

Malindidzimu; a “View of the World”



Before discussing the various memorials on this hill, first a word about the fascinating landscape in which we find ourselves. The Matobo Hills are carved out of a vast bubble of granitic rock which formed underground about 2 600 million years ago. This massive rock intrusion was later weathered, decayed, and brought to the surface by erosion. The characteristic granite hills that we see today are the surviving remnants of this process - they are the harder lumps of granite that were left behind once the softer, chemically decayed rock around them was removed by running water.

These residual hills take many forms, but there are two general types - *bornhardts* or *dwalas* are the massive domes of solid rock; while *tors* or *castle kopjes* are accumulations of smaller, weathered granite blocks that have been left balancing on each other. Once exposed at the surface the remaining solid rock will breakdown, but this is a very slow process and the landscape that we see today is thousands of years old.

The Matobo Hills consists of a multitude of spectacular hills and deep valleys, but in this pamphlet we focus on the long granite *dwala* known locally as Malindidzimu, the dwelling place of benevolent spirits. It is said that the local African community, the Banyubi, once used the hill to bury some of their chiefs in the natural clefts on its flanks.

In 1898 the highest point of this ridge was selected by the imperialist businessman, Cecil John Rhodes, as the place where he wished to be buried. His burial within the Matobo National Park remains highly controversial. For some this was to the “Rhodesian Valhalla”; a centre of colonial celebration. Opposing this, his grave became a focal point of resistance in the struggle for African rights and later Independence. As early as 1961 there were calls being made for the removal of Rhodes’ remains, a demand still made by some today. It is unlikely that consensus will ever be achieved.

Regardless of personal opinion, it is an undeniable fact that Malindidzimu remains one of the most visited locations in the Matobo Hills, for many it is their only experience of the

Hills. For this reason we present a brief outline of those known to lie buried here. Further information can be found at the reception area where there are a series of informative posters.

It was Rhodes who said of the hill, *‘I call this one of the views of the World’*, not as it is often incorrectly attributed — World’s View. Here he chose his burial place, a tomb cut into the solid rock on the crest of what Rhodes thought of as “his hill”. In 1902 his wish was fulfilled. His choice was a mixture of personal ego and late Victorian romanticism; a simple grave set amongst ancient weathered boulders, part of the African wilderness that he sought to bring into the imperial fold.

It is unlikely that Rhodes knew of the Banyubi burial’s nearby, it was a fortuitous choice, but it cannot be denied that he fully appreciated the symbolic significance of being buried in the Matobo Hills, not far from the grave of the Ndebele monarch, King Mzilikazi. Rhodes saw himself as founding a new African nation, he was the new, successor King of the Ndebele and of the white Settler community.

Following Rhodes’ burial several other white Settlers were buried here. In 1936, however, it was decided that there should be no more burials and the site was frozen in time. Now to present a brief background to those known to be buried here. Unfortunately no one recalls the names and deeds of the early Banyubi chiefs, but their nearby entombment certainly adds to the general spirituality of the place.

Cecil John Rhodes

Cecil John Rhodes was born in 1853 in the small English village of Bishop’s Stortford. After an uninspiring school career, in 1870 he joined his brother Herbert farming in the Natal Colony. They tried to grow cotton, but it was a failure and eventually both brothers left for the newly opened Diamond Fields of the northern Cape. Here Cecil Rhodes fitted easily into the rough-and-ready Kimberley society, proving himself to be an astute businessman and was soon he was a man of means.

Finding himself with enough money he took up studies at Oriel College at Oxford University. Here his imperialist dreams were forged based on the supposedly innate superiority of Victorian British Society. Upon his return to South Africa, in a cut-throat brawl, Rhodes eventually achieved a controlling interest in the Kimberley Diamond Fields through the De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd. which was formed in 1888. The resulting wealth this gave him would finance Rhodes’ imperial schemes. Due to uncharacteristic indecision Rhodes narrowly missed monopolising the emerging gold industry of the Witwatersrand, although he acquired considerable interests.

In March 1881 Cecil Rhodes entered the Cape Parliament for the constituency of Barkly West. Through



various appointments and treaties Rhodes was able to enlarge the Cape Colony, thwart Boer and German territorial expansion, and he financed, both personally and through his companies, the colonisation of Bechuanaland (Botswana), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi).

Based on the Rudd Concession that Rhodes' associates received in March 1889 from with the Ndebele King Lobhengula, Rhodes successfully negotiated a Royal Charter that would give his newly created British South Africa Company, BSACo, full economic and administrative rights over the territories north of the Limpopo River. His Pioneer Column subsequently occupied Mashonaland in 1890. In the interim Rhodes became the Cape Premier.

The 1893 Anglo-Ndebele War saw Rhodes' forces invade and annex what was the independent Ndebele state of Matabeleland. The Northern Column, funded by the BSACo and commanded by Rhodes' friend Jameson, seized control of Lobhengula's territory. In 1895 this was combined with Mashonaland to become Rhodesia.

Rhodes was appointed a Privy Councillor in 1895, but his success at the centre of British imperial power was short lived given the disastrous Jameson Raid. Impetuous as ever, Jameson invaded the independent Afrikaans Republic of the Transvaal. Although he was never directly implicated, in the aftermath of this failed intervention in another independent state, Rhodes lost considerable political and public support. In disgrace he resigned from all public offices.

With the outbreak of the "Matabele Rebellion" or Umvukela in 1896, Rhodes returned to Rhodesia to assist in organising the Settler's campaign. Following a number of bloody, but inconclusive skirmishes, Rhodes became convinced that mere force would not win the war. He resolved to negotiate a lasting peace. The "First *Indaba*" took place with select Ndebele leaders on 21st August 1896.

Thereafter Rhodes became once more embroiled in the politics of South Africa. With the outbreak of the Second Anglo-South African War in 1899, he was besieged in Kimberley. Upon its relief by Imperial troops, Rhodes returned to Cape Town, before travelling to Egypt, England and Scotland. However his health was deteriorating and Cecil Rhodes died in his seafront cottage at Muizenberg in the Cape Colony on 26th March 1902.

In accordance with his wishes, Rhodes body was carried northward to be buried in the Matobo Hills. It was a long and incredibly slow journey by steam train. Not only was South Africa still in the last throws of war, but the train would stop at every small town to allow local people to pay their respects. On arrival in Bulawayo his body was laid in the Drill Hall. It was then carried out to his farm at the edge of the Matobo Hills where it was placed in his favourite, open-air summerhouse. Traces of this structure can still be seen on the Rhodes Matopos Estate through which you pass just before entering the Matobo National Park. Meanwhile workers had carved out his grave in the solid rock, while a new road to Malindidzimu was opened. A special team of black oxen, a play on Ndebele traditional custom, was trained to carry the massive coffin up the hill on two joined gun carriages.

Cecil Rhodes' burial took place on 10th April 1902. Most of Bulawayo's white citizens attended, crowding out the space between the massive boulders around the grave. Outside of them on the flat area west of the grave a large contingent of Ndebele men gathered. Once proceedings were complete, unexpectedly they cried out in unison - *bayete*, the Ndebele royal salute. This was their mark of respect. The grave site was later handed over to the Ndebele nation by Rhodes' brother, Frank. In time this authority was taken from them by the Rhodesian State.

Leander Starr Jameson

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1853 was formally known as Starr Jameson, and more often by the informal name Dr Jim. He completed a medical degree at University College London and was a successful surgeon in London before emigrating to South Africa following a breakdown in his health. In 1878 while working in Kimberley he met Rhodes and they became lifelong friends.

In 1889 and 1890 Jameson visited King Lobhengula on behalf of Rhodes. His medical skills assisted the monarch and this proved instrumental in the granting of the Rudd Concession that inadvertently led to the occupation of this country.

In 1890 Jameson accompanied the Pioneer Column as Rhodes' personal representative. In 1891 Jameson was appointed Administrator of Mashonaland. After leading the invasion of Matabeleland in 1893, Jameson worked to achieve the eventual amalgamation of the two territories which would be named Rhodesia.

Jameson planned and led the ill-fated invasion of the Transvaal Republic in the closing days of 1895. The "Jameson Raid" was a debacle, the invaders were forced by Afrikaner volunteers to surrender at Doornkop near Johannesburg. Jameson did not get the support of local Transvaal residents that he had anticipated, while he completely underestimated his opposition. He was held for a time in Pretoria, pending possible execution, but was later expelled to England. He was tried and sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment. Jameson was subsequently pardoned due to ill health.

Many blame the impetuous actions of Jameson for the political and administrative failings that fermented the Ndebele and Shona Uprisings of 1896, as well as the tensions which ultimately resulted in the outbreak of the Second Anglo-South African War of 1899 - 1902.

Despite losing friends and support, Jameson quickly bounced back and led a successful political career in South Africa. In 1904 he was appointed Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. Later he took a prominent part in discussions that led to the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Jameson served in the new unified parliament until 1912 when he returned to England. A year earlier, 1911, he was knighted.



In 1913 Jameson was elected President of the BSACo. In this capacity in 1914 he toured Rhodesia to see local developments and meeting the white Settlers.

Jameson passed away in London on 26th November 1917. As the First World War was raging, he was initially buried there. His body was only brought back to Southern Rhodesia in 1920 where he was buried alongside his friend Rhodes on 18th May 1920.

Charles Patrick John Coghlan

Charles Coghlan was born in the Cape Colony on 24th June 1863. After leaving school, he was articled to his eldest brother who was an attorney in Kimberley. As an experienced lawyer he arrived in Bulawayo in 1900 with his family.

Coghlan quickly identified with White populist causes. He was always ready to further the interests of Rhodesia's Settlers against a combination of powerful political and financial interests in England and the Cape, especially companies of Cecil Rhodes and his close associates.

In 1908 Coghlan was elected to the Legislative Assembly. Six months later he represented the Southern Rhodesian electorate at the National Convention on South African Union in Durban. He was later knighted for the active role he played in bringing about the Union of South Africa.

Faced with growing Afrikaner nationalism, Coghlan changed his mind about the planned incorporation of Southern Rhodesia into the Union of South Africa, becoming a leading supporter of local self-government. He led the campaign against continuing BSACo rule which culminated in a referendum in 1922 which posed two possibilities for the country - either self government or amalgamation into South Africa. The bitterly fought referendum took place on 27th October 1922; 8 744 voted for Responsible Government and 5 989 for Union. Self-government won the day and Coghlan became leader of the newly formed Rhodesia Party. In the first election under the new constitution in April 1924 his party won 26 of the 30 seats.

Coghlan died in Salisbury on 28th August 1927, busy at work for the forthcoming election. Initially he was buried in the Athlone Cemetery in Bulawayo, but his remains were later moved to Malindidzimu in 1930. His grave, often overlooked by visitors, is set apart in separate area of consecrated Catholic ground.

Of those who lie in the three separate graves at World's View, Coghlan is probably the least remembered. But without his courage and dedication, Southern Rhodesia would almost certainly have become a fifth province of South Africa and there would never have been the independent nation of Zimbabwe.



The Shangani Memorial

This monument commemorates those men of the Allan Wilson-led military patrol who died to a man at Pupu in Matabeleland North near Lupane. This was one of the last actions of the Anglo-Ndebele War of 1893.

Following the occupation of koBuluwayo, the Ndebele royal capital, on 4th November 1893, a detachment of Settler forces set out to capture King Lobhengula who had fled northward. The column was led by Major Patrick Forbes and it was to prove a disaster, characterised by incessant officer intrigue, bad morale, and insufficient supplies of food and medicine.

After failing to find the King at either Inyati or Shiloh Missions, the column marched to the banks of the Shangani River. This was reached in the afternoon of 3rd December whereupon a small detachment was sent across the river to reconnoitre. Led by Major Allan Wilson it consisted largely of volunteers from Fort Victoria (Masvingo). Wilson was ordered to return by nightfall. However, on finding the King's encampment Wilson opted to stay out, calling for reinforcements. An additional group of men under Captain Henry Borrow was sent, Forbes planning to cross the river at dawn the following day.

This juncture was not to be. Heavy rains caused the Shangani River to flood, cutting off Wilson and Borrow on the north bank where they were surrounded and attacked by the Ndebele. Wilson's party retreated through the thick woodland, taking their last stand at a place now known as Pupu. The battle was fierce, 34 Rhodesians were killed as well as more than 300 Ndebele warriors.

Meanwhile a demoralised Forbes realised the inevitable and retreated up the Shangani River, and with considerable difficulty he and his men made their way back to Bulawayo. In February 1894 two white Settlers, James Dawson and James Reilly, eventually reached the battle site, burying the Settler remains at the base of a large mopane tree on the trunk of which they carved "To Brave Men". The Ndebele had buried their dead nearby not long after the battle.



Soon after Rhodes had the Settler remains exhumed and reburied at Great Zimbabwe where he planned an elaborate memorial. This was never built and in March 1904 the bones were moved once again, this time to Malindidzimu where they were laid to rest in a Grecian-style mausoleum erected to their memory.

The memorial was constructed by the Rhodes Trustees following Cecil Rhodes instructions. Consisting of locally hewn granite blocks and it was designed by renown Imperial architect, Sir Herbert Baker. The four bronze panels were cast by sculptor, John Tweed, using actual images of the dead. Dawson and Reilly's earlier Pupu epithet is repeated, while plaques record the names of the dead Settlers.

Another memorial to this incident was recently constructed at the actual battle site of Pupu, north of Lupane in Matabeleland North. Consisting of a series of painted panels on an arced wall, resembling the traditional "horns of the bull" battle formation adopted by the Ndebele, this memorial provides the African perspective of the event.

Ntumbane: the resting place of the King

Although not buried at Malindidzimu, it is only right to make mention of the African King whose nearby burial influenced Cecil Rhodes own choice to be interred here. This was a man whom Rhodes greatly admired.

Mzilikazi, more correctly Mzilawegazi, was born around 1790 in northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. A capable military leader, after falling out with the Zulu King Shaka, Mzilikazi and a small band of followers fled into the South African interior. Here they forged a new, powerful political entity based in northern South Africa.

Following conflicts with encroaching Griqua and Afrikaner Settlers, in 1837 Mzilikazi moved his people across the Limpopo River into what is today central Matabeleland. Conquering the local Rozwi leadership and incorporating their people into his own society, Mzilikazi ruled supreme over the powerful Mthwakazi Kingdom. Referred to by Europeans as Matabeleland, this independent state existed until it was conquered by Rhodes' forces in 1893.

Mzilikazi's first capital was near Bulawayo. Later he moved north to *Mhlangeni, eNyathi* which was his capital until 1863 when Mzilikazi moved southward to *Mhlahlandlela* close to the northern margins of the Matobo Hills.

King Mzilikazi died on 5th September 1868 at a small private village of one of his wives. *Ngama* or *Nxiweni*, lies near the modern Matopos village. After various rituals, on 2nd November 1896 the King's body was placed in a cave in a granite kopje, *Ntumbane*, near Fort Usher. His belongings were piled in an adjacent cave.



In King Lobhengula’s time the tomb was guarded by the Nyathi Regiment. Unfortunately, during the 1896 conflict, European troops ransacked the grave, disturbing Mzilikazi’s remains. News of this desecration came to the ears of Rhodes who ordered the site to be sealed and henceforth protected.

Now under the watchful eye of members of the Khumalo Royal family, Entumbane is a National Monument. Located off the Bulawayo-Fort Usher road, access is permissible if accompanied by one of the site custodians. It is, however, a contested site. Some members of the family are against “tourism” as they consider it to be an insult to Ndebele tradition, others promote it for financial reasons. Before you plan a visit to the site, please first check with the Museum in Bulawayo as to the current situation.

eMhlahlandlela (Old Gwanda Road)

The site of *Mhlahlandlela* on the old Gwanda Road was the third capital of King Mzilikazi, occupied from 1863 until his death in 1868. As with most Royal Ndebele settlements its historical structures (houses, fences and grainbins) were built in traditional style using perishable materials. These have long since decayed and there is not much that survives for the visitor to see.

However at the centre of the settlement there is a stone memorial to the King. It was erected in 1941 in the shade of the King’s “indaba tree”, an *uMqugudu* (condiment saffron). Sadly the tree died some years ago. The memorial consists of a large granite boulder with a brass plaque affixed that records the “fall of the mountain”. It is enclosed by a low granite wall with seating, and here one can sit, reflecting on the sacred nature of this site and the neighbouring Matobo Hills.

After King Mzilikazi’s death, a reluctant Prince Janda (later known as King Lobhengula) fled the area. He was quickly brought back to *Mhlahlandlela* where he was crowned as the second Ndebele Monarch. He later abandoned this site for a new Royal Capital nearby - the historical site of koBulawayo.

Every year in early September, Ndebele leaders and well-wishers from across Southern Africa gather at this site to celebrate the memory of the founding King and to reaffirm Ndebele cultural identity.

© Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe, Bulawayo

Sponsored by the Matobo Conservation Society, <https://matobo.org/>

