

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famaona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/0 30/94

NEWSLETTER 30 / JANUARY 2001

1 -NEW COMMITTEE

The Society held a well-attended annual general meeting in early November, with a good number of members staying behind to join in the social braai. Whilst we all would have liked to have been in the Hills themselves, the granites of Mabukaweni, with the "right" indigenous trees all around, did very well indeed!

Mr Trevor Hemans was the only member of the outgoing committee who was not available for re-election, and there were no new nominations. Consequently, following the first committee meeting the new committee is as follows_

Mr Iain Sheasby	Chairman
Mr Derek Darby	Vice-Chairman & Membership
Mr Gavin Stephens	Secretary (Acting) & World Heritage
Mrs Barbara Muchechetere	Treasurer
Mrs Mary Friend	Events
Miss Pam Birch	Education
Mr Guy Ellman-Brown	DNPWM
Mrs Flora Sibindi	Rural Councils
Miss Bobby Hogan	NMM's
Mr Mike Philipson	NRB

You will see that the Secretary is in an acting capacity. If there are any volunteers for the position, please let the Chairman know. We have been very fortunate in the calibre of secretary in the past, and so it is important that this critical role is filled.

The committee is presently examining both its structure and the number of projects on hand, in the hope of rationalising its effort, and improving efficiencies. To this end they may be asking members to sit on committees to assist with the completion of outstanding project work. If you would like to be a part of this, please contact the Secretary. We hope to bring you more on this development in due course.

2 - MCS HATS AND SHIRTS

The Society hats and shirts have been delayed yet again. The manufacturer unfortunately closed down before our order was processed, and so the order has had to be placed elsewhere. We do apologise for this unfortunate delay, but assure you that the matter is not forgotten, and is being pursued.

3 - MEMBERSHIP

The Committee has resolved to examine the list of members against the list of outstanding subscriptions and to cancel the membership of all those who have subscriptions outstanding. Committee members will endeavour to contact each of the affected persons, but members are again asked to check that they have paid their subscriptions that were due in July 2000.

4 - RAINS

The 2001 season is not looking good at present. An anti-cyclone, Botswana upper high, established itself during the Christmas period, and there has been no rain for some time. Consequently, the hills are presently well behind average, with on average only between 125mm and 200mm recorded so far, some 40% of normal. We hope that the forecasts of a good February remain accurate!

5 - NEXT EVENT

Date	4 February
Venue	TBA
Meet	9:00am, Churchill Arms
Travel	TBA
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks

6 - REPORT BACK

Only two teams with a total of 7 members participated in the event, which was unfortunate. As a consequence, not all sites were visited, but the balance of sites are being included in subsequent fieldwork so as to complete the exercise. For those who attended, the survey was both interesting and worthwhile, and the weekend was made all the more fun as it coincided with a wet spell. Consequently, the hills were in a spectacular condition. The teams spend the night on the farm Shumbashaba Mkulu, staying in converted stables and enjoying an evening braai where tales of the day were swapped. There were mixed results, with some alarming damage to rock art being reported, but also some remote sites being found without trace of any damage. The teams were armed with GPS equipment so as to record exact positions for future surveys, and the experience gained will assist with the planning of similar tasks in future.

7 - CHEETAH SURVEY

A study of cheetah at Chipangali will be undertaken in late January. Members are offered the chance of being part of the observation team, which will entail observing the animals for pre-determined periods from a platform. (Somewhat like a Game Count). If you are interested, please contact Miss Pam Birch on 67049 (h).

8 - APPEAL FOR HELP

The committee believes that the society requires professional legal advice if we are to put pressure on various bodies to perform in accordance with the statutes presently in existence that regulate environmental management and control. If pressure is to be exerted it is important that we are able to quote from the relevant statutes when making our presentations, and it seems that at present environmental legislation is to be found in a great many different statutes. The society has a number of copies of various acts in its records, but we are sure that these are incomplete. Of interest is the proposed formation of an Environmental Law Association, established between Environment 2000 and the CZI. Assistance or advice from any of our legal minded members on this topic would be appreciated.

9 - EMAIL

The Society has been shocked by the 300% increase in postage, from \$2;00 to \$8;00, for domestic postage. This means that our newsletter will cost per issue over \$2,000 in postage alone! Consequently, those members who have e-mail addresses, and would like to receive their newsletters in this manner should please contact the Secretary so that you can be included on the e-mail network. This will result in your newsletter arriving early, and contribute towards reducing our administrative costs.

10 - APPRECIATION

Mr Trevor Hemans stood down from the committee after serving as secretary for the past five years. Trevor has been a member of the committee since the inception of the Society - indeed he was a part of the interim committee that saw the establishment of the MCS in 1994. He has played a significant role in the establishment, and subsequent smooth running of the Society, and his contributions at Committee meetings will most certainly be missed. With Trevor's departure, there is only one remaining member of the committee that was a part of the original team, but this is perhaps a positive point as it means that the baton has been successfully handed over from those who established the society to those who followed. It has certainly been a period of growth for the society, and despite the present depressing state of affairs in the country, the society has managed to grow in member numbers, activities and financial strength.