer Bosman

Traditions

The mascot (bull) is handed to the Under-14A team captain by the Under-19A team captain at the Big Brag Event before Interschools.

The First XV wear white jerseys, whereas the other teams wear blue jerseys.

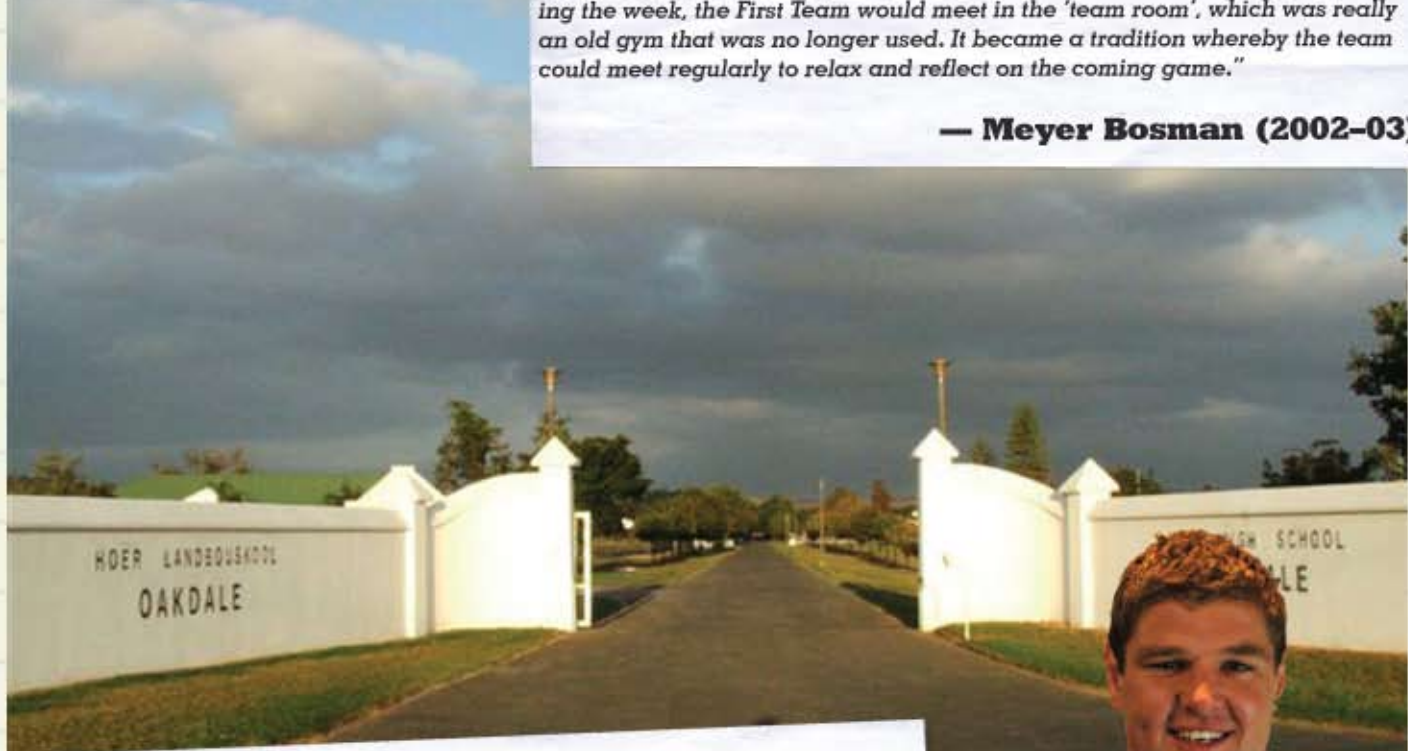
"I was grateful to have had some really good coaches at Oakdale. Frans Marais, Willie Janse van Rensburg and Kobus Gerber come to mind. Coaching and the schools large hostel help us to be a competitive rugby school, although I think our main rivals, Boland Landbou, benefit by being nearer some of the bigger Paarl, Stellenbosch and Cape Town schools.

Being able to play for the Oakdale First team was a real privilege. It was something that, as an Oakdale pupil, you aspire to, and traditions like the bull mascot are unforgettable."

— **Pedrie Wannenburg (1998-99)**

"Because Oakdale is a small, hostel school, there tends to be a good spirit in the school, and this is reflected on the Saturday morning. When I was at the school, there were about 320 boys, of which 310 were in the hostel. So generally, if there was a home game, we'd stay in the hostel for the Friday night. During the week, the First Team would meet in the 'team room', which was really an old gym that was no longer used. It became a tradition whereby the team could meet regularly to relax and reflect on the coming game."

— **Meyer Bosman (2002-03)**



"Oakdale is a very proud rugby school and it was great honour to play for the 1st team. I think a lot of people helped me through my school career. My dad was great, being at every game, not running next to the field and screaming at me... only after the game would we have a great chat about how it went. My coaches were also was great. Willie van Rensburg and Tienie Fourie.

To play for you country is just best thing ever. But school days were also very special as well. Playing in front of the whole school while they were singing and screaming meant so much."

— **Johann Muller**

