



FRIENDS OF PILANESBERG

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

SEDIBA

August 2017 – February 2018

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Letter from the Editor

August 2017 – February 2018

Kerry-Anne Hare

Dear friends

Well, I'm once again playing catch-up. It has certainly been an eventful few months. FOPS has been called on to help out with everything from our usual tidying up, to firefighting, retrieval of planes, and the loading of orphaned baby rhinos. You name it, we have done it. We have mourned and celebrated, partied and commiserated.

In November, a small fire spread rapidly from Tshwene drive down into the riverbed, up the hillside, and down towards Mankwe Way. Within an hour the wind came up and the bush was ablaze, making for a rather dangerous situation. The firefighting team and most of the parks staff were off duty and after a mad scramble to put on boots and grab whatever we could to help, FOPS joined the HO's on duty and a few of the CPU guys to try and get the fire under control. What an experience. I think a few of us have a whole new respect for firefighters.





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Thank you Debbi Adcock for these amazing pictures

On our way to Ruighoek the morning after the fire, one of the teams came face to face with the CPU vehicles and a helicopter. They asked us to close the road with our vehicles, as they were trying to dart a baby rhino. It turned out that this little rhino had been orphaned in a poaching incident in the early hours of the morning and they were trying to capture her and remove her to a place of safety. The team was successful and she is thankfully doing well. It's very



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sad to see that she and so many others are having to grow up without their mums. We are so thankful to the volunteers who take care of them.



Just before Christmas, we received the sad news of the passing of Hans Glunz. He was on his way to join his family in Mozambique for Christmas when he passed away suddenly. Hans, we miss you already. Our thoughts are with Morag and his daughters. A celebration of his life was held at Jeppe Quondam and a number of FOPS members came in



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uniform to show our support. The room was packed and it was a wonderful tribute to a great man. A fig tree has been planted by FOPS in a special place in his honour.





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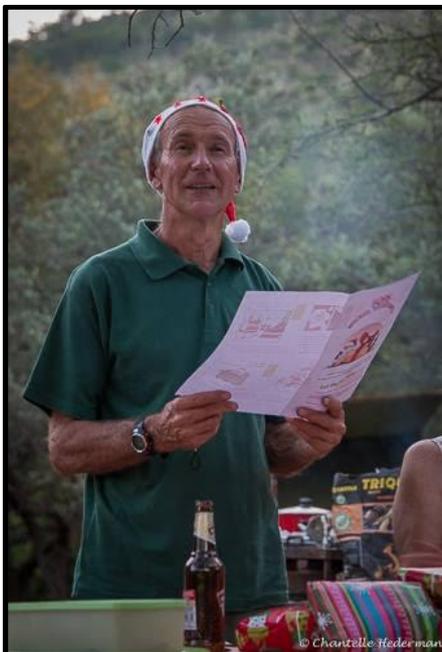
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On a lighter note, Roland and I got engaged on Christmas Day, so we had a bit of a cheese and bubbly celebration with all of our special FOPS friends at the January work party. Where would we be without FOPS ☺. This work party was so hot (around 42 degrees) that some of our members resorted to unusual methods to cool off.



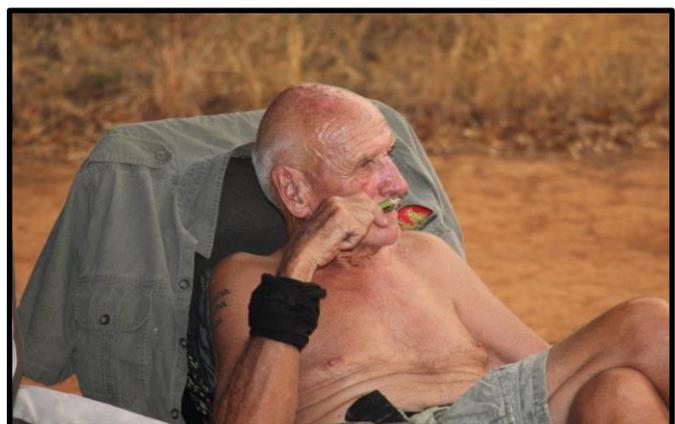
While I was busy putting the bits of this newsletter together, gathering photographs and reminiscing, I was informed of the very unexpected passing of Dennis Cooke. Dennis was the fittest, healthiest guy in our team and his death has come as such a shock. He appears in so many of the photographs in this letter and it is hard to imagine him gone.

Jan, you are in our thoughts. Dennis, I hope that you and Hans are holding your own special work parties with the angels. There will be two HUGE gaps at our campfire.



Thanking everyone for their continuous hard work. I look forward to seeing you in coming months.

*Warm regards,
Kerry-Anne*





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Special Project Weekend Reports- Pilanesberg

August 2017

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

You guys just keep coming, and in numbers. To be exact, we had 37 people in attendance. For this time of the year it's incredible, but wonderful. We had another two new members- Kyle Rossouw and Alicia Schubbe- welcome, and we hope to see you again soon. Then, a couple of oldies but newies reappeared... they have not been to work party for nearly 2 years- Peter and Zika Bennett, welcome back!

Then, some park news. The hide up on Lenong burnt down, but by the time you read this the contractors will have rebuilt it. This can only be an improvement. I can't wait to see the new hide. Maybe it was a blessing. Now, on to the projects.



The Iron Age Site: 11 people went there to cut and clean up. It was hard work as Alicia found out, but she was not the only one. These guys found muscles they did not know they had, but the place is looking great.

Some Google Earth pictures of the Iron Age Site sent in by Trevor Ketler, illustrating the amount of clearing that has been done in a few short months. It is looking incredible. Well done to Trevor and his teams of hard workers.





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Dithabaneng Drive: The two geological sites were a mess so it was FOPS to the rescue. The team did a bit of road clearing and then they cleaned up the lookout spot at Dithabaneng Dam. Great job, guys.

Potokwane Camp: A group stayed in camp to clean up and cut the grass. It was a much needed spruce-up. The place has had a complete face lift.

Tent 1: An ongoing saga. It needed to be completed and is not quite finished. Then the guys went down to Ruighoek to tidy up, and cut back overgrown vegetation on the loops, so now the cars can drive through there with no hassle.

Tamboti Shooting Range: The guys from Enviroloo very kindly came out to repair the loos which the elephants had wrecked. So a team went out to clean up around the loos and the range. We thought we'd kill 2 birds with 1 stone. Unfortunately the one loo needed more than a little help, but will be repaired next time out.



Part of why we do what we do....thanks Lampies for this lovely set of photographs



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Elephant damage. Planning repairs.



As much as we could do for now.

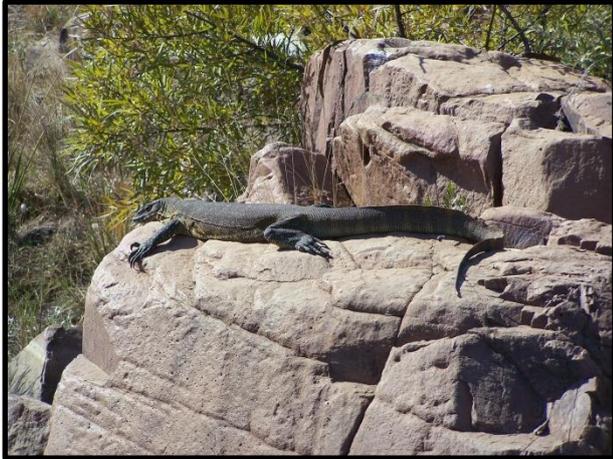


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All in all it was a very good weekend, hopefully enjoyed by everyone.

Until next time go well. Hope to see you all again next work party

Regards,

Paddy

September 2017

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

It was another fantastic weekend! The weather was pretty good, a bit chilly in the morning, but lovely for working. We had a good turnout, with 29 people and 3 cancellations. We had 2 new memberships, Riaan Koekemoer and Donald and Isobel Mc Dougall. Welcome and I hope we will be seeing more of you at work parties. Good news-we received a generous donation of gum poles, from Grant Naude of Light Fibre. These were very welcome and we can now go ahead with a couple of projects which are in the pipeline.

This was one of the work party details-taking some poles from the parks workshop up to Bathlako hide, ready for next month.

The other project was again the Iron Age Site- the old faithfuls (14 odd people) got stuck in, cutting back and spraying. These guys are really making an impact on the brush. The place looks amazing- you can now see the wood



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from the trees. Another team also did a fire break along the eastern fence line where it was getting a bit overgrown. All in all it was a very successful morning.

Then, road clearing along Korwe- as we started we realized how much there was to do. We'll need a follow up to finish.

Again, as always a great weekend was had by all.

Until next time, go well.

Regards,

Paddy

October2017

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi folks,

It was another near perfect weekend, which 42 people enjoyed. There were two new family members - Brett and Pauline Collinson and Colin and Joanne Brazer. Welcome and keep coming please. Then, to make up the numbers we had 6 non-residents. The weather played ball. It rained most of Friday night, but cleared up for the day on Saturday. The only problem was that we had to cancel one project, which was to continue at Tamboti shooting range, because of the rain. The road was impassable, but the guys rearranged their schedule and joined up with a couple of other teams.

The projects:

Iron Age Site: The same team went and carried on with the clearing. There was no spraying because of the rain- the spray would not have been effective.

Bosele Gate and the Environmental Education Zone: They cleared up the rockery at the gate. Then, the main reason for being there was to take out the Milkweed, which is taking over. There was so much of the stuff that we will have to do a follow up next month. This stuff is indigenous but does become invasive, so it needs to be controlled.

Bathlako: With the poles that were delivered last month, the guys managed to repair the car park fence. I say this lightly but 5 panels of fencing is no joke.



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Lastly, alien vegetation: The Elands River on Mankwe Way near Fish Eagle was full of Poplar trees. That is what we first thought, until we found Syringa trees for Africa, and dozens of Milkweed plants. This quickly turned into a long, hard morning. The worst was that, with the rain (we had 12mm on Wednesday and 20 mm on Friday) the river was full of water, so it made matters a bit dodgy. We did what needed to be done.

Then, on Sunday a couple of us went to Moloto drive to do a Jacaranda. We landed up doing 6 Jacaranda trees. Then we were told of an alien tree with yellow flowers. We found it and removed it. We later found out what it was. A tree native to Mexico called a Yellow Trumpet Tree. What next? Don't ask me how it landed up in Pilanesberg! But, stranger things have happened.

Well until next time go well.

Regards,

Paddy

November 2017

PaddyCoombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

There was a wonderful turnout, with 26 people. One family cancelled, but we made up for it with three new members. Welcome to Arie Claasen, Sylvia Whyatt-John and Agatha Ikking. The weather was great but did get a bit hot around midday. We had a lot to do, and we discovered even more work.

Firstly, road clearing along Korwe: We started last work party and finally got finished this time round.

Iron Age Site: We could not spray because it was very wet, but the guys cleared more of the area. The spray that we have been using lately is working a treat. There is very little regrowth.

The area from Bosele gate through to the EEZ still had a lot of milkweed. There is still a lot left now. It is work in progress.

Then, a big team went hide crawling. We started at Ruighoek, where we repaired 2 panels of the fence in the corner. The gate needed a repair job done, which we did.

Bathlako hide was next. We repaired the gate and fixed the shelf inside the hide, plus the fence on the walkway.

Makorwane hide's gate needed repairs. A couple of fence uprights were also fixed



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Then, we got word that the fence at Rathlogo hide had been damaged by an elephant, so we went down there to do some running repairs. The gate also got the treatment. Closer inspection revealed that a lot more needed to be done on the walkway, but it was decided that this would only happen at the next work party. All in all it was a long, hot day. We managed to get a lot done and everybody was exhausted by the time we got back to camp.



Elephant damage at Rathlogo

Well until next month go well.

Regards,

Paddy

December 2017

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

As usual, we had a big work party for the Christmas Party weekend. 33 people attended, 2 pulled out and 1 did not pitch. We had 1 visitor, Jose Skead. We hope to see you again.

Projects:

No Iron Age Site...sorry guys! 😊



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From Bosele into the EEZ: the team had a final sweep through. They still found plenty of milkweed, but most of it has now been cleared.

Rathlogo Hide: A big team went there to repair the fence, properly this time. They cleaned up around the area and then started on the fence along the walkway to the hide. This was a bit of a nightmare and we only managed to do some of the repairs which needed to be done. But next year is just around the corner...

Ruighoek parking lot: They took down the old temporary fence repair and replaced it with a more permanent panel. It looks pretty good. They also repaired the floor in the hide which was a bit shabby. They got the job done.

Road clearing along Dithabaneng: we cleared a lot along the road and went to Malatse hide for breakfast. We repaired the gate there and continued along Phiri loop. The main bridge was very overgrown, so we cleared all the trees along the road. Then, to our horror, we spotted Milkweed. There must have been at least 100 plants. The guys jumped in and started clearing. The place was one big mud puddle. A couple of guys did take a tumble, but all in good spirit. We then went on to Rathlogo to see if there was anything we could help with.

After that, it was back to camp to prepare the evening meal. The members decorated the tables and the gazebo. Pieter was our chef. We had beef, pork, mutton, veggies and potatoes, all done in a big spit braai. The ladies did salads. For desert we had fridge tart for Africa and ice cream with chocolate sauce. Rather delicious!

We were privileged to have a number of the Parks Board members there. Park Manager Johnson Maoka, Ecologist Steve Dell and his wife Perry, Khaya Nontununu (Maintenance Manager) and Charlotte Marais, who works for Copenhagen Zoo on the Rhino project. It was great to have all these guys join us.

The evening was a great success, thanks to all the people who contributed to the makings of the evening, and all their hard work. A huge thank you to everyone.

That was the end of 2017. I just want to say thank you to all of you who came to the work parties during the year and worked your butts off. Hope to see you all next year. From me, I hope you have a fantastic festive season, and a prosperous new year. Make sure you all come back safe and sound, ready for 2018.

Regards,

Paddy



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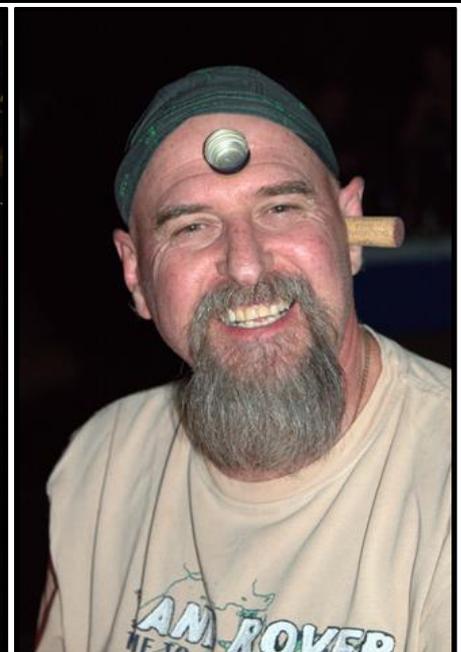


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A big thank you to Debbi Adcock for the stunning photographs



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January 2018

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

Welcome to 2018. Let's hope it is a good one for everybody! As per normal, a relatively quiet start to the year with 25 people attending, but we got a lot done in the park.

We removed and poisoned a lot more milkweed in the E.E.Z. near Manyane. We also sprayed the fountain grass along the main road going into the park at Bosele gate. We were going to cut out Pride of India on Thutlwa drive but a pride of lions was camping there, so we gave it a miss. Road clearing needed to be done in many areas. Tlou link was one road and Letsha was another that we targeted. Both were very over grown.





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Thank you Debbi Adcock for sharing these lovely pictures.

On Saturday we tackled the Pride of India again, this time there were no lions. The first destination was Kgabo where we found the place infested with Pride of India. There must have been about 15 plants here which we cut and painted with insecticide. Then, it was on to Thutlwa again. It was the same story- there were two lots of about 20 plants...it was very time consuming and hot, but we got it done and had a nice view of a herd of elephants walking past us. Then, Lindy was very happy that we found a big Lantana along the way, which we got rid of.

Ruighoek Hide needed some supports put in place underneath. Thank goodness the dam was not too full. We needed to be wary of the hippo family that stays there. All in all, it was a very hot, pleasant weekend.



Support beams were almost cracked through! Thank you Roland White for these great photographs

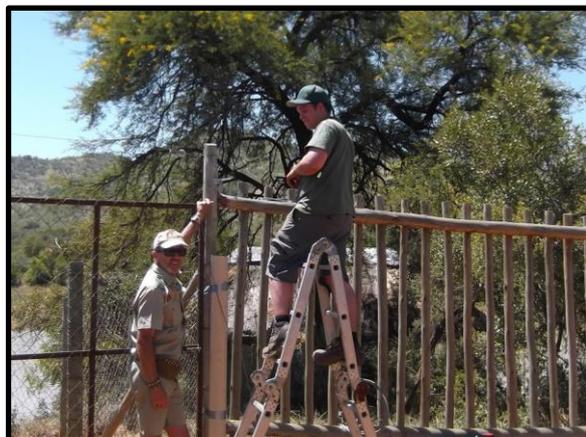


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New posters are up, new supports are in place and the hide is MUCH safer now.



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Then, we had some bad news. Our condolences go out to Morag Glunz and family, for the passing of her husband Hans Glunz. He was a dedicated member of FOPS for many years and will be sorely missed around our campfires.

But on the other hand, congratulations to Roland White and Kerry-Anne Hare on their engagement. They put on a lovely spread of cheese and biscuits, which went down very well with a couple of bottles of bubbly. Well done guys! Congratulations!

Well until next month, go well.

Regards,

Paddy

February 2018

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

It was back to normal, with a good turnout of 36 people. There were two new members Guus Krombeen and Robin Eggington, welcome to you both. Then, there was a family visiting from KZN, Piet and Karen Glasgow-hope to see you again. Glad to have you guys on board.

The Projects:

Iron Age site: Again there was spraying and cutting back of the brush. These guys deserve a break from the Iron Age, so you other guys are going to have to help Trevor for a while. Then, the electric fence needed a new energizer and solar panel. Thanks to Steve for doing that for us.

Alien vegetation and road clearing: We checked on the Pride of India that we did last month, because I sprayed a couple of the smaller bushes to see if that would work. Thank goodness, it did. We still had to do 2 small bushes which had not been sprayed with herbicide. Then, it was on to do road clearing along Sefara and Moloto.

Rathlogo hide: Here we repaired the fence in a couple of places and cleaned up in the parking area as well as in the fire break around the fence.

Then, our new project- Moloto picnic site: This place is in dire need of a revamp. We started by erecting a shade gazebo over one of the tables. We would like to put up another three gazebos and pave the path to the wheelchair-friendly toilets. The fence also needs a lot of T.L.C. The guys really pulled their weight and managed to get one gazebo finished on Saturday. This was a big job digging holes, planting poles, putting lathe on the roof etc. It was hard work, so well done to you guys.



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Thanks to Roland White for these super pictures

Then, some plumbing was needed in Potokwane: The drain from the basins and wash-up was blocked. This was also a big job, having to dig up the pipes and replacing them. It's almost finished, there's just a small piece left to do.





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What a messy job! Thank you to Kobus Pienaar for this fabulous set of photographs.



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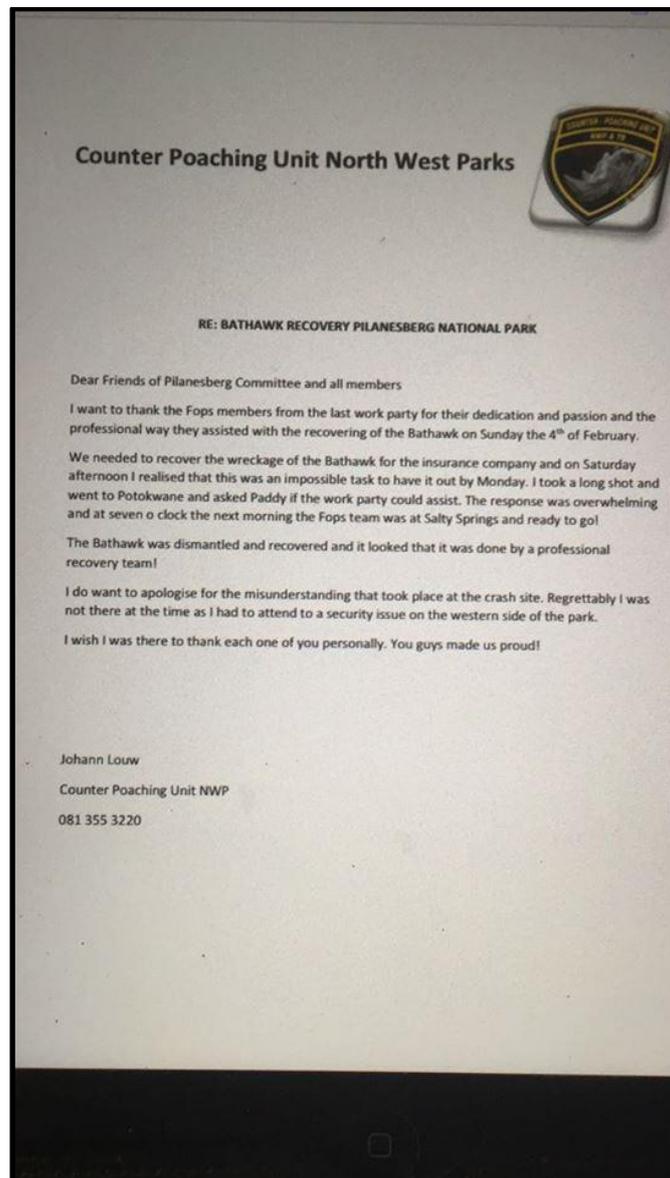
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Then for those who do not know, the Counter Poaching Unit's plane, the bat hawk crashed on Saturday. Thank goodness the pilot Jefferson Brown and Steve Dell survived. Jefferson broke his finger and Steve suffered a fractured vertebra. The plane is not so good...Thank the lord at this stage that the guys are ok. Steve had to have surgery to his back but is out of hospital and home. FOPS recovered the plane on Sunday morning. It was a mangled mess.

A special thank you to all the guys who helped on Sunday, from the Counter Poaching Unit that were involved that weekend, and from me. It's wonderful what can be achieved if we all work together. Well done you special FOPS members.





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Bathawk retrieval. Photographs courtesy of Roland and Kerry-Anne

Well, there's never a dull moment at the work parties. Until next time go well.

Regards,

Paddy