



PO Box FM 648, Fomona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

## NEWSLETTER 19 / SEPTEMBER 1998

### **1 - CHAIRMANS REVIEW**

Whilst a full report on the activities of the society will be presented at the Annual General Meeting (detailed at the end of this newsletter), I thought it appropriate to consider some of the successes and failures during the past year, and indeed over the five years since our establishment. Yes, we have had our failures, but I think that they are far outweighed by our modest achievements.

Despite hard campaigning, the Matopos is not yet listed as a World Heritage Site, but it has been entered on the shortlist, and with just a bit more effort, we may just succeed. Contrary to reports in the press, it has always been our intention to include the WHOLE Matobo Hills, and not just the National Park. Our earlier efforts, which were initially carried out with National Parks, clearly demonstrated that it was not adequate to list only the Park, and so our involvement with the National Museums, and a shift to focus on the cultural history (without neglecting the remarkable flora and fauna) was inevitable - indeed the logical progression. This has developed into a positive, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationship with the National Museums.

We have not had any joy in convincing authorities that visitors to the park do not appreciate an endless demand on their pocket, but would prefer to make one payment at the point of entry. However, I am led to believe that progress may yet be made in this regard, with Parks and Museums sharing entry fees. This would also then facilitate Museums' employment of additional custodians so that our Rock Art Heritage can be properly protected.

The Society has developed positive relationships with the two Rural District Councils (Matobo and Umzingwane) and in particular with the latter, this is being translated into the creation of a Nature Reserve in the Mtshabezi Gorge, the adoption of conservation bye-laws, and the establishment of campfire operations. Again, the relationships have been one of considerable exchange, with both parties coming to a better understanding of the many and complex environmental problems of the hills.

The quarterly field trips have become the bench mark for other societies. We have enjoyed many varied outings, always accompanied by an expert willing to enthuse on the topic of the day. The newsletter has also become an eagerly awaited "journal" by our members. Membership itself has continued to grow (though not as many young members as one would want) whilst our finances have gone from strength to strength. We have been able to produce a number of educational items for both schools and tourists, all contributing to a better awareness of the issues.

The society has matured to become a recognized and respected pressure body. We must however ensure that it does not grow obsolete and redundant just as quickly.



### **2 - REMINDER**

Have you paid your 1998 / 1999 subscriptions that were due 31 July ? Subs must be paid before the Annual General Meeting.

### 3- NEXT EVENT

WHERE	Fort Mtshabezi & Matopo Mission
WHEN	Sunday 22 September 1998
MEET	At Churchill Arms Hotel 09:00am for 09:15am departure
WHO	All members and friends
WHAT	Bring own lunch, deck chairs, drinks. Don't forget your hat!
WHY	An historical and social trip into the north-western hills.

All vehicles will be able to access the sites.

This field trip has two purposes to it :

- A) Fort Mtshabezi. This fort is situated on the headwaters of the Mtshabezi river on the way to Boomerang. It saw little action during 1896, but as it was built along the road to Filabusi, a "refueling point" for both beast and man, before the roads were entirely surveyed, the fort has all but disappeared. The society has on two previous occasions been permitted onto the farm to search for the fort, but whilst the fort was not found, the visits allowed us the opportunity of seeing magnificent scenery. The fort has finally been located and we have been allowed back to visit. However, the farm is now being run as a safari camp (Royal Kingdom) and so access will be limited.
- B) Matobo Mission. The society, during one of its earliest trips, visited the Matobo Mission, and it is planned to return here during the Mission's centenary year. The Mission, founded soon after the 1896 war, came to play an important educational and agricultural role, not just for the people of the Matopos, but even as far afield (no pun intended!) as Zambia and Botswana. It has a fascinating history and promising future. The main centenary celebration was held from 26-30 August 1998.

Should time permit, the afternoon may be spent visiting Morning Glory farm, adjacent to the Mission where an "outward bound" school is being established.

### 4- REPORT BACK

The visit by the Society to the Mangwe District was a most memorable affair. A group of around 40 to 45 members (including members of the WSZ) travelled out to Marula, and thence to Fort Luck, which was an 1896 fort built along the Mangwe road - then the only link to Cape Town!

The party proceeded to the Mangwe Pass and Memorial, where we were joined by Barbara Viljoen and four visitors from South Africa. It transpired that this second group included a Mr Sarel Lee (grandson of John Lee) searching for the ruins of his grandfather's house, to which we proceeded after visiting Fort Mangwe. At the ruins of John Lee's house (c. 1880) and following Dereck Viljoen's introduction, Sarel spoke of his family and their life here in Matabeleland and in the Northern Transvaal over a century ago. It was a moving event for all present, and even more so for Sarel and his wife. All remarked on the incredible coincidence of meeting Sarel on this particular outing. Before lunching under a magnificent *Diospyrus missillifolius* on the banks of the Mangwe dam, we visited the old Mangwe cemetery.

The day was truly superb, and our considerable appreciation is extended to Barbara and Dereck for their magnificent hospitality and fascinating lectures.

### 5- ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

VENUE           NEWMAN HALL, NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM  
TIME             5:15pm FOR 5:30pm  
DATE             16 OCTOBER 1997  
SPEAKER & TOPIC   TO BE ADVISED

Please give serious thought to nominations, which should be submitted to the Secretary, in writing, prior to the meeting. Remember, your Society can only be as strong as the Committee elected to run it!

