

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

www.matobo.org

Welfare No: W/O 30/94

NEWSLETTER 74 / JUNE 2011

1 – MCS PROJECT AT MALEME REST CAMP NEARS COMPLETION

With funds raised from the “Heritage Ride” your committee met with National Parks and offered to refurbish the ablution block at the Maleme Rest Camp. This project will not just benefit future riders as they use the camp, but obviously all occupants at the Maleme Rest Camp who stay in chalets, and so leaves a small legacy from the “Heritage Ride”. It is hoped that each year further work will be done to various facilities within the Park as we seek to assist Parks to recover from the years of low maintenance. At the time of writing new tiles have been laid and painting is underway. New bathroom fittings have also been installed, whilst National Parks have undertaken to replace the geyser. The project should be concluded in July.

2 – THE LAND DEBATE

Illegal settlers on conservancies and plantations have contributed to an increase in poaching and degradation of the environment, officials from the National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and the Forestry Commission said yesterday. The officials said this in oral evidence to the House of Assembly Portfolio Committee on Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism, chaired by Tsholotsho South legislator Maxwell Dube (MDC). Parks Director-General Vitalis Chadenga said several conservancies had deteriorated due to the illegal settlers' activities – *Herald, April 5th, 2011*

3 – IRONWILL 2011

This was the 11th edition of the Ironwill, which is usually held in Chimanimani or Nyanga. This was the first time that the event had been held in the Matopos, and it turned out to be the largest event to date with 66 competitors, divided into an Elite Category (4 teams) and a Sport category, which had slightly less arduous routes, or shorter distances. The first two days were essentially riding, though there was a ten km hike and a 300m swim in the Mtshabezi Dam on day one, and the second two days were hiking. The weather turned cool, and rained almost solidly for the first two days – but plenty of hot water in the Camp Dwala showers kept the competitors going! During the hike phase the weather was superb, and under a brilliant star light sky the collection of tents turned quiet and went to sleep! The race was designed so the participants visited a variety of rock art sites, demonstrating different styles, and culminating in a visit to Inange Cave at the start of day four. Whilst competitors had been impressed with Gulubaghwe and Amadzimba, it was the almost reverential silence at Inange that showed how impressive that cave was – or perhaps the participants were now finally broken! Your Chairman participated in the event giving a talk each evening on the next day's highlights, or as at Inange, at the site. But this meant he had to compete as well and so like the others ended foot sore and weary! By all accounts the event was a resounding success – and certainly introduced a number of people to the glory of the Matopos.

4 – FUMUGWE SCHOOL PROJECT

The society was able to source a donation of roofing material from TURNALL for the classroom block at Fumungwe School. Any members who might like to get involved with this worthwhile cause should contact Duncan Purchase, or let the secretary know of your interest. On behalf of the school, we would like to record our appreciation to TURNALL for this support.

5 – MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

We are in the process of updating our data base and so will be removing members whose subs are in arrears. Please ensure that you are paid up to date and that your details are current.

6 - NEXT EVENT

Date	10 July 2011
Venue	Brandt's Patrol, Sikombo's Fight and the Orbicular Granite
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Ascot Service Station
Travel	Trucks preferred
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

PLEASE NOTE THE DEPARTURE POINT. In early morning of 2 April 1896, a column of 100 men (and one maxim gun) was sent from Bulawayo to gather up any survivors from the outbreak of the Matabele Rebellion / Umvekela and to "rescue" the folks in Gwanda. This column had an uneventful trip south on the old Tuli wagon road, though found Dawson's Store on the Umzingwane still smouldering from being burnt down the day before. After three days they arrived in Gwanda to find that the people of Gwanda had just recently retired from their fort there to Fort Tuli. Knowing that they were needed back in Bulawayo the column returned north, and so started back on 9 April after patrolling the district. They had a harrowing journey back to the laager at Bulawayo and were lucky to survive. Ominously Granger's store had been burnt down in the intervening period, and the 10th April saw a concerted attack by Matabele Regiments under the command of Babyaan as the column passed through the eastern fringes of the Matopos. Finally after continuously suffering losses the patrol reached a dwala near Dawson's Store on the banks of the Umzingwane and made a stand. During the night the patrol travelled onto Bulawayo carrying their dead and wounded. Of the 100 men, 8 were dead, 2 dying, and over 20 wounded. It was an heroic but fruitless effort, which saw the greatest loss of British lives in the 1896 campaign. This outing will trace part of their passage in the north eastern Matobo Hills, visit the old wagon route and the battle sites along the way, and so promises to be particularly interesting. Members will be able to visit the Orbicular Granite as we will have lunch at Diana's Pool. This is a rare geological formation, which is rarely visited.

In the afternoon we will visit the site of Sikombo's Fight which took place on 5th August 1896. This was probably the largest single engagement, and some severe casualties were suffered. If time permits we will also visit Fort Umlugulu and the 1896 Cemetery – so let's be on time and "move along" so that we get to do all that is promised on this outing.

7 – REPORT BACK

(with appreciation to S Adams)

On the 10th of April 2011, a group of 25 MCS members inclusive of 1 teenager, and 2 younger children, gathered at the Churchill Arms Hotel car park, prior to departing on our trip out to Fumugwe Primary School which had been previously arranged by Duncan & Nettie Purchase, in conjunction with Dr Phinot Moyo.

The morning, although being cold was sunny, and so warmed up around 10am. We started off at 8am, taking the route to Fumugwe via the Kezi road. Turning off on the Khumalo West Road we stopped to have a look at Njelele – rising majestically to our south. At approximately 10.30am we arrived at the Badja growth centre cross-roads, and continued on our way, for a further 10 - 15 kms, stopping at a couple of places of interest one of which was a granite outcrop, that resembled a Zimbabwe Bird, and another an amazing cube balancing rock, until we arrived at the school site, where we were made welcome by Dr Phinot Moyo, and various members of the school staff, the headmistress, the caretaker, and a few members of the community.

The school is at the base of Fumugwe kopje, and is still under construction, with only one small classroom block, and an ablution block completed. It is the only school in the area for a long distance, and until it was built the children had to walk for approximately 20 kms every day to Badja to attend lessons.

One is not permitted to point at Fumugwe, as according to local tradition it shows disrespect and induces inclement weather. (There are many other Hills in the Matobo that should not be pointed at for different reasons). After we were made welcome, we settled down to a cup of tea, and some general conversation and bird watching. After our tea, we all gathered around Dr Moyo who spoke about the district community, and how he grew up there, and the various cultural beliefs of the area. When Dr Moyo had finished his presentation, which was extremely interesting and fascinating, there was a lot of discussion, questions and answers, and consensus about getting the community involved with MCS, and the information disseminated by Dr Moyo. We then had our picnic lunches, after which we bade farewell to our hosts and continued on our way. We drove for about 2.5kms, until we came to the homestead of one of our hosts, and visited his forge where he still makes iron products the old-fashioned way. We

then continued on our way, stopping near Mfabantu hill, at a site which was a favourite of R Tredgold (reference his book on the Matopos) near a feature called Mulomoluthoto, a giant finger of rock. This hill was where one of the first engagements between white and black persons took place in Matabeleland (1847), and the Matabele seeing the "invaders on horseback" thought that they looked like animals carrying their "babies". Mfabantu means "where the people died", in reference to the loss of life that was suffered during this first engagement. We then continued to the southern end of Shashane Dam where Gavin spoke about the construction of the dam, and some of the stories that arose during the building. The dam wall is also at the south western end of the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site, and so is the start of the annual MTB event. After a tea break, we wended our way home, collecting and towing a local car that had broken down in the Badja Pass (which was an adventure itself), and then turning off at Badja, to link up with the Plumtree road at Figtree.

Our thanks to Dr Moyo, Duncan and Nettie Purchase, and of course Gavin, for a truly interesting and enjoyable day; see you on the next one.

8 – WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Our event for World Environment Day was unfortunately deferred, but we hope to bring you news of a new date in due course.

9 – RAINFALL

We experienced some unusually late rain, but as we approach the end of June, and close our records for the year the rainfall records are as follows - the Eastern Matopos has received 765mm, the Western Matopos 575mm, and Bulawayo 753mm.

10 – www.matobo.org

We continue to upgrade our website, and are adding new material, so be sure to log in and follow the progress of the Society. Please give us news, views and links to other useful sites.

11 – WORLD HERITAGE UPDATE

We regret that there has been no further progress with the Matopos World Heritage Management Committee structure.

12 – WEZ PRO-AM QUIZ

WEZ Matabeleland will be holding its annual Pro-Am Quiz on Thursday 21st July at 7:30pm. If any MCS members would like to form a team, please contact our secretary for further information.

13 – DUMPING

We return to this topic once again. Sadly, dumping on the Old Gwanda Road, within about ten kilometres of the City Boundary, has got worse – despite the now regular, if albeit only monthly, waste collection by the BCC. If persons can travel that far to dump, why can't they go to the Municipal dump, which is free for domestic waste? Recently a truck belonging to a respected company was "caught in the act". Pictures and a report have been sent to the company concerned who have promised to "clean it up". If this does not happen, we will name and shame. Any volunteers to monitor this site for a few days so we can catch the culprits?

14 - TICKS

(With appreciation to Moira Fitzpatrick. This is the third and final article in our short series)

Tick Bite Fever : Ticks are commonly acquired while walking in long grass or amongst shrubs where they wait for animals to brush past. On finding a host the tick usually crawls to tender areas of the body (often under the arms or around the groin) and will penetrate the skin to take a blood meal. The tick parasite may carry a bacteria-like organism (*Rickettsia*) which causes tick-bite fever in some animals, including man. About 10 days after infection, symptoms develop which characterize the disease. These include fever, chills, swollen lymph glands, headache, and dizziness. The fever can be treated with aspirin or paracetamol until a doctor's prescription for antibiotics (usually Tetracycline) is obtained.

Tick Bites : Unlike Tick Bite Fever, this is simply a festering tick bite, which is usually the result of small pepper ticks getting "under your skin" about a day or two after your excursion. Constant scratching results in a festering wound with symptoms of swollen glands and headaches. Best to keep the bite clean with Dettol, and take a disinprn! And try to avoid scratching the irritating bite!

Finally : When walking in the bush it is advisable to check arms and legs occasionally for ticks. Remove them carefully to avoid infection caused by leaving the mouthparts imbedded in the wound. The application of insect repellent reduces the risk of tick infection, but repellents containing a high proportion of DEET can cause skin irritation on exposure to UV rays. It is therefore advisable to apply these lotions to areas not exposed to sunlight, such as the upper legs, under your shorts, or under your socks.

15 – CALENDAR 2011

10 July 2011 Brandt's Patrol Route

18 Sept 2011 Practical game count transept with Dr Nicky Lunt

27 Nov 2011 AGM, Matobo Mission and Camp Dwala

(We will endeavour to keep to these dates, but reserve the right to make amendments)

16 – RHINO NEWS

WEZ recently hosted Cath Lawson from Save the Rhino International, a UK based charity (www.savetherhino.com). Those who were able to attend enjoyed a most interesting talk on world rhino populations, and so we thought we would include an extract on the world Rhino populations taken from Time magazine. At the present time over 95% of the rhino population has been killed, with two sub-species now extinct. As a Society we have perhaps become complacent with our Rhino herds in the Matopos – perhaps now is the time to become more engaged on this subject.

There are five species of rhinoceros in the world: two in Africa and three in Asia. Two of the three Asian populations – the Sumatran and Javan varieties – are on the brink of extinction. The story in southern Africa is more heartening. Back in the 1960's, the African black rhino numbered about 100,000, but its population waned to just 2,400 in the early 1990s. Today its numbers have doubled to about 4,800 – still low, but heading in the right direction. The real conservation success story has been the dramatic rebound of the African white rhino. A century ago, there were as few as 50 of the beasts alive. Now, because of field-conservation efforts, relocation of animals to safer regions and expanded wildlife refuges, the population has reached around 20,000.

But over the past few years, the news from Africa has turned dire. Poaching, once restrained, has skyrocketed. From 2000 to 2007, only about a dozen rhinos were poached each year in South Africa, where nearly 90% of all rhinos live, according to WWF. But last year, 333 were illegally slaughtered there, nearly all found with their horns chopped off. "Poaching is like a bush fire," says Raoul du Toit, a Zimbabwean environmentalist who won the prestigious Goldman Prize this year for his efforts to nurture critically endangered black-rhino populations. "It starts small, but it spreads and turns into a conflagration very rapidly." Although the current poaching levels are not high enough to suppress the natural population growth of rhinos in southern Africa, they are edging closer to the tipping point. "We look on this as an emergency", says Josef Okori, the manager of the African Rhino Program for the WWF. "We are waging a protracted war." *Time Magazine; Fri June 17, 2011*

17 – WORLD POPULATION

At about the time you receive this newsletter the World Population will reach and exceed 7 billion persons. As an environmental society, this should have a profound impact on the way we think. If the world's population were to enjoy a lifestyle the equivalent of the average American, the world could only sustain 2, 5 billion persons. Clearly the emerging economies will strive for that standard of living. India in the past ten years has raised 300 million people from poverty to middle income – that is more people than live in the whole USA. But middle income in India is still not an average American citizen. In Zimbabwe estimates show our population has doubled since independence – this is actually quite low but is a result of both HIV and emigration; in fact we declined during the past decade. Would we have as severe a land issue if we had half our population? What impact does this have? As a youngster, I hiked much of the communal lands, and most often the valleys were wild, and the streams free. Today almost all valleys are heavily populated – and stream bank cultivation is rife. How do we incorporate this into a World Heritage plan for the Matobo Hills?

Plenty of food for thought – plenty of work to do!