

The face of South Africa

By Maré Mouton

The farm Boplaas in the Koue Bokkeveld between Ceres and Citrusdal became famous as the birthplace of Afrikaans author I W van der Merwe, better known as Boerneef. It may also hold the record for the farm that has been owned by one family the longest: the farm, then called Moddervallei, was transferred to Izaak Wilhelmus van der Merwe in 1743 and is now farmed by the ninth generation of van der Merwes (the eleventh generation in South Africa). The H-shaped house (in background) is undated but may be older than the land grant, while the water mill (foreground) is more than 150 years old. The previous owner of the farm, who wrote under the name "Carl Boplaas", admitted in his memoirs that he was considering demolishing the mill, wagon-house, bakery and the "seephuisie" (where soap was made), when an uncle asked him, as a favour, to collect all the old items from lofts and outbuildings on the farm and to lock it up in the mill. As a result, many historical items were preserved, and Carl restored the mill to working condition in the 1970s.

