



PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 41 / SEPTEMBER 2003

1 – MATOBO HILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

The World Heritage Convention was established at the 17th General Conference of UNESCO in November 1972. The 27th World Heritage Congress concluded on 3rd July 2003 with the announcement of 24 new sites listed on the World Heritage list. This brings to 754 the number of sites from 128 countries that are listed as World Heritage Sites. Of these 582 are cultural sites, 149 are natural sites, and 23 are mixed sites.

The MCS started campaigning for World Heritage Status almost from the time of the Society's establishment in 1993. By June 1995 a proposal had been submitted to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management, but that was lost during the shake-up at Parks that followed the departure of Dr W Nduku, the then director, who had lent much support to the initiative. However, the Natural History Museum in Bulawayo that had reviewed the draft on behalf of the MCS, took the work to a World Heritage Convention held in Harare later that same year, and the project received a new lease of life – and a new adopted parent. Finally in 2000, the Zimbabwe UNESCO Commission provided funds to complete the project, and ensured that the three key stakeholders – Museums, Parks and the MCS – were involved along with Local Government, Traditional Leadership and others.

The World Heritage Committee, meeting in Budapest, Hungary on 26th June 2002 selected the Matobo Hills World Heritage Cultural Landscape Site as one of 30, out of over 500 submissions, after the Technical Committee changed the submission from one of a Mixed Site to that of a Cultural Landscape Site. This was a key moment in the campaign that resulted in a visit by ICOMOS in October 2002.

The Hills have been recognised as a Cultural Landscape. Whilst this is not a mixed site per se, it still draws upon both cultural and natural attributes, endeavouring to acknowledge the impact of man on the environment, and the environments impact on the evolution of man.

The Matobo Hills is a unique landscape because it contains both cultural and natural attributes of exceptional aesthetic, scientific and educational significance. The diverse cultural heritage in the area spans a period of more than four hundred thousand years, with continual settlement over at least one hundred thousand years from Early Iron Age to the present. There are numerous rock art sites, rock shelters with Stone Age and Iron Age deposits, religious sites, historical burial sites and historical buildings. The cultural time-depth and variety is not represented anywhere else in the country. The natural landscape comprises unique scenic geological formations, and fauna and flora. The area possesses great variety and population density of predator species, especially in the avian world. It is regarded as one of the most important sanctuary for birds of prey, and includes the largest population of Black Eagle, *Aquila verauxii*, to be found any-where in the world. The hills also possess the largest population of Leopard, *Panthera pardus*, and are an important sanctuary and research centre for both endangered Rhino species, *Ceratotherium simum* and *Diceros bicornis*. Over 210 species of tree, and 20 species of wild orchid give the area a particular significance in the botanical arena in the sub continent.

Apart from the status of being recognised as a World Heritage Site, the listing opens up considerable research opportunities for the Matobo Hills. This could also imply assistance with the protection of the rock art, tourist management and a commitment by the State to preserve the integrity of the site. Whilst major issues around the environment, demographics and pollution still remain to be addressed, with the World Heritage status we will be able to draw upon the expertise of UNESCO and others to determine the best possible approach to future challenges. It goes without saying that tourism to the Hills will also improve over time due to its enhanced status, and it is hoped this may improve the lives of the Matopos residents.

2 – BOOK RAFFLE

Two lovely books have been donated to the Society and will be raffled separately at the AGM. The books are “Pocket List of Southern African Indigenous Trees” and “People’s Plants; A Guide to Useful Plants in Southern Africa”. Tickets will be sold at \$500 each, and can be obtained in advance from the Treasurer.

3 - NEXT EVENT

Date	Saturday 8 th / Sunday 9 th November 2003
Venue	Maleme Rest Camp
Meet	Maleme Rest Camp
Travel	All vehicles
Details	Our tenth anniversary and AGM will be celebrated!

The Committee have reserved the entire Maleme Rest Camp for the night of Saturday 8th November. To make a reservation, please take this newsletter to the National Parks Reservations Office, in Bulawayo. National Parks will reserve the camp until 12 September, so you must make your reservation before this date. A number of special events will be arranged, including walks, and a concert in the rocks. The World Heritage Video will also be available (Copies of the video are not yet ready for sale). On Saturday evening, following the AGM, there will be a social braai (please bring your own food and drinks) for all members, including those who choose not to stay overnight. A full programme of events will be made available at Maleme on arrival, but will not start until after the AGM.

4 – REPORT BACK

The field trip on 3rd August was again well attended despite our various woes. Enough people managed to collect fuel to join the outing, and whilst the day started cool and overcast, by the afternoon it was clear and warm. Just under forty members attended. The cars were parked in the vicinity of the Nkantolo Battle Site, and the monument was visited, before we set out on a 4km walk into the Tuli Valley, and down to the ruins of Lobengula’s House (1870-1890), which were located thanks to Norman Scott. Lunch was held back at the cars, and members then went for small walks in the vicinity of the picnic site in the afternoon. Appreciation is extended to Norman Scott for taking time out of a Scout event to join us and act as guide. This was a very interesting historical outing, enjoyed by all participants.

5 – PARK ACCOMODATION RATES TO INCREASE

The Park rates are set to increase from 1st September 2003. They were last increased on 1st January 2003. The new rates are as follows:

Eagle Lodges from \$7,000 per night to \$25,000, Lodges from \$6,000 to \$20,000, Chalets from \$2,000 to \$10,000, and camping from \$500 per person to \$2,500 per person. Other charges remain unchanged.

6 – SUBSCRIPTIONS 2003/2004

This is a reminder to our members that Subscriptions, referred to in the last Newsletter, are now overdue. Please attend to this important issue.

FAMILY / INDIVIDUAL	\$ 2,000
SPECIAL / PENSION	\$ 600
CORPORATE	\$20,000

7 - AGM

The 10th Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Saturday 8th November 2003 at Maleme Rest Camp at 4:00pm. This will mark our tenth anniversary, so a special event is planned. Please support your committee, and society, by attending. It is also important that we are able to elect a new committee for the year ahead, so please give some consideration to new committee members - this is an important request. Refer to details above re accommodation and events at Maleme Rest Camp.

8 – CHANGE TO THE MCS CONSTITUTION

Following notice given at the last AGM, and discussion with the Zimbabwe Revenue Service, it is proposed to include in our constitution the following amendments:

Para 8.3 The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority shall be advised of, and approve, any changes to the constitution before being effected, and Para 9.3 The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority shall be advised of, and approve, the manner of distribution of any remaining assets upon dissolution of the Society.