

MATOBO



SOCIETY

PO Box FM 648, Famona. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

www.matobo.org

Welfare No: W/0 30/94

NEWSLETTER 80 / SEPTEMBER 2012

1 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Yes, it's that time of the year again, where we call you all to attend our Annual General Meeting (25th November at Rowallan Park, Matobo National Park). More importantly we need to call on members to serve their Society – with no negative comment implied to present committee members it is always good to get new blood and fresh ideas onto any committee!

2 – EDITION 80

This is our largest newsletter to date, a full 8 pages – and it is published as Newsletter 80 – a milestone! Our next outing will be the eightieth event arranged by this Society! Next year we celebrate our 20th anniversary! We have certainly come a long way since we started off in 1993. We hope that you will enjoy this special, bumper edition. Read on

3 - MATOBO NATIONAL PARK

A PHOENIX ARISES?

In our last newsletter we wrote about an informal meeting that involved National Parks, National Museums and other key stakeholders, that had been initiated by Area Manager Norman Monks. This has been followed up by a further meeting on the Matobo National Park at which your Chairman and Secretary were again present. The significance of this initiative is that:

- 1 – National Parks accept that the Park has deteriorated, and action is required;
- 2 – Parks themselves can't fix all the problems unaided;
- 3 – NGO's and Private Enterprise can be included in any rehabilitation plan.

These are meaningful changes in approach from where we have been in the past, and consequently your committee believe that the outcome of these meetings will not just be action on the ground, but a positive outcome for all parties going forward. Already some improvement can be seen – most obviously in the reduced fires this year. The years ahead of us could see a massive return of tourists – the Park's environment is not ready to handle that. Let's be honest, this will not be easy, it will not be quick, but a start is being made. We believe that the MCS has a valuable part to play in this; Firstly, we can act as "Friends" of the Matopos National Park. In this light we need to actively find more friends overseas who may be able to contribute. Secondly the MCS has no commercial interest – so we can really stand up to ensure that certain environmental and cultural values of the park are not undermined. We don't want to see this special area "sold" for pure commercial considerations. We look forward to the crafting of a new Park Management Plan and call on all our members to come forward and assist where possible.

4 – FIRES

Environment and Natural Resources Minister Francis Nhema says there has been a significant drop in incidents of veld fires countrywide this year as compared to last year." The total forest area destroyed represents a decline of burnt area of about 38% when compared with the 2012 fire season, with fire related deaths also having gone down nationwide from 25 recorded in 2010 to 5 deaths in 2011..." – *NewsDay, Monday July 9, 2012.*

Certainly, within the Park the incidence of fire was markedly less than that in prior years. As the park is assisting some communal farmers with grazing during the harsh drought, is it a coincidence that the fires are much reduced?

5 – NEXT EVENT

Date	14 October 2012
Venue	Dam, Eastern Matopos
Meet	8:15am to leave by 8:30am, Churchill Arms Hotel
Travel	All vehicles
Details	Provide own chairs, tables, meals and drinks. Don't forget your hat!

This is our annual *HOT and DRY* outing to the hills!

We will be visiting a delightful dam set in the eastern Matopos, amongst some outstanding *Brachystegia* forest. Despite the drought the dam is fairly full, and the trees should be in full foliage. The Old Gwanda road has recently been graded and so is in passable condition. After lunch, time and temperature permitting, we will go in search of Mbelele cave which is in the same area, or visit a vantage point on the Mtshabezi Gorge above the Mtshabezi dam.

6 – REPORT BACK

Outing to Maleme Dam : Sunday 15 July 2012.

This outing was to an old favourite of us all. Nothing new there you might say – and yet the day was interesting and, as always, the Matopos had something new to give up to us. Despite some cooler weather in the week before the outing, the day was a glorious winter day, with clear warm skies. It was one of those days where you were unsure of sitting in the shade (too cool) or in the sun (too hot)!

We were able to visit the Maleme Rest camp, where slowly but steadily accommodation units are being refurbished, and were able to visit the ablution block to which the Society had contributed. A picnic tea was held next down at the dam, followed by a walk around to Mbila Lodge, which was opened for us. En route we had a good view of a crocodile sunning itself on a bank.

After lunch, there was an attempt to search for paintings in the area, but most enjoyed a lovely social afternoon soaking up the sun!

On the way home members chose to go via the rock fall site on the Circular Drive.

7 - RAINFALL

REPORT 1 – September

Zimbabwe is expected to receive normal to below normal rainfall during the 2012/13 farming season, Meteorological Services Department officer Jephias Mugumbate has said. However, some parts of Mat South, Midlands and Masvingo provinces are expected to experience severe drought. Presenting the national climate outlook at a stakeholders' forum in Harare, Mugumbate said regions 1 and 2 would receive normal to above normal rains, while region 3 was expected to receive normal to below normal rains – *Herald, Wednesday September 5, 2012.*

REPORT 2 – August

Southern Africa will receive normal to above normal rainfall for the 2012/2013 farming season, weather experts have said. The experts, who attended the just-ended Southern Regional Climate Outlook Forum in Harare, said the region was expected to receive normal to above normal rainfall during the first part of the season from October to December. However, the southern, eastern, northern parts and Madagascar are expected to get normal to below normal rains over the same period. The entire region is expected to receive normal to above normal rains for the second part of the season covering January to March – *Herald, Saturday August 25, 2012.*

8 – LITTER

The Society is sourcing a donation of litter bags to re-launch the “anti-litter campaign” in the National Park and so support the “*Carry in, carry out*” policy for our parks. These bags should be ready in time for the festive season – but all the same, if you take litter in, please take it home!

Unfortunately, litter left in bins in the park either gets raided by the wildlife, and so gets spread all around the veld, or it gets dumped by cleaning staff behind the nearest big rock, or gets blown out of the bin. So let's all make an effort to keep our park clean.

9 – HERITAGE

We have two reports on incidents at Njelele. This is a very sad situation that demonstrates the breakdown in law and order, the scant respect for culture, and the determination of some to go to any lengths to please their political masters.

A – Report 1

A proposed traditional cleansing ritual at Njelele shrine by a group of war veterans to appease the spirits of their colleagues who died during the liberation war has further widened divisions among the war veterans. Last week war veterans believed to be ex-ZANLA combatants vowed to proceed with the cleansing exercise this Saturday. The group has hired 7 buses to ferry people from Harare to Bulawayo for the ceremony despite widespread condemnation from the traditional leadership and Zanu-PF. The move has prompted the ex-ZIPRA combatants to seek court order barring the planned “invasion” of the shrine by ex-ZANLA – *Fingaz, Thursday July 5, 2012.*

B – Report 2

About 568 people, some of them war veterans, on Thursday visited Matopos National Park and performed rituals. Chiefs from Mat South, who were not part of the proceedings, immediately condemned the act, saying they were not notified of the visit. The group, which was made up of former freedom fighters, 25 chiefs and 5 spirit mediums, arrived in Bulawayo on Thursday morning from Zambia and proceeded to Matopos National Park where they conducted the cleansing ceremony. The clique brought some stones and soil from Zipra camps in Zambia. They said the stones, which they dumped in the park, represented the remains of the fallen freedom fighters. War veterans from Matabeleland and Chiefs Council president Chief Fortune Charumbira have also condemned the group – *Herald, Saturday August 11, 2012.*

10 – OUR LEGACY

A row has erupted in the Zambezi Valley between the miners and environmentalists over mining activities in the Mana Pools region, a UNESCO World Heritage Site rich in biodiversity and mineral rich sand deposits. Hubbard Investments wants to undertake exploration of riverbeds of the Chewore and Rukomechi tributaries for heavy mineral sands deposits while the Zambezi Society, a non-profit conservation organisation formed in 1982, is against that – *Sunday Times, September 23, 2012.*

11 – RHINO NEWS FROM THE PARK

It was reported that a rhino had been lost in the Matopos game Park during the last week of September. Since about August 2011 up until this incident there have been no rhinos poached in the IPZ. On Sunday 23rd September 2012, a radio message from the Area Manager of the IPZ resulted in the Area Manager being called to the Whovi Game Park urgently where on arrival he was taken to where three rangers on patrol had found a dead rhino. The horns had been removed. The last time this rhino was positively seen and identified was 31st July 2012 (verified from records on Monday 24th September). In the field, the age since death was unclear and was originally estimated to be two months, but since the rhino was positively seen on July 31st it is more likely one and a half months.

The rhino had been snared. There is a good coverage of the park by rangers and in fact law-enforcement activities takes more than 50% of the Matopos station budget with extra rangers being brought in from stations when required. Their rations and field allowances are paid for by the Matopos station.

There are two possibilities here: (1) This is a new tactic since the coverage by rangers is so intense that a gunshot would be easily heard and reaction immediate, or (b) this was a chance happening (the snare being set for kudu or even giraffe) but the poachers took full advantage of the situation and harvested the horns. In terms of the latter this has been experienced at Mana Pools when poachers set snares for buffalo but actually caught an elephant which subsequently died. They left the tusks intact. When the poachers were caught, they told Parks that when they saw it was an elephant in the snare they panicked since this was not what they wanted and they knew that they would be in big trouble!

Parks are investigating the rhino poaching further.

12 – WHAT NEXT?

A – Report 1

War veterans have grabbed paddocks from villagers in Natisa area in Kezi, Mat South province, resulting in scores of cattle dying due to lack of pastures. The invaded land, which covers 1500 hectares, is part of Maleme Ranch, owned by a farmer, Peter Cunningham. The paddocks were allocated to the

villagers by Cunningham as part of his social responsibility programme – *Standard, Sunday September 2, 2012.*

B – Report 2

Youth farming initiative facing closure after war vets' invasion.

SW Radio Africa, Monday September 3, 2012

Bulawayo-The invasion of a farm in Matabeleland South by a group of war vets has resulted in the seizure and possible closure of a farming initiative, which provides free training to local youths.

The Ebenezer Agricultural Training Centre forms part of the Maleme Ranch, which has been invaded by war vets in an on-going attempt to remove the farm owner Peter Cunningham. Paddocks for cattle grazing that were allocated to local villagers have also been seized, resulting in scores of cows dying. Cunningham had given the local villagers access to the paddocks in 2000 as part of a social responsibility programme. The Ebenezer Centre, which is a charitable foundation, was also formed as part of this programme, by giving free training to local youths interested in farming. It's understood most of these youths are orphans from across Matabeleland South.

The war vets, led by Clever Dube, have reportedly targeted the villagers' paddocks in retaliation for their support of Cunningham and for protecting him against eviction. Villages are now reporting that their cattle are dying because there is limited grazing ground for the animals.

The war vets are now believed to be renting out the same paddocks they've seized.

Killion Sibanda, chairman of the Natisa area grazing scheme, said they had sought the assistance of Chief Masuku to drive out the war vets.

"We are just praying and hoping that the Chief will intervene urgently to evict these war veterans before we lose all our cattle," said Sibanda. "These people are saying they are fixing us for protecting Cunningham, whom we have lived with peacefully for years. He has done a lot for us."

The Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) told SW Radio Africa that they were aware of the situation and were following up on recent developments. CFU President Charles Taffs also slammed the invasion and the seizure of the training centre as more "unnecessary destruction" on farm lands.

13 – AN EARLY MATOBO HILLS ROCK ART RESEARCHER; RICHARD NICKLIN HALL
PAUL HUBBARD, Associate Researcher, Monuments and Antiquities Department, Natural History Museum, Byo

Richard Nicklin Hall is best known – or rather, notorious – in archaeological circles as the first full-time curator of Great Zimbabwe. He rose to prominence in the early 20th Century as an ardent defender of the incorrect idea that Great Zimbabwe was the product of a foreign race. His feud with professional archaeologist David Randall-MacIver was heated and prolonged and produced many similar publications. Hall, more than any other person, can be held responsible for the longevity of incorrect exotic ideas about Great Zimbabwe's rise and fall. For the purposes of this note, my interest is not on this early part of his career. Instead, I will critically review his important contributions to the study of rock art in Zimbabwe, most notably in the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site. This is an aspect of his early life usually neglected or ignored by most writers. Garlake's (1993: 2) harsh attitude is representative of previous work, claiming that Hall's rock art research was "dogmatic and unscholarly and filled with grandiose but unsubstantiated claims".

Born in 1853, Richard Hall was a solicitor by profession. He started his career at the High Court of Judicature in the United Kingdom; he later acted as political agent to various members of parliament, including Sir Edward Reed (Anon 1915). He immigrated to South Africa in about 1897, and as his obituary (Anon 1915: 85) says, "he soon identified himself with the activities of the young British colony of Rhodesia" filling a number of posts in civic and commercial organisations.

It is not clear when Hall developed his interest in rock art. He may have been captivated by the sites near Great Zimbabwe during his two-year tenure as curator (1902-1904). His first published descriptions are in his guidebook (Hall 1911), referring to rock art at his house (aptly named Bushman's Haunt) near Hillside Dams. For the next three years Hall devoted himself to the location, recording, and study of rock art in the Matobo Hills.

In 1912 Hall successfully applied to the Royal Society of South Africa for a grant to conduct a systematic examination of rock art in the Matobo Hills (or as he insisted on calling them, “Ma-Dobo”) with the aim of finding and recording paintings and “carvings” (Hall 1914a, b). This he undertook with great passion, claiming to have walked over one third of the Matobo Hills in three months of work, locating close to 100 sites including 25 large caves (Hall 1914a).

Hall’s fieldwork provided him with insights into the landscape and environment of the area, giving him a better understanding and appreciation of the painters and their work than almost any of his contemporaries. For example, he argued that the concentrations of small sites in an area was always indicative of a nearby large site, something confirmed by later research on possible site hierarchies in the Matobo Hills (Hubbard 2006). He also mentions the strange ability of many researchers who are often able to find paintings with little difficulty after gaining a little practical experience: “the enquirer who has seen several series of paintings on the open veld soon learns on what class of boulders he may expect to meet with paintings as also on those on which they will not be found” (Hall 1914c: Ch 2, 20).

In starting his manuscript with an ethnographical examination of the Bushmen, Hall (1914c: Ch 1, 1-30) foresaw the use of this data as a means to understand the art. He went to the extent of asserting that no one should attempt to study rock art without first gaining some familiarity with the life and religion of the Bushmen. Hall shows a familiarity with the primary sources then available regarding the ethnography and history of the Bushmen in Africa, referring to the works of Bleek, Orpen, Stow, Theal and Sollas. He was however justifiably cautious about the data then available: “we must not... rush to the conclusion that in every respect the Bushman of Rhodesia was altogether identical with the Bushman of the remote south” (Hall 1914c: Ch1: 1). Burrett (2002: 30-42) and Garlake (1995) have shown that researchers north of the Limpopo need to be cautious when using ethnography from South Africa given the probable differences in hunter-gatherer ideology and worldview as expressed in the rock art within the different countries.

“It is almost inconceivable that a people showing by their works of art, many of which reveal most delicate taste and feeling - and such an ideal truth to nature, could be mere savages” (Hall 1914c: Ch 2, 35). He continues: “the Bushman of Rhodesia must have been a loveable little fellow, and one is fain to regret that his race has vanished”. Such stereotyping of the Bushmen, as primitives closely connected to nature, was common in the early twentieth century and Hall is merely echoing the racial prejudices of his contemporaries. He did, however, exhibit a sincere appreciation of the artistic skills of the hunter-gatherers claiming they had a high degree of taste and a “greater ingenuity and fertility of expression, the paintings [were] made with a certain and sure hand” (Hall 1914c: Ch 2, 27-29).

Hall was the first to claim that the paintings were of great age and predated the introduction farming, although his reasoning was faulty. For example, he claimed that many paintings occurred near old gold mines, and argued that this was proof that the artists must have ceased operations since otherwise they would have surely “painted the ancients’ mining activities” (Hall 1914a). He claimed the “oxidation” of the paintings, “the rock having reassumed its original colour and state” must have taken thousands of years thus proving their antiquity (Hall 1912a: 142). Today it has been shown that the appearance of rock and the art is an unreliable method of dating.

Even by the standards of the time, Hall had some strange ideas about the rock art of Zimbabwe. He claimed there existed two main periods of painting, the earlier artists exclusively using yellow pigment while red characterised their “degenerate” successors. Standing at a distance from the painted panel, “shapeless blurs of yellow... assume the shape of heroic drawing of exceedingly well-proportioned animals” (Hall 1914b). These yellow “animals,” Hall claimed had faded away and were used as “backgrounds” by later artists who suddenly appeared and began using red pigment. He argued incorrectly that the hunter-gatherers never lived in the caves and shelters where they painted, discounting the stones tools, ashy remains and other deposit as “Bantu” remains. Horrifyingly, Hall (1914c: 50) mentions more than 30 “excavations” in caves which he suggests failed to reveal much in the way of physical evidence of Bushman occupation. This revelation of random diggings is hypocritical in light of Hall’s (1914c) earlier warning to the reader that all sites are protected from such depredations by law. However, he was by this time Curator of Monuments for Rhodesia and may have given himself permission to conduct his “excavations”!

Like many researchers before him, Hall was fascinated with the oval motifs now known as formlings. He confidently proclaimed them to be depictions of Victoria Falls, “so true to nature are certain of these representations that the actual point of view of the Bushman, the spot at which he received his impressions can be located to within a couple of score yards”; the bank of the river at the foot of the gorge immediately below the Falls (Hall 1914c: Ch 2, 43). To his mind, the dark ovals represented the basalt rock face and the sometimes-accompanying white paint the spray from the water. Defending the Bushmen again, Hall claimed they could not be “savages” if they studied and painted such a wonder. Today, these formlings have been convincingly argued to represent termite nests, encapsulating beliefs about potency and spiritual power (Mguni 2002).

Hall's (1912a, 1914b, c) claimed to have discovered rock engravings in the Matobo Hills which has yet to be confirmed. To my knowledge, no engravings or carvings have been found in the Matobo Hills while their occurrence in Zimbabwe is limited to the border regions of the country (Goodall & Summers 1959; Haynes 2010). Hall claimed many paintings were first chipped in outline and then filled with paint. These he argued were best seen in wet conditions or with the aid of a light to throw the necessary shadows. I believe he may have mistaken natural irregularities in the rock surface with engravings.

The deliberate use of photography for recording rock art was pioneered by Hall although he was by no means the first to take photographs of the art in Zimbabwe. He repeats a familiar litany of complaints when discussing the drawbacks to the technique: “the usual darkness or shadow, cross-lights, the deep colour of the rock, the numerous pits surface [sic], the great age of the paintings and their faintness, all militate against the photographer” (Hall 1914c: A). Alarming by today's standards, Hall confidently asserts that throwing water on the paintings will produce acceptable results, an early example of vandalism by rock art researchers in Zimbabwe!

Hall also made several tracings of paintings in the Matobo Hills and elsewhere, using his copies to create exhibitions in the Bulawayo Museum. His aim was to raise public awareness about Zimbabwe's rock art heritage. Even if they are not entirely accurate by today's standards they can still serve as a valuable record of the state of the art in the cave when he first visited. Regrettably few of Hall's copies were ever published, while no originals have been discovered in Zimbabwean or other archives. Nevertheless, Hall felt that he had “succeeded in breaking through the prevailing indifference to, and even ridicule of these researches,” (1914c: Intro, 10) creating interest among the white settlers and fostering a lasting pride in their existence, preservation and study. This may, in fact, be the most important contribution Hall made to Zimbabwean rock art studies.

Hall's passion and interest in rock art superseded his initial fascination with the Zimbabwe Culture. His writings on the subject, occasionally misguided and prejudiced, reveal a distinct and abiding concern for the art that is not, in my opinion, reflected in his work on the ruins. Perhaps wearied by the controversy his work on the ruins had engendered he sought comfort in the mostly-solitary joys of rock art research. Hall (1914c: Ch 1, 4) began his last book with a rather plaintive sentence making a plea for recognition - and perhaps - reconciliation with the academic establishment:

The worker on the spot, enthusiastic as he must necessarily be to labour on these vast territories which imply prolonged isolations, constant risks of health and life, heavy expenditure, disappointments, absence of recognition or sympathy, has the evidences at first hand constantly before his eyes and his findings, to use Sir John Lubbock's words, “based on an impartial observation of ascertained facts to which he applies ordinary common sense” cannot be ignored.

Author's Note: A version of this note was previously published in the Prehistory Society of Zimbabwe Newsletter volume 143. I have included updates of my thoughts and new research in this note.

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14 – SUBSCRIPTIONS

This year our members have not been as prompt in settling their subscriptions for the year 1 October 2011 to 30 September 2012 and so you are reminded:

US\$ 20	Individual/Family
US\$ 5	Special Member (Pensioner/Student)
US\$100	Corporate

At the same time, you are encouraged to invite potential members to join the Society. Friends are always welcome at our quarterly events – and hopefully will join the Society thereafter.

New subscriptions (1 October 2012) will be advised in the next Newsletter.

15 – CALENDAR 2012

Proposed dates for the 2012 field trips are listed below, but as always subject to alteration.

MCS Spring Field Trip	Sunday 14 October 2012
MCS AGM	Sunday 25 November 2012

16 – www.matobo.org

We continue to get "visitors" to our web-site from around the world. Have you checked in yet?

17 – MCS APPAREL

Looking for a Christmas present?

The Society has stocks of hats (at \$10 each) and we are looking into shirts and other apparel.

18 – CONDOLENCES

National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority Director General Vitalis Chadenga has died. Chadenga died at Avenues Clinic in Harare yesterday afternoon where he had been battling for life since being admitted last weekend. He had collapsed in Bulawayo last Thursday while attending the Zimbabwe-Botswana Joint Permanent Commission meeting and was thereafter airlifted to the Avenues Clinic in Harare – *Herald, Thursday September 6, 2012*.

The Chairman extends his condolences, and that of the Society, to the Chadenga family.

19 – OBITUARY

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the passing of Dr Viv Wilson in early September. It was only a year ago that the Society recognised his contribution to the Matopos in general and made him an Honorary Member.

Viv led an incredible life, partly thanks to the fact that much of his informative years were spent conducting research and work across southern and central Africa when a large portion was part of the British Empire. It meant that travel was so much easier, there were no foreign currency restrictions, and research work was regional. Today, it would be a bureaucratic nightmare to try and achieve all the Viv did. Carpe Diem!

But even so, it was the man who made it all possible. His love of nature, his quest for knowledge and his dedication to science all combined to produce an extraordinary life. Viv worked for National Parks in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, he was Director of Zimbabwe's Natural History Museum in Bulawayo when he moved to Bulawayo in 1973, and of course founded the well-known Chipangali Wildlife Refuge. He led countless expeditions, but is probably most well recognised in the world of science for his life's work on the duiker family that saw him publish a huge book on this diminutive creature! He featured in a number of wildlife programmes on both radio and television. Viv published 80 books and received over 20 international awards in recognition of his work. Whilst Viv held an MSc he was awarded a Doctorate from NUST two years ago.

Viv's work in the Matopos culminated in a ten-year study of the hills which he completed in 2010. Whilst focusing on the leopards of the Hills, he was also able to research in detail the biodiversity of the Matopos, and so ably assisted by various colleagues he drafted his latest book. Earlier in the year Viv had approached the Society to seek assistance in the publication of this book "The Spectacular Matobo Hills (Its leopards and biodiversity)", a project that your Society was pursuing. We hope that the family will endorse the efforts to have this work published.

A remembrance service was held for the late Dr Wilson at Chipangali. As one looked into the trees coming into fresh foliage one could not help but feel the circle of life being played out, and so whilst we mourn the loss of Viv, we remember a man dedicated to the environment and who embraced the wheel of life.

Viv leaves behind a son, Kevin, daughter-in-law and two grand-children – and of course all his pets and animals that will live on at Chipangali. The Society joins the Chairman in sending sincere condolences to the Wilson family on this sad occasion.