

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Fامona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/0 30/94

NEWSLETTER 9 / FEBRUARY 1996

1 - COMMITTEE NEWS

It is with regret that we have had to accept the resignation of PAULETTE O'HARE who is travelling to the United Kingdom to join her fiancé, and enter college. Paulette has been in charge of arranging functions. The committee takes this opportunity to thank Paulette for her contribution over the past eighteen months.

2 - NEW VICE-CHAIRMAN

JOHN MOGER has stepped down as Vice-Chairman, and been replaced by IAIN SHEASBY. John will be concentrating on the Rock Art issues, and liaison with National Museums and Monuments, whilst Iain will remain with the membership portfolio, as well as his new position.

3 - MEMBERSHIP

Society certificates of membership have been distributed to all members who are involved in the tourism sector. The certificates will be restricted to corporate members, and if we have omitted any such members, please advise us.

Membership of the society now stands at 77, following cancellations for subscriptions o/s.

Ordinary members	55	Life members	8
Corporate members	11	Associate members	3

4 - WORLD HERITAGE

The Regional Inspector of Monuments, Mr J Muringanisa, who is responsible for the World Heritage submission (due to be presented to the UNESCO in July this year by the National Museums and Monuments) has written to the World Heritage Fund to request funding and assistance for further research into the communal lands, so as to round off the submission. There is a wealth of information from research in the National Park, but very little for those areas lying outside the park.

5 - EXOTIC TREES

It is understood that National Parks staff will soon start clearing exotic trees and shrubs from the National Park. The most obvious area to be affected will be the old pine plantation opposite the MOTH shrine. These trees were planted in the early part of the century as part of the Arboretum, and with the purpose of establishing whether forestry would be a suitable industry for the hills - fortunately, as shown by the state of the trees, this was not successful. The trees are likely to be cleared in strips so as to minimise the impact of the clearing, and indigenous species will be replanted.

Other areas that will attract attention are the various picnic sites in which Lantana camara or cactus are found (it is hoped that the Society will be allowed to assist in this regard) and the Maleme valley, which is full of gum and willow trees.

It is hoped that OPERATION RALEIGH will be allowed to assist National Parks in this event as a trial for their future involvement in the Matobo region - and in our projects.

6 - NEXT EVENT

We have arranged the following function for the Society:

WHERE	Boomerang Farm, NE Matopos
WHEN	Sunday 10 March 1996 MEET : Churchill Arms Hotel 9:00am
WHY	Mostly an historical and scenic visit. Good game viewing
WHO	All members and friends
WHAT	Picnic lunch, bring own meal, drinks, chairs, HATS etc

We will be visiting Fort Usher, the second Indaba Site, and search for Fort Mtshabezi.

DISTANCE TO THE FARM: ± 40 km. ROUTE: OLD GWANDA ROAD - DRIVE SLOWLY.

7 - REPORT BACK

A most successful event was held in December at Amalinda, with AUBREY PACKENHAM proving to be a most interesting guide. The threat of rain made the event all the more exciting, and did not dampen spirits at all. About 25 members attended, visiting rock art sites, shrines, and other sites of archaeological interest.

8 - WATER

Following the good rains, it is a pleasure to report that all the dams in the National Park have filled, and are spilling (with the exception of the Matopos Dam). Consequently, the pending crises at Mpopoma Dam has been averted, and of course there is no threat of the Maleme Rest Camp closing.

The "mystery" of Maleme dam filling is not such an unusual event. The dam is a relatively small body of water (made smaller each year due to serious siltation, that perhaps now accounts for 40% of the original volume of the lake) and is therefore easily filled by a sufficiently large storm. The night before the dam filled, a storm of over 100mm fell in the catchment, and the resultant flooding of the Maleme and Mamelongwe rivers accounts for the rapid filling of the dam. The real issue is why the dam filled so late in the season, and this is a direct consequence of the construction of at least three weirs upstream of the dam, all of which are believed to be illegal. It is understood that one of these dams has burst. A similar event occurred about six years ago, when following a storm of over 100mm in the Figtree area, the Mamelongwe river filled the dam in less than 8 hours.

Attempts to have the matter involving illegal weir construction above the Mpopoma dam cleared have foundered within the Water Department. No doubt, now that the pressure is off, it will be even more difficult to resolve the matter.

The massive Mtshabezi dam has now filled to over 25% and the lake is now forming behind the 45m high concrete wall. All the tributaries are flowing well. (as at 4/2/96)

The park is looking in great shape, with every spruit flowing, and sufficient water to last until the next rainy season - not that the current year is over!

9 - MATOPOS RECORD?

Rainfall figures for the eastern Matopos stand at over 1 285mm (52") as at 11 February, and it is quite arguable that this represents the highest (wettest) position in the country. Rainfall figures for the Matopos, as given in the Chronicle or on ZBC are those for the Matopos Research Station, which is always much lower than the Eastern Matopos.

10 - TREE IDENTIFICATION COURSE

A tree identification course is being run from the 15th to 18th March 1996, at Big Cave Camp, by MEG COATES-PALGRAVE. Special accommodation rates have been arranged for participants and those interested should contact Big Cave Camp on telephone 183-8245.