

# The face of South Africa

By Stephen Pryke

*On the morning of 15 September this year the residents of Impendle in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands woke to a winter wonderland. Not that theirs was the only place in the country to receive a blanket of Spring snow: snowfalls were also reported in the Eastern and the Western Cape. Access was difficult that morning and, without a four-wheel-drive vehicle, I had to trudge and slide over the last two kilometres of the muddy main road on foot. Fortunately, the snow here had largely cleared by the next day and cattle and goats were able to return to their grazing.*

*Impendle is a beautiful area. The little homestead in this picture is set against a backdrop of the 3 314-metre Giant's Castle, one of the highest peaks in Southern Africa. Visit in summer and the abiding image is one of an archetypal African scene. From the high points one looks down on traditional Zulu homesteads, rows of subsistence crops, women carrying large parcels on their heads and livestock grazing, with the quiet punctuated by the lowing of cattle, animal bells and occasional cheerful shouts by someone. Green in summer, Impendle is pleasantly cool thanks to a relatively high altitude. Impendle Nature Reserve lies only a few kilometres away, between Impendle village and the Drakensberg mountains, and is home to many small mammals as well as rare birds such as the Blue Swallow, Bald Ibis, Wattled Crane and Ground Hornbill.*

