



FRIENDS OF PILANESBERG

Non-Profit Organization Fund Raising Number: 006-421 NPS

SEDIBA

May 2016 - January 2017

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Letter from the Editor



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Kerry-Anne Hare

Dear friends

Well, it has been a while since I have been able to update the newsletter. Besides the website hiccoughs, life in general has been getting in the way, but I'm hoping to be back on track in the new year. We are in the process of putting together a brand new website. The committee members are hoping to make these updates into more of a blog that we can update more regularly. Our current website is very outdated and written in a language that many new developers don't use. We also can't make any minor changes ourselves.

I've decided to write a brief information and work party update for now, rather than the wordy newsletter we are used to. I'm sure that this will be enough reading as it is.

Please make a note of the new committee details: Grant Walker has taken over from Bronwyn as secretary. We welcome him and hope that he will enjoy being on the committee. Bronwyn will be staying on, and helping me with the Sediba etc. and Shelley Davids will be helping to get the website up to speed. Our elected 2nd in command with respect to work parties is Dennis Cooke. Dennis will help out on those occasions when Paddy is unavailable. A few of our email addresses have changed, so please make a note of these too.

A few changes have been made to the tent tariffs. Please be aware of the new rules: Members attending work parties will still have the use of the tents at R200 per night, while non-work party attendees will pay R300 per night. You must have attended 4 work parties in the last year in order to qualify for the lower rate. Lindy continues to manage our tent bookings. We thank her for her time and patience.

Work in the park has been keeping us out of mischief. We had a very long dry season, which left the park looking desperately thirsty. At least it seems as if the worst is over. The animals now have some proper grazing again and there are plenty of babies around.

However, the dry season did allow us to do some rather urgent inspections of and repairs to the hides. The supports under Mankwe Hide had rotted away, a potentially disastrous situation for the many large groups that move through there. It has since been fixed. The new year will see us doing some repairs at Ruighoek Hide if the water is still low enough, and possibly replacing Bathlako Hide completely, as the elephants have made this hide quite unstable. Mankwe Hide also needs a new walkway, so we will be a busy bunch.



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Hippos searching for grazing during the dry season



Mankwe Hide's central supports looking rather dodgy- they no longer touched the ground!



The quote isn't in yet, but it looks as if we will be putting some of the increased tent fees to good use and replacing FOPS Tent no 1. The zips and canvas are now a bit beyond repair. The tent has really served us well, and is of course a big income generator.

I look forward to working beside you guys in 2017! May the year be a happy, healthy prosperous one for us all.

Regards

Kerry-Anne

Committee Contact Info



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Special Project Weekend Reports- Pilanesberg

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May 2016

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

This month we had a very impressive turnout, with 29 people and only 1 cancellation. It was wonderful, because we needed people, lots of people! Last weekend we started building the gazebo in Potokwane, for shelter from the rain, and the sun. It turned out to be a much bigger job than was first anticipated. There were 6 people...not enough. Luckily, Makanyane Volunteers were in the park that weekend and came to give us a hand, just to put the poles in the ground. Anyway, at least they got the bulk of the job done. We thus had to finish it over the work party weekend. I must just say a word of thanks to the Makanyane guys who came and helped, it would not have been finished if they were not there. Thanks guys.

Project 1 for May: Seven guys worked on the gazebo to complete the job started the weekend before. It was hard, hot work and they worked most of Saturday too.



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Gazebo building operations under way.

Project 2: Alien vegetation. We chopped out some Syringa trees and Lantana

Project 3: Two groups went out and did road clearing and direction cairns. At this time of the year the bush encroachment is horrendous. It's back-breaking and very taxing.

Then, Makorwane hide. People had broken a couple of the shelves, so we had to repair those.

Lastly, special thanks to the guys who volunteered to spend an extra weekend working on the gazebo. It was not a holiday camp- all hard work, very little play. The structure is complete, apart from a couple of finishing touches. Well done guys.

Well, until next time, go well. Hope to see you at the next work party.

Regards,



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Paddy.

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June 2016

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

Again, we had a good turnout for June, with 21 people and 5 cancellations. The flu and cold weather seem to be disrupting our work parties. Nevertheless we had a decent number of people. Before you hear any stories, it is true. Makanyane Volunteers are using Potokwane camp for their work parties when necessary. That's all. They will do their thing and we will do ours. The reason is that the boma is sometimes out of bounds. For now a baby rhino is in there. And secondly, they had a nasty experience at Manyane. So nothing has changed. It's business as usual for all.

Projects: We have had complaints about Mankwe Hide's benches, so 3 architects were sent out to inspect, and decide what could be done about the problem. Watch this space. All the rest of the crew were divided into 4 groups of 4 and 5 people, split up all over the park to do road clearing and direction cairns. Did anybody notice the fact that there has been no Iron Age Site work for 2 months?? Basically we are waiting for the results to show themselves, from the new herbicide we used. Personally I think it was a waste of good money, but let's give it another month. I do know that there are a number of people who have been very happy about the lack of Iron Age tasks.

That's about it from me. Please remember that it is time to renew your membership.

Go well and hope to see you next month. Don't worry about the cold, bring extra wood and you will be fine. Remember Africa is not for sissies.

Regards,

Paddy.

July 2016

Paddy Coombe-Heath

It was cold and we worked 😊. Use your imagination for this one. Get a cup of coffee.

Moving right along...



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August 2016

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

All I can say is, to those who did not come to the work party, sorry for you. The rest of us, all 23 people, had a blast. This includes 1 new member, Arjen Sweinder. He must have enjoyed it, as he signed up on Saturday night. Welcome, Arjen. We made the most of the long weekend, and many of the guys stayed, and worked until Monday. Tuesday was treated as a Sunday.

Saturday projects: Camp, there was lots of work to be done. The new gazebo roof needed painting, a big job, and it was very hot up there. We put the metal table back under the gazebo. This was all very sweaty, messy work.

Then, a team went to Tlou dams to clean up and cut back the bush along the road. We got disturbed by a lion that came to visit, so we moved off. Another team went up to Lenong View Point to trim the trees, so that we can have a clear view from up there.

Iron Age Site: there was lots of cutting and clearing to be done. The site is starting to look really good. It has been opened up so that you can see what the place really looked like in the old days.

Sunday: We carried on in camp. We replaced some of the rotten toilet roof timbers. We also did a stock take in the store room, then it was back to Tlou Dams to finish off. This time we had a herd of elephants disturb us. Really! But this time they moved along, not us.

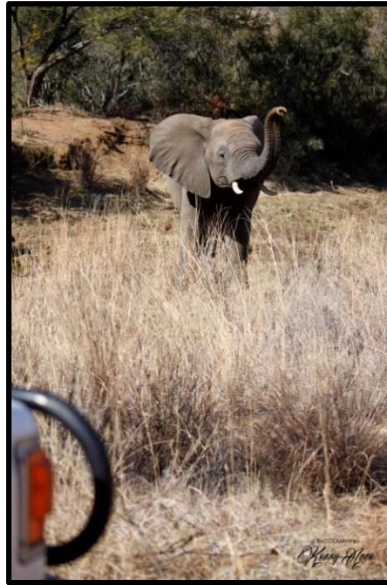


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A few work party disruptors. That lion was a little too close for comfort!

Iron Age Site: More cutting and spraying. Then we went to Mankwe Hide. We replaced the planks that were missing from the walkway, checked the benches (not good) and decided that the hide needed to be painted on the outside, before the rainy season.

Monday: All the guys who were still there went to the Iron Age Site. We cleared, cut back and poisoned all the stumps. Some of the guys collected wood for camp, while some put wire around the tops of the big upright poles. This is to stop them from splitting. I did a fence patrol to check for holes in the fence.



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Thankfully there were no holes. The fire break on the Eastern side was getting overgrown again, so we cleared that up.

Then some of us went to Rathlogo Hide to replace a number of small upright poles. Most of those broken were from vehicles driving into them.

Well, as I said, a very active weekend and we got a lot done. From me, until next time, go well.

Regards,

Paddy

September 2016

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

This work party consisted of 26 people, which is a fairly good turnout. No newbies, only old work horses. We only had 3 projects running and those were the following:

As usual, we had the Iron Age Site. With Trevor at the helm, they are still cutting back sickle bush and generally spraying the grass. There's not much of that. We are now painting the bush we cut with herbicide as we go along. Hopefully this will stop any re-growth. Only time will tell.



Iron Age Team. Well done guys. Thanks Kobus Pienaar for the photograph.



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Mankwe Hide: This has been in need of some T.L.C. for a long time and we gave it some of that this weekend. We repaired broken floor planks on the walkway and then painted the outside of the hide with Creosote. It took 10 people 5 hrs to do this. But I must say, the hide looks much better now.

Road clearing: A team went up Sefara Drive and cleared the road. We also cleaned up the geological site up there, No. 6. This had taken a beating by elephants who dug up acacia trees and moved a lot of the rocks, but all looks ok now.

Well for now, that's it. Hope to see you at the next work party.

Regards,
Paddy

October 2016

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

We had a slightly smaller work party than last time, but still 27 people in attendance. We had 2 new families, namely Ken and Vee Jackman (Borakalalo people who have moved over to us), and Mike and Lesley Pursey. Welcome. We hope to see you guys again soon.

We had 5 teams out in the park on projects this month:

Mankwe Hide: It was decided that we take over this hide, so we will be doing a fair amount of work there in the future. This time we replaced 1 bench- only 5 more to go. These benches will add a touch of class to the inside of the hide. The bench looks great and is much more comfortable than the others. Well done to Roland.

Then we started replacing the beams under the hide. A lot of the uprights have got wood rot and are not any use at all. We still have a lot of work to do there. I hope that the rain holds off long enough so that we can complete the job.

Ruighoek and Bathlako fences and hides needed a bit of T.L.C. Both of these hides are looking a lot better now.

Lastly, we did some road clearing. Two teams went out- one along Tshukudu e'Ntsho and one along Kgama. Both of these roads were very overgrown. We finished Tshukudu but not Kgama- it is a long road to travel.

Needless to say, we still got a lot done.

Well, until next time go well.



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Regards, Paddy.

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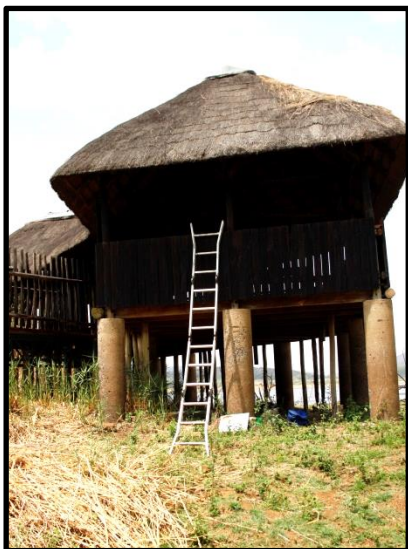
November 2016

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

Summer is almost here and numbers are slightly on the increase. We had 28 people, including 1 visitor from Australia, Adelaide Harvey. That's her name, not the city ;-). Hope you had a good time. There were enough people to have 4 projects going, and these were:

Mankwe Hide: There is still a lot of work to be done, but this team worked their butts off, replacing the beams under the hide. This was tough work, with two prides of lion on the hunt nearby... but these guys were up to it. They worked on the hide for 7 hours. Roland and the team decided that they had to finish, in case the rain came and we could not work under there in December. Well done to you guys, a sterling effort.



Our escape route from the lions.

A few of my photographs, taken at the Mankwe Hide work party.



Thankfully there was lots of space between us and the hippos...



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Hard at work



Shocking state of the supports under the hide



Had to do a bit of bundu-bashing to get there

Iron Age Site: The same story as before- we cut back, sprayed and put herbicide on the cut stems.

Road clearing: Again, we had two teams. One team removed a big Jacaranda from near Pilanesberg Centre and then cleared Letsha Link. The others went down Ntshwe. This time we did get finished. I mentioned at the AGM that there had been very little elephant damage over the year. Murphy's Law, Bathlako Hide fence was in a very sorry state thanks to an elephant! He must have walked in and out a couple of times, or just decided that the fence must go. A big team will be required to repair the damage- more for us to do next month. But, I suppose that's what we are here for.



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*Road clearing and examination of the elephant damage at Bathlako.
Thanks to Mike and Lesley Pursey for the photographs.*

Until next time, go well.

Regards,

Paddy.

December 2016

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

As per usual for a December Christmas party we had lots of people. 42 to be exact. There were 2 lots of new guys- Craig and Shelley Davids and Peter and Maureen Swart. Welcome and hope to see you again soon. With all these people we had 6 groups working.



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Mankwe Hide was top priority. We needed to finish the reinforcing of the floor from underneath before the rain arrives. This was a big, hot job, but the team finished on Saturday. Well done guys. Let the rain come, we need it.

Bathlako Hide and parking area need drastic attention...why? One word ELEPHANT. He damaged 6 panels of the fence, and damaged the hide. There is still work to be done, but it's safe at the moment.

The Iron Age Site required the usual cut back and spray.

The three other teams went out to tackle road clearing and geological sites, and cleaning up the direction cairns. All in all a lot of work got done.

Then came the Christmas party. The guys all chipped in and made the place look very pretty. The new lapa was a great asset. Then, the guys got stuck in with the braai and cooked up a storm. We were lucky to have the NW Parks senior staff join us- Johnson Maoka, Robert Gaoloalawe and Steve and Perry Dell, with Mom. Great to have had you guys. It was a lovely party and I think a good time was had by all.

Well, from me, have a wonderful festive season and all the best for 2017.

Hope to see you all next year. Enjoy the holidays.

Regards,

Paddy

Thank you Robbie Thomas Young for sending in these lovely photographs!





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January 2017

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

Happy new year to you all!

I was impressed with the turnout of 24 people. Luckily a couple of people came up early on Thursday and Friday so we got a lot done before the weekend. We fixed the roof on Rathlogo Hide, cut out a few Pride of India plants and a couple of Lantana. We also cleaned up the thatch that was blown off the roof at Lenong Hide and then put in a new bench at Mankwe Hide. We repaired a couple of planks on the walkway too. The weekend was a little wet, so between showers we did cleaning up of direction cairns and did some road clearing. Even with the wet weather, we got a lot done.

My appreciation to a couple of people who came out briefly, then went home very wet on Saturday afternoon. Thanks guys and girls, every bit helps. This shows the dedication of some of our members. I think it's great to have people like them, working for a worthy cause.

Well from me until next time, go well.

Regards.

Paddy.



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