

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 27 / JUNE 2000

1 - SOCIETY AFFAIRS

Your committee has obtained quotes for the manufacture of Society shirts, hats etc. It is intended that not only will this generate some revenues for the society, but also it will help in getting our image across to the public. However, there is quite a range available, and consequently we would like to obtain the opinion of our members. The following items are available

- Cotton Shirt (with collar and embroidered badge)
- Golf Shirt (with collar and embroidered badge)
- T-shirt (no collar, screen printed badge)
- Wide brimmed hat (with embroidered logo)
- Cap (with embroidered logo)

There are minimum orders, so we will have to select the most popular lines only, and order a variety of sizes. In so far as colours go, the shirts may be in jungle green, or khaki. The logo will be in Bushman orange. Again the most popular colours will be ordered.

Please let us have your opinion, should we proceed with such a venture? What range should be purchased? What are your preferred colours?

2 - CYCLONE ELINE UPDATE

Your Society was represented at a URDC meeting in which the preliminary disaster data was presented. It is reproduced here to give members an idea of the scope of damage that occurred in the eastern Matopos. Please note that the area covered does not include parts of the hills west of the Tuli river or north of the Matopo Mission, and the figures were not complete as some communities were still cut off.

1536 homes damaged (83 huts collapsed, 189 houses collapsed)

4500 people homeless (383 people in need of feeding)

1 50 Blair toilets collapsed

16 goats, 8 cows, 3 donkeys killed, 71 granaries destroyed

1 12 kms road destroyed, 2 bridges damaged, 4 dams burst, 3 pipe schemes damaged

We were able to make the point that much of the hardship was in fact the result of the neglect by the authorities to enforce conservation bylaws, such as the prohibition on stream bank cultivation. Homes had been built during the drought years in areas, which are traditionally vleis - these homes had of course collapsed. The NRB advised that there is no compensation paid to persons for losses incurred where such loss was the result of violating conservation bylaws - i.e. fields and homes within thirty meters of stream/river banks are not compensated for. Council accepted the need to enforce these bylaws in future to avoid a repeat of the disaster when the next cyclone comes this way - which it will, even if it is ten years from now.

3 -WOOD CARVING

The Society has made representation to both the NRB and to the Umzingwane Rural District Council regarding both the increase in numbers, and increase in size, of woodcarvings for sale along the Gwanda Road, between Esigodini and Gwanda. The NRB has found considerable hostility towards their staff in the area but Council has resolved to assist.

Council will also look into stream bank cultivation and deforestation on the Irisvale Resettlement farm in the same area.

4 - NEXT EVENT

Date	Sunday 16 th July 2000
Venue	Silozwane Cave
Meet	Churchill Arms Hotel 8:45 for 9:00 departure
Travel	All vehicles, trucks preferred
Details	This is one of the great caves of the Matopos. Time permitting, energetic members may want to climb Mt Silozwe, the largest mountain in the Matopos. Trucks preferred, but all vehicles should manage the dirt roads. Route to be advised

5 - REPORT BACK

Despite fuel shortages and other field trips held on the same day, 23 determined members met at Ascot Service Station under a warm sun and set off for the Lumani falls. Regrettably, members of the URDC were, at the last minute, unable to accompany the group. After a quick cup of tea, the team set off for the falls themselves - having decided it was safer not to and cross the river by vehicle. However, the walk is short, and pleasant enough. The falls were reached in due course, some members took to swimming, others to climbing the falls themselves and others just enjoyed the beauty and tranquillity - well apart from the noise of the waterfall itself! The river was flowing very well, but there was plenty of evidence of the massive flooding that occurred some weeks earlier.

After a leisurely lunch, the group visited Kulembedzi dam, a delightful little dam nestled below Wambeza mountain and surrounded by mountain acacia, and then proceeded to the Mtshabezi dam, where the water was still pouring over the spill way. The late afternoon sun cast a tranquil glow over the still waters of the lake. Some members went on to visit the URDC lodge being built at the dam site. The trip enabled members to visit some wonderful sights of the Eastern Matopos, but more importantly allowed us to see the damage caused by the heavy rains. There is massive and alarming siltation of all the river systems - a situation that simply cannot be sustainable in the long term. This in turn resulted in blocking of bridges, which then of course suffer extensive damage. Dams are being filled by sand at a rate far in excess of that estimated previously, whilst river banks are being undercut as silt fills the original river course. This has resulted in massive trees crashing down, and general erosion of the riverbanks. Stream bank cultivation, poor agricultural practice, and the building of homes in vleis all compound the environmental problem — and result in even greater hardship for the rural people themselves.

Following our visit, your committee has had an opportunity to report to the URDC on the state of the environment at Lumani falls and at Mtshabezi dam, and on the lack of public toilets and facilities. We will advise members of progress in these areas.

6 - COMMUNAL LANDS GULLEY SURVEY

We have been asked by the URDC to assist with the identification of gullies caused by Cyclone Eline. A donor will assist with a recovery programme. Consequently, we are appealing to members who may be travelling out into the Communal lands, to please collect a report form from the Chairman, or from Mrs Mary Friend, take along a tape measure, and help us to get the survey done. This is a great opportunity for us to ensure that some environmental restoration is done in the hills, and a chance for us to get involved.

7 - RAINFALL

As at the end of March, the position was as follows:

The eastern Matopos (Matopo Mission) has recorded 1400mm (56") and the western hills (Kezi Rd) 900mm (36"). Average rainfall is 850mm and 600mm respectively.

8 - ASPIVENOM

We have received a few enquiries regarding the purchase of the Aspivenom Pump. We shall endeavour to source these, foreign currency permitting.

9 - SPECIAL APPEAL - CYCLONE ELINE

We would like to thank all those who contributed to this appeal. Your committee elected to assist those villagers living in the Ntunja area; Gulati Communal Lands, which was featured in the Chronicle. Distribution was made directly by the Society, with the advice of the local councillor.