

Dear Friends of The Craggs,

I was raised with resident Muscovy ducks that used to try and bath with me, a budgie on my shoulder, a cat in my shadow, pet pigs, hedgehogs, hamsters, rabbits, talking crows, Bouvier des Flandres and very naughty ponies. My mom is a medical doctor and my dad has always been an overt animal lover so by the age of three I was already telling people I was going to be a horse doctor.

As a child, my family moved to the Garden Route in 1981 and I spent the next 7 best years of my life in this beautiful part of the world. As one of the first pupils to start with Kim Wallace (nee Rivas) at the George Riding Club, where I went on to compete at a provincial level, I developed a strong passion for horses and their welfare.

From George I moved to Cape Town as a boarder at Wynberg Girls High but matriculated 1991 at Lowveld High in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga due to my family relocating.

After school I spent a gap year working in the Thoroughbred industry - first in Sunland, near Addo, with the Price Brothers, assisting in the preparation of yearlings for the National Yearling Sales, then on to the Natal Midlands to work on a stud farm for the breeding season. During this time I foaled down over 100 mares, assisted in general stud management and used to back the two-year old colts and fillies before they went into training.

From 1993/94, I studied veterinary nursing at the Faculty of Veterinary Science, at Onderstepoort, Pretoria and passed with distinction. I met Dr Daryl Hunt within the first couple of weeks of starting and we have been friends ever since. In 1995 I went back to Pietermaritzburg University to do BSc Agric and was then accepted into the second year of Veterinary Science in 1996.

As a vet student I saw practice with as many equine specialists as possible, always trying to combine it with travelling to new destinations. At the end of my 4th year I spent 6 weeks in Australia seeing practice with Equine stud and reproduction specialists along the east coast. After completing the theoretical part of our degree in my 5th year, I took a year off to work in the UK as a locum veterinary nurse in a small animal specialist referral centre, before returning to complete my degree. During my final clinical year I was sponsored by Mrs Bridgit Oppenheimer to attend one of my Equine rotations at the New Bolton Centre in Pennsylvania at their High Risk Pregnancy and Neonatal centre. One of the foals we were treating was insured for 28 million USD!!

I qualified as a vet from OP in December 2001. Earning my airfare doing night shifts at the Cape Animal Medical centre emergency service, I was on a plane back to the UK within a month and took my first job in a large mixed animal practice in Cornwall. We were 26 vets that served a 50 mile radius and the hospital was started in 1852! I arrived at the end of the foot and mouth disaster and was thrown straight into the mayhem caused by movement restrictions, being called out for a cow caesar almost every time I was on call due to heifers

that had been mated too early as they were not separated from their male siblings.

I started my family a bit sooner than anticipated and my eldest daughter, Daisy, was born back in Cape Town in 2003.

Until recently, my facebook page job title read "self employed gypsy vet" as I have worked in several places as a locum in the UK and South Africa including setting up a rural welfare vet clinic in a totally remote part of the Transkei for 3 weeks, where we sterilised and treated almost 700 animals including dogs, cats, horses, goats, sheep and chickens. I did not yet feel the longing to put down permanent roots anywhere until now.

I met my husband, Andy Rodmell in Cornwall, UK. We came back to South Africa at the end of 2006 and our 2nd daughter, India, was also born in Cape Town in 2007. We had previously identified The Crags as where we would like to settle and raise our family and we came to look at properties here only a few months later. I had already decided I wanted to open a vet clinic, but it was not yet meant to be...

In 2009 Andy was still working on the oil rigs in the North Sea, so sent my girls to live with their UK family for 6 months and I did a resident equine internship at Drakenstein Veterinary Centre, just outside of Franschoek. During this time, I did a lot of high care/intensive care, foaling management, assisted in theatre and general first opinion work. I was fortunate to work with Prof Sybrand van den Berg, Dr Andrew Gray, who is now becoming a European board certified Equine surgeon, Dr Rachel Shuttleworth, the reproduction specialist and Dr Cynthia Donellan, Equine medicine specialist.

During the 6 months that I was slaving away in the hospital, my husband stripped and refurbished an old bus with full sleeping quarters, kitchen, hot shower, log burner etc. We hit the road and spent the next 9 months travelling as a family around Europe. I home schooled my oldest daughter and we have the most incredible family memories from this experience.

During this time we adopted our first official family pet –Jamie, from Drepano beach, in Greece. He was one of the feral dogs running around in a pack, scavenging in the camp sites. We were based there for a couple of weeks while Andy was completing his rotation on the North Sea, so Jamie got to know us and decided we were worth hanging around for. He followed the girls everywhere and by the time Andy got back, we were not leaving without him.

The local vets in Greece vaccinated, dewormed and treated Jamie for external parasites. I could not, however get him a passport. We were forced to bend some rules and managed to smuggle him from Greece to Italy, to Croatia and then Slovenia where I met up with a vet colleague friend and Jamie became a Slovenian national after being castrated. I then left my family on the road to return Jamie back to South Africa exporting him from Frankfurt, arriving in Cape

Town at the end of November 2010. Jamie was joined by a companion – a ginger male cat called Selassie.

Settling in Houtbay, including the acquisition of a pony (the cheeky sports model called Chelsea), was not meant to be. In May 2011 I had a very unfortunate head on collision with a cash transit van that was over taking on a blind corner. As a result of my injuries and then my 3rd pregnancy, we moved back to the UK, with a cat and a dog and two children, as Andy was still working on the North Sea. Chelsea had to stay in Hout Bay!

Our son, Devon was born in Cornwall in 2012. Last year Andy finally managed to secure a job working off shore of Africa. This gave us the opportunity to move “home” at last. At the same time William and Lucinda Edwards were looking for tenants for their parents’ property on Ingwe farm in The Craggs and we were fortunate to be able to arrange this from the UK.

Towards the end of last year we relocated again from UK to South Africa but this time to The Craggs, with our 3 kids, cat and dog and reunited with our pony, Chelsea. Since then we have adopted another cat, a dog from PAWS and another from KAWS and two horses from Bitou Horse Welfare.

Our son, Devon, goes to The Craggs Eco School and our two daughters attend the Raphaeli Waldorf school in Piesang Valley road. Daisy is a very keen horse rider and Chelsea is staying at the 5 star inn at Tamodi until we build some stables. India is a keen micro nipper, gymnast and rock climber.

I was happy to start as a locum and assist with welfare work for now, and have assisted in both the PAWS and KAWS volunteer spay days and vaccination clinics and do regular shifts at the KAWS clinic in Knysna.

When Laura contacted me to see if I would be interested in taking over The Craggs Vet Clinic earlier this year, it was a dream come true. I immediately contacted Daryl as we have spoken about doing this for years.

We compliment each other very well with our skills base – he is a keen surgeon and his main interest is small animals, wild life and exotics. I have more interest in small animal medicine and equines. We are holistic in our approach and will consider alternative modalities such as veterinary herbal medicine and acupuncture where necessary and feel very strongly about being involved in our local community and making a difference.

We look forward to being of service to you in the near future.