

**September - December
2009**

Pioneer Trail



**Meeting
Mabukwene Nature Reserve
Friday's 19:00 - 21:00 hrs**

**Scout Leader
Norman Scott
nclscott@netconnect.co.zw**

**1st Bulawayo (Pioneer) Scout Group
Founded 1909**

www.angelfire.com/sc/matabeles/troops

Under the Pseudolachnostylis Maprouneifolia

The One Hundredth Anniversary Year of our Troop was celebrated in grand style by the holding of a number of special Troop events throughout the year, with the all-important National Centenary Camp being held during the August school holidays. Four hundred Scouts from around Zimbabwe camped with us for five days in Gordon Park where they participated in a range of activities, including over-night hikes in the Matopos. These activities have already been reported on in previous editions of Pioneer Trail. Reports on the last of this year's activities appear in this edition. Our celebrations as a Troop will continue for another year as we still have activities, that owing to time and financial constraints, we were unable to accomplish in a twelve month period. Further, the overflow of our Centenary Celebrations into our one hundred and first-year will hopefully set the pace for the future.



Patrol Leader Christopher Mackenzie receiving the coveted GP Crew Scarf.

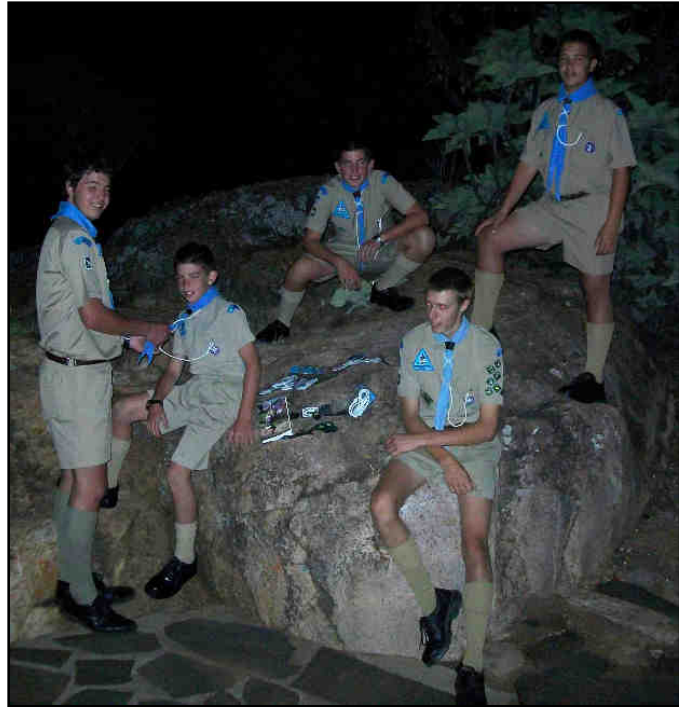
Our membership numbers remained static during these last four months of the year. However, at year end, Daniel Francis, one of our senior and long serving members left us. To you Daniel, thank you for your regular attendance at weekly meetings, your valued help in the training of the junior Scouts and the interesting general knowledge quiz question, you posed at each meeting. On the plus side, we were pleased to welcome Leon Wuyts back into the Troop when he returned from his 'gap' year spent in England. Coming back as an adult, Leon soon immersed himself in the life of the Troop. With his return, I am pleased and very relieved to be able to hand the production of Pioneer Trail back into his capable hands. Next year he plans on attending Leader Training courses and also taking out a Warrant as an Assistant Leader.

Scouting received a boost when the Matopos Conservation Society held its Annual General Meeting at Gordon Park, during November in respect of our Centenary Year of Scouting. As the Scouts of our Troop are members of the Society, we were only too pleased to host the event. Our duties included preparing the Naomi Conolly Lodge where the meeting was held

and then designing and setting out an orienteering course for the members of the Society to experience a Scouting activity. The course included instruction/revision on how to read a magnetic compass, a bit of thinking and some physical activity. The Society ended their weekend in Gordon Park with the planting of a *Kirkia acuminata* (White Syringa) in the Bowl Campsite, to commemorate their association with Scouting.

At the September Church Service at Gordon Park, Patrol Leader Christopher Mackenzie was invested into the Gordon Park Crew. This honour is reserved for those Scouts who have attained as a minimum their Adventurer Badge in their Scout Troop, render regular service in the maintenance and development of Gordon Park and carry out a project that will benefit those Scouts who use the Park. Congratulations Christopher on your investiture.

Since 1992 I have been involved in the production of an annual calendar which is used to raise funds for our Scouting activities and to publicise Scouting to the general public. When preparing this year's calendar at the end of 2008, on the advice of our publisher who had been one of my Scouts in the dark distant past, he suggested that we go for a full colour production and include photographs depicting our Scouts involved in scouting activities. The result was absolutely fantastic, and as professional as any commercial company's production. A high standard was set, which we have continued with new photographs for our 2010 calendar. Scouting is alive and as exhilarating as ever, even though we are one hundred years old.



Members of the Troop with our Irish Christmas goodie parcel.

Just prior to Christmas we received a parcel from our international pen pal Troop, the 12th Cork Scout Troop (Ireland). The parcel contained lanyards, (we have been making our own as these have not been available in Zimbabwe since 1965) a number of the most common proficiency badges Scouts gain, Patrol flashes and an Irish Scout Handbook. These gifts are really appreciated, and we sincerely thank the Scout Leader, Philip Jones and his Scouts for their thoughtfulness and generosity.

Ending off the year, the Troop met at Mabukuwene as usual, only to be whisked off to the Creamy Inn at the Hillside shopping centre for an evening of feasting on pizza's, ice creams and cold drinks. Wow! What a delightful way to end a memorable year of scouting activities.

And now it is back to my hammock beneath my favourite *Pseudolachnostylis maprouneifolia* with my floppy hat pulled over my eyes as I dream of the planning necessary in implementing the final round of exciting High Adventure Activities for our Scouts to get involved in to complete our Centenary Birthday celebrations.

N. Scott
Scout Leader

Cook-out Competition

26th September 2009

When we arrived at Milton Junior School, Chris and I unpacked the cars, and headed for the Judge's table to be given our sites, so we could start setting up. At first, they gave us sites next to each other, but they changed their minds, and I helped Chris move to another site and we began setting up.

We dug holes for our cooking fires, before we were called for the Opening Parade, and they wished us luck. After the Parade, we began cooking our meals. I cooked pork chops, sadza and creamed spinach, followed by baked apple, whilst Chris cooked a three-course Traditional meal.

When we had finished cooking our meals, we went to the judges to get our meals judged. After this, we packed up our stuff, and cleaned up our sites. They called us to the Closing Parade, and we got our marks, and then we went home, and I think it was the best...

Kevin FitzPatrick

The Hike of Caves, Paintings and Grain Bins

2nd – 3rd October 2009

At about five o'clock we had all arrived at Christ the King Church. Chris and I packed the car and at ten past five we left for Gordon Park. On our arrival, we unpacked the car ready for the hike, since we were going to sleep on the top of Shumba. We had our dinner and a quick shower. Then the three of us, Norman, Chris and myself set off on our hike at half past seven. When we got to the top of Shumba at a quarter past eight, we set out our beds then went to sleep, but unfortunately it was cold, so none of us had a good night's sleep.



Early start on Shumba Shaba.

At half past five we woke up and we had oats for breakfast. At about half past six, we started on our hike. On our way down the back of Shumba, we stopped at Witch Doctor's cave at about 7 o'clock.

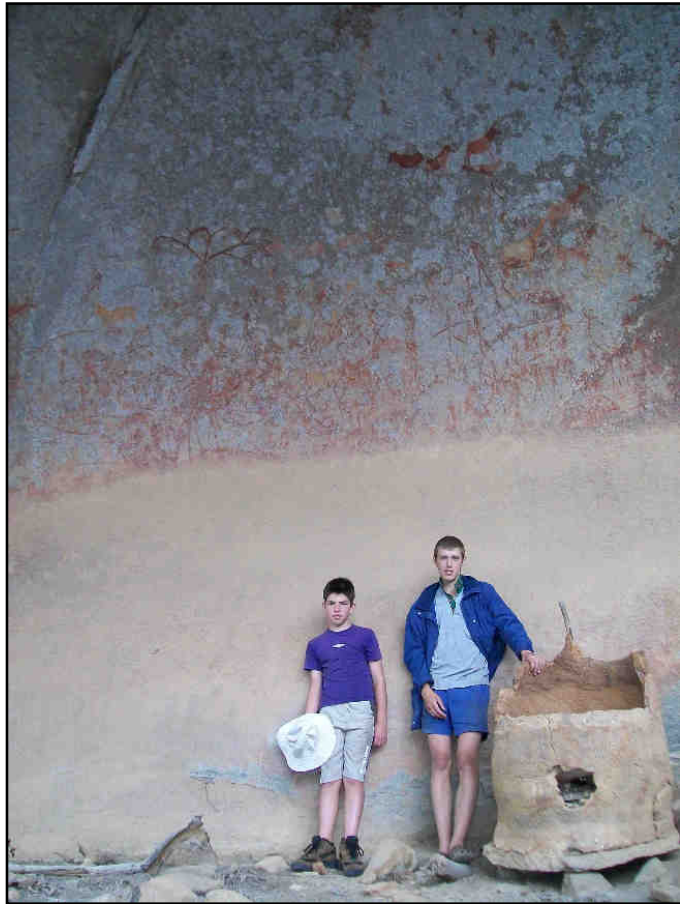
Then we had a look around the cave and took some photographs. Then we carried on. This was the first time that I had been to the cave.

When we were down we started looking for the fence that marked the boundary of the National Park. When we found it, we followed it for

about one kilometre. After a long walk we saw a flock of Guinea fowl on the way to a nice cave because it had some nice paintings in it and this was at about 8.30. After about ten to twenty minutes we continued the hike.

So Norman wanted to show us another cave. After a few miss calculations, Norman said that we should head for a "bridge" of rock across the river gorge that we were hiking up. But when we were on the "bridge", we saw something else. Chris walked past a cave and looking in, said that there was a clay pot in the cave. We put our packs down and entered the cave. But the pot was not the only thing there, but twelve grain bins and three more pots made of clay. We called it the, Grain Bin Bridge cave. This was at about 10.00.

At about 10.30 we continued our hike, but we could not find the cave that Norman wanted us to see, so we stopped for a rest, while Norman looked around for the cave. As Chris' and my feet were sore, we took off our shoes whilst we waited. When we saw Norman coming back we put our shoes back on. Norman said that the cave was still a long way away and that as the time was now 11.45 we had better head back to Gordon Park. It took us quite a while to climb down the mountain to the road that goes from Gordon Park to Mtshelale dam. We reached the road at 12.30 and had a twenty minute rest before heading back for Gordon Park following the road for about one and a half hours. Nearing Gordon Park, we went on a path that took us to the vlei which we crossed and entered Gordon Park. Once at headquarters we made the fires and had a nice shower and then lunch, which was cheese, tomato, polony and onion rolls. It was now 2.30 in the afternoon.



Kevin and Chris beneath a backdrop of rock-paintings, and one of the many grain-bins.

Following a short rest after lunch, I was told to cut the strawberries ready for dinner while Norman and Chris went to start the pumps. When they got back we started preparing dinner. Chris was not hungry and felt sick, so he went to bed. Norman and I had dinner which was boerewors, tomato and onion rolls. We then went to close up the pumps and went back to headquarters to get the gate keys for we had locked the gates into Gordon Park whilst we were away from the Park on the hike. At the gates, Norman heard a noise in the bush so taking a torch we went to look, but didn't see anything. We went out onto the main road and then followed the vlei road to Mtshelale. As we were going along we saw two Rhino on the side of the road. So we let them go across the road in front of us. We saw some eyes in the bush in front of us shining in the light of the car. We looked into the bush, but could not see anything, so we carried on driving. After a while we came to some Rhino droppings in the middle of the road. We turned around and headed back to the Park. On the way we saw our two Rhino again and then as we turned on to the main road we saw a huge Rhino standing in the middle of the road. It had a horn of about sixty centimetres long and it

trotted off into the bush on the other side of the road. We then went back to the Park where we had our showers and went to bed.

The next morning it was cold and it was raining. It soon stopped so we had our breakfast of oats. We spent the rest of the morning doing the foundations for a new stove at the headquarter kitchen. For lunch we had spinach and white sauce, carrots and meat-balls. We then looked up in a bird book, a bird that we had seen on the hike but could not identify. We think it was a Martial Eagle. Then Chris and I played around and he locked me in a room. He eventually let me out.

To end off the day, I sat down and wrote this article for our magazine, whilst Chris and Norman did some road work. They collected the pump and then we had our showers and went home at 5.30 pm.

Kevin FitzPatrick

Parent's Camp

10th – 11th October 2009

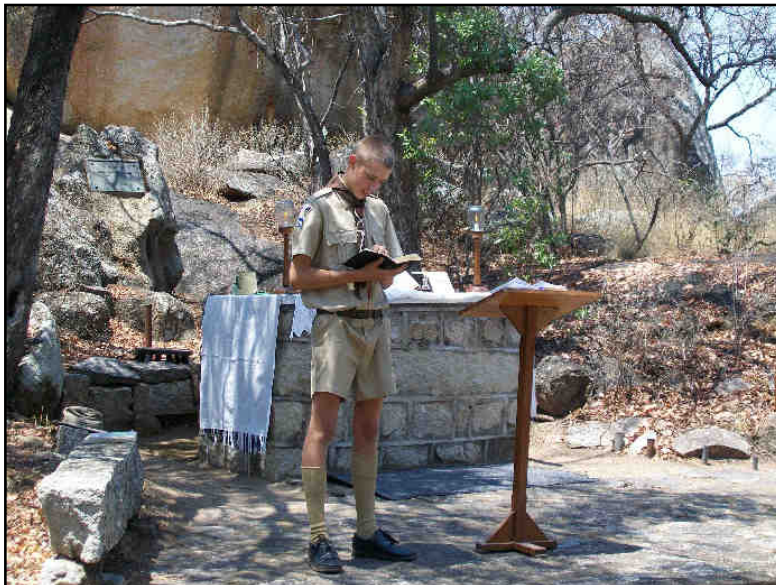
This was nearly a non starter due to school commitments for most of the Scouts. In fact it was cancelled and then resuscitated on the Friday night before the weekend.

I think this was probably the first camp where the parents outnumbered the Scouts by two to one. Admittedly, not all parents stayed out for the night, but we did have a cosy little campfire and sing along all the same, before the townies headed back to town.

Not having a large group out also meant that we could do other things. After the end of camp fire and escorting Wendy back to the stables, we went to switch off pumps and make sure that they were securely chained up for the night. After all, Gordon Park is situated in a National Park and they might grow legs and walk out during the night. At this late hour of the night, Norman decided that it was a good time to take a little drive down the side of the valley just to see if the Rhino that he had seen the previous weekend were back in the vlei. But alas, it was not to be the case; they

had been and gone as we found the spoor on the road. Maybe they had heard our singing and decided that they had quieter areas to browse in.

Now here is something for all you scientific types out there. We have advanced so far down the road with micro electronics, genetic engineering etc. Why has no one yet invented a micro chip that can be implanted into kids with all the required; who did what, when, how, etc. so that they do not need to spend countless hours memorising formulae, times tables, and



Chris giving the reading at the October Service.

history lessons. This way they need only go to school for a couple of days a week and can complete all sports etc. during the week, with out loosing out on the chance to spends days out at places like Gordon Park. Here they could learn to appreciate a more tranquil side of life without the chaos and mayhem of video/computer games and the garbage that is churned out every day on those square appliances you see in all houses, namely televisions. Parents could have quiet weekends at home while the boys are out learning scouting at it best. Then I think parents would be more inclined to come out once a term to Parent's Camp and enjoy a special treat. But seriously, getting back to reality I think those parents who came out thoroughly enjoyed the chance to sit back and relax for a while, and for those who did not make it, you missed out on a glorious weekend.

Sunday morning saw bacon, egg, sausage, toast and waffles for breakfast. The waffles were a vast improvement over the attempt at waffles after campfire the previous night. It helps when you can see what you are doing. After breakfast we took a leisurely walk around the Park and after which we packed up tents, tarpaulins etc. We then loaded up and moved back to the "Stables" at Headquarters to find a shady spot to park the car and set up our camp table ready for lunch. This is not easy in October, as most of the trees have shed their leaves ready for the start of the rainy season.

The service was taken by "Butch" Blake and Christopher did the reading. This he attempted to memorize before hand, as he is none to confident to stand up and read in front of an audience but he none the less did extremely well. At the Service we were joined by Milton School Cub Scout Pack who had also been camping out at the Park for the weekend. Even without John and his guitar, it was a melodious group of singers in Chapel on Sunday.

Following the Service, we retreated back to the cool and shade at the "Stables" for lunch. Later in the afternoon the Scouts decided that it was too hot to sit around and proceeded to have a water fight. But even with a little splash here and there onto the adults, they could not be drawn into joining in. And so ended the last of our Parent's Camps for this year. I hope to see more of you out for the next camp.

Rob Mckenzie
Parent

Assegai Competition

23rd – 25th October 2009

It seemed like Assegai Competition was still far away, when meanwhile it was just around the corner:

Day 1:

Just after school on the Friday, I rushed to get my last things packed. I just made it in time to catch Norm and the others before they left. As we got to Gordon Park the work started, collecting all the tools and equipment we'd need, and setting up our camp. We had a great dinner, and went off to bed.



The lowering of the flags at the Closing Parade.

Day 2:

We awoke early the next morning to make camp gadgets with out gum-poles and ropes in order to impress the judges with our pioneering skills. We were so busy enjoying ourselves that time just flew by, before we quickly ran to get dressed, and headed off for the Opening Parade. We got back to camp and worked till the bases for First Aid, Knotting and so on were open. We did well and finished all the bases, so we quickly went back and did some of out spare time activities. At about 5 o'clock we set off for the cooking competition. We got back and rehearsed our camp-fire skit. It went well, but looked a bit silly, as they had changed the theme without telling us, and our skit did not really fit in. We headed back to our campsite, ate some dinner, and called it a day.

Day 3:

We were up early on Sunday for camp inspection, and the judges seemed impressed. We then went down to the Chapel, for a short service, with a Bible reading and prayer. We got back to camp and started taking down all our hard work. We then got ready for the Closing Parade, where we found out that we had not won, but came a close second. But the best thing was that we really enjoyed ourselves.

Michael Dodds

GPS Hike

6th – 7th November 2009

It was just before 5:00pm on Friday when Dale, Chris and myself were putting our hiking kit in Norman's landy. We set off from Christ the King with Chris and Dale in the front, and me squashed up in the back.

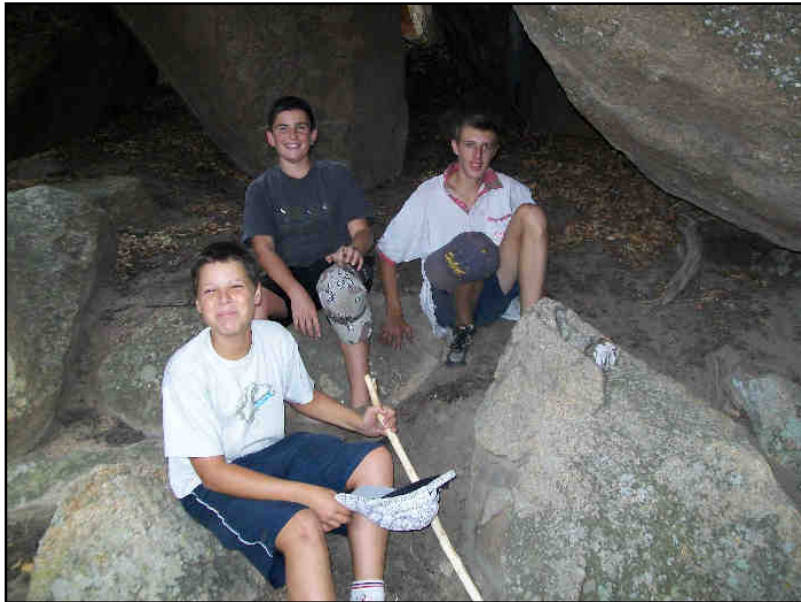
We decided to sleep at Gordon Park and leave the next morning for an easy walk in the bush because of the rain, and none of us felt like getting wet...

In the morning, we left after our breakfast and decided to go to a cave that Chris wanted to see. So we set off along our 'wood-collecting road' just behind the Park, and walked quite a long way along this before turning off into the bushes. Here we found another road, but I wasn't listening to where it comes from or goes to... We then cut through more bush and eventually came across the area the cave was in.

After a few minutes, we found the cave and headed towards it, on the way up spotting a single rock with cave paintings on it, before we went up to the cave. While Chris went to look for his bottle of information, the rest of us sat in the cool cave.

He came back with a GPS tube, that had all sorts of goodies in it, so we wrote the date on a piece of paper, and he went to hide it again.

We then headed off towards the Park again, and it began to drizzle! Poor Norman! But we made it back before it got too bad, and we came out onto Circular Drive, and it stopped raining. Well at least we were going to be ready if it rained on Chims.



Decklan FitzPatrick

Resting in the shade of the GPS Cave.

The Day at the Museum

27th November 2009

I had organised to visit the Thomas Meikle houses, as part of a requirement for a badge, but unfortunately, we were not allowed to go in and see them, so Mr Sanderson offered to take us round the Museum. He kindly paid for us, and then began showing us around, as he had worked there once, and knows a lot about the place.

As he showed Norm, Leon, Declan, Kevin, Dale, Daniel, Shaun and me around, he explained all the different exhibits, but we didn't get a chance to go all the way through, because they wanted to lock up. So Norm decided we would go and get ice-cream, so we bought a tub of ice cream and some cones and went back to Mr Sanderson's place, where we all like to explore.

Whilst eating our ice-creams some of us went to climb the Big Rock, and I found some cave paintings near there, which Mr Sanderson didn't know were there. So he took us to see some others on the other side of his yard. I love to explore round there! Before long it was time to go to the next venue for our Sausage Sizzle.

Christopher Mackenzie
Patrol Leader

Sausage Sizzle

27th November 2009

Hey, I think we've stopped – shhh... I can hear a gate opening. I wonder where we are? – umm dunno, do you? Uhhh, no I've got a scarf over my eyes...

“ALL RIGHT CHAPPIES, take off the blindfolds. WE'RE HERE!” yells Norm. So in the darkness of a power cut, we stumbled over to our host, who turned out to be Barry Knight.



The Troop on our pre-Sausage Sizzle visit to the Museum.

We trooped to the braii area only to find that the fire had been seriously neglected, but of course with hungry Scouts around (and a cold Norm) there was soon a roaring fire. Roasting, toasting and warm we were until –

AAARRGG!!!

SPLASH!!!

A few Scouts had found Barry's pool and wanted to know how cold it was, and sure enough everyone knew the temperature of the pool, because of some very loud yells of “IT'SS COLD!!!!!!” Thus Norm abruptly decided he wasn't going near the pool, but that didn't apply to the rest of us who very loudly joined the ermm... pioneers of the game known as: who can turn into an ice lolly first.

With a sizzle and a crackle and a munch and a crunch the food went from braii to plate to stomach in no time at all. Stories and laughter were the order of the day until – CRACK WOOSHH! Water came gushing out of a PVC pipe which Leon's misguided foot had happened to step on. Aaah well!

Soon after this, or maybe because of this, we said our farewells and thankyou's to Barry for once again allowing us to invade his house for our Sausage Sizzle, and headed off home.

Daniel Francis

100th Anniversary Chimanimani Hike & Expedition

6th – 12th December 2009

There's no place like home... And how could there be, when home in this particular case includes the beautiful Matobo Hills, and with a bit of effort, the majestic Chimanimani Mountains, and all the country in-between the two. Though I only arrived back home from my extended gap-year in England in November, I was lucky enough to be given special dispensation to join the Chimanimani Hike & Expedition in this, our most extraordinary 100th Anniversary Year.

An early start was to be made on the Sunday morning – too early for a cultured urbanite – but we all managed to drag ourselves to the Woodlands Fuel Station at 6:00am, the all being Norm, Chris, Declan, Kevin, Dale, Brendan and myself, along with our respective guardians to bid us a safe trip. We managed to shove all our kit into Norm's big landy and trailer, with enough room for our own bods to squeeze in too, making us wonder if maybe we should be taking porters with us... After a short prayer, and farewell photo, we piled into the landy, arms and legs creating soft, comfortable nests, the engine roared into life, and off we set, with the sound of sweetie papers already crackling, and the huge sigh of relief and contentment from our guardians wafting us towards the Esigodini-Joburg road.

We cruised out of the city, mentally double checking our packs, hoping we had remembered everything, with the excitement still buzzing in our ears. We made good time, heading towards Esigodini and Balabala beyond that, with only one or two unexpected pit-stops. We planned to reach our first stop at Triangle by lunch, and the miles rolled past, punctuated by the sounds of merriment throughout the car. We dropped down into the lowveld in the late morning, instantly feeling the heat that would be with us until the highlands of the Chims.



Norm, Dale, Declan, Mike, Chris, Kevin, Brendan and Leon all ready to begin our expedition.

Thundering into Triangle soon after lunch-time, we went first to the Murray MacDougall Museum, only to find it closed! So, going for Plan B, back down the hill to the Triangle Estate Club, where we found our host, Mr Andy Gibson, who looked after us incredibly. After a quick coke at the Club, we headed for the High Syringa Game Park, the Estate's private game-park, stocked almost to overflowing with plains game. He led us the scenic route through the game park to our camping site, nested amidst huge trees overlooking a natural pool on the Mutirikwe River. We unloaded our kit, unhitched the trailer, wolfed down a quick lunch, and about 4:00 headed back to the Museum.

Mr Gibson gave us a very detailed history of the Triangle Estates, and of Murray MacDougall, who founded the sugar company, in the heat-parched lowveld, building, with the simplest of tools and machinery, miles of canal works to irrigate the sugar crops. Both the scale, and hardships encountered were very impressive to hear about, which we followed by a tour of the Museum. Of course, once the tour was over, a water-fight on the springy green lawns of the Museum just couldn't be resisted, and we were soon shepherd back to the campsite, marvelling at the abundant game on the way.

A quick game of 'stingers' was followed as the sun began to set with dinner and coffee, and we relaxed and unwound on the bank of the river, listening to the crickets and frogs in the reeds below us. As the shadows lengthened, the sky drenched in the wild colours of an African sunset, small, glowing lights started to dance and flicker over the pool before us, reflecting into a hundred glimmering glowing drops of blue light. Finally, the swift darkness overtook the scene, as more and more fireflies started a slow, double-visioned ballet over the water in front of us. The lights of Broadway or Piccadilly Circus can never hope to compare to the swift, silent tinkling of the fireflies over the water at dusk.

With drowsiness steeling over us, we rolled out our sleeping bags, propped up our mosquito tents, and settled down, with the moon rising high above us, and the night-insects singing a high-pitched lullaby.

We awoke early the next morning, mostly due to the loud tone of Chris' alarm clock, followed by a quick cup of coffee – much needed at this hour – before Mr Gibson arrived again to give us a tour of High Syringa, passing herds upon herds of zebra, waterbuck, reedbuck, eland along with several groups of warthog and long stately giraffe, and the occasional kudu and duiker. Mr Gibson took us to some of the other campsites, explaining more about the working of the Triangle Estate, and the vision that brought it about. Finally, we returned to our campsite, and presented Mr Gibson with a set of our 1st Pioneer Anniversary mugs and plates, as a thank you for his hospitality.



Mr Gibson telling us the story of Triangle.

Our stomachs rumbling, we tucked into a breakfast of oats, and began to pack away our kit. After changing a tyre on the landy that was showing a bit too much wear for comfort, we rumbled off back to the main gate of the game park, which was locked. So followed a very long and drawn-out re-tour to find someone to let us out. Finally, we hit the road again, by now about 11:00.

Leaving Triangle, our next port of call was the campsite at Mt Selinda, in the Chirundu Forest. We made quick time, stopping briefly for lunch, before finally beginning the long winding climb to the prominence of Mt Selinda at about 4:00. After a short stop at Swynnerton's Memorial,

and a slightly longer stop to see the Big Tree, we rumbled into the clearing of the campsite, overhung with huge leafy rain-forest trees, and with the sounds of forest monkeys to welcome us.

We unloaded our kit, setting up a tarp to catch the drips and insect-splats from the trees above, and after a quick cup of tea, rough-housed until either our tummy's rumbled, or our energy levels flagged. After a warm dinner, and a warmer shower, we settled down to bed again, just a patch of sky showing through the deep gloomy trees above.

Another early start the next morning, saw us munching away stoically at the oats we again had for breakfast. By Saturday, oats became a very dirty word. Folding up the tarp, and packing our kit away, we set off again, but with the excitement slowly growing. Today, we would finally reach the mountains, the real reason of our expedition, and we lost no time in getting there, though following a 'back-route' to try and get out of the lowveld heat as soon as possible. But by mid-morning, we had begun the winding, swooping climb up into the mountains, as miles of scent-y pine trees filed past, row upon row.

After a quick stop at the Moodie Memorial and graves, sadly much overgrown, we caught our first glimpse of the mountains we were to be climbing in, standing tall and distant in a purple haze. Slowly, and almost imperceptibly, the tallness grew, and the distance shrunk, until we were right beneath the range, bumping over the rough dirt road climbing up to Dead Cow Camp, the National Parks office where we would leave the car.

Whilst Norm went to pay our fees, we sorted out our kit, repacked our packs, weighing them expertly, and grunting to show how heavy they were, and how strong we were. After a lunch in the shade of the Mountain Acacias at the camp, we rechecked everything for the last time, locked up the car, took the first step, and we were off. After taking so long to get here, it only slowly sunk in that we had arrived at our actual destination, but as the mountain seemed to rise up above us, it couldn't be ignored for long.

We ascended onto the range following the Banana route, though many of the wild banana plants have been burnt out through fires. After a quick rest at the top, we set off following the ridge down towards Southern Lakes, which always seemed to be just another ridge ahead. The mountain air was cool and brisk after so long in the heat and depression of the lower altitudes, and we set a brisk pace. About 4:00 we reached the Southern Lakes, with the instant result of a dip in the ice-cold mountain water. A brisk dip!

Refreshed, we followed the Bundi from the Lakes upstream towards the steep path that would lead us to Terry's Cave, where we were to spend the first night, noting with horror the enormous damage done to the banks of the river by the illegal gold-panniers in their search for riches. Finally, as the sun slowly began to sink below the horizon, we arrived at the cave, dropping our packs and ourselves into the shade of the overhang, and wasting no time getting a cup of tea on the go.

A quick nip down to a nearby stream to refill our water bottles, and the smell of cooking dinner was soon wafting through the evening air. As darkness fell, our tummy-beasts stilled for the moment, our packs no longer a menace, and the wide vista of the mountains spread before us, we all squirmed down into our sleeping bags, wondering what tomorrow would bring.

Not that we had very long to wonder, as yet another early start on Thursday morning, with a few half-hearted attempts at a mouthful of oats, and we were back in our packs, leaving Terry's behind us and following the River upstream towards today's objective: Binga. Thankfully, the massif of Binga was obscured amidst the folds and valleys of the mountains ahead, and without the daunting mountain to loom over us, we were soon swimming and diving in the pools and waterfalls along the River.

At a good speed, we soon reached our first real stopping point, where we left our packs in the shade of a convenient overhang, and filled our pockets with good energy food: sweets and dried fruit. After a breather, and feeling much more enthusiastic without the constant gravity reminder of our packs, the intrepid climbers and mountaineers of the 1st began the Ascent. The gradient suddenly doubled, then even more alarmingly trebled, as we slogged our way uphill into Hidden Valley, with the full splendour of Binga suddenly before us.

An attempt to regain our breath at a stream at the half-way point to the base of the mountain, a few sweets to keep our legs from liquefying, and the mountain growing larger with each passing metre, we finally staggered to a halt at the foot of the monstrosity, gazing up to the far-distant reaches, wondering how the Tower of Babel would compare. But, seeing as we had already come so far, we couldn't give up now, and following the loose path of beacons, slowly and tortuously we made our way up to the top. Binga is particularly stricken with that mountain angst of presenting a ridge to the climber, leading them to believe that's the top, and then suddenly flinging another fold in front of their wearying feet. At last, as we stumbled onto a flat plateau, with the trig beacon ahead of us, I was almost expecting another ridge to loom up behind this one.

A scramble through the rock to the beacon, and a pile of softly twitching and loudly panting Scouts surveyed the world. With views stretching through the distance to the flat lands of Mozambique on one side, and the harsh face of Turret Towers and the rest of the range on the other, it was easy to feel like conquerors, surveying our bounty, through a hazy, flitting wreath of low-lying cumulonimbus. Wolfing down the sweets and dried fruits, and with a photo to record the moment for prosperity, we now faced the challenge of heading back down again.



The intrepid mountaineers atop Binga.

Though a quicker process, it was almost more exhausting going down, keeping a check on your forward progress with already complaining knees. At last, we staggered back onto the plain of Hidden Valley, looking up at our mountain now with a fond eye, and affectionate respect. Dark mutterings of 'never again,' a care-free heart, and a refreshing paddle in the freezing stream and we arrived back at our packs soon after lunch-time. Soon after was years too late, and the beasts were stirring furiously for feeding. Lunch was followed by a siesta through the heat of the afternoon sun, before the next leg of our journey to our final sleeping possie, Red-wall Cave.

We crossed the Bundi Plain basking in the late afternoon sun, with a final climb beside North Falls, passing a Berg Adder on the path to Red Wall Cave, and a much needed rest in the shelter of the overhang. A trip down to the river for water and a cool-off was followed, as another sun sunk behind another horizon, with another warm dinner. Listening to the red-winged starlings nesting above us, and the open mountain panorama to delight us, we watched the sun fade from the landscape, before our tired eyes flitted closed till morning.

Our final morning in the mountains thrust us out of sleeping-bags, with coffee and a force-fed breakfast of oats to herald the new day. Everything packed, and packs fitted into the deeply worn grooves on our shoulders, we waved farewell to Red-wall, headed to Sphinx pass, dropping down steeply to Outward Bound below. A quick rest on the edge of the pass, whilst Norm went back to retrieve his forgotten camera, and we began the slow, hair-raising descent.

With thankfully no hiccoughs, we finally stumbled down to a set of crystal clear pools at the bottom of the steep section, and no water can be so lightly passed without a splash. Norm soon left us to fetch the car from Dead Cow Camp, whilst we continued on to Outward Bound, where after a chat with the Warden, we were given permission to swim in Tessa's Pools, for our last real taste of mountain water.

We whiled away the time until Norm arrived, swimming and diving in the Pools, and gulped down the cokes he bought when he arrived. After an end-of-hike photo, it was time to pile the packs back into the trailer, wave farewell to the mountains, and continue our wanderings.

Our original intention was to head north to Mutare to visit Uncle Ken, but on the way out of the mountains, as we were pulling into a small recreational park Norm wanted us to see, we suddenly lost clutch on the land rover. Oh dear! After a hasty stop, a quick diagnosis and a phone call to our ever-patient honorary mechanic in Bulawayo, Norm managed to make a plan using the landy's 4-

wheel drive, and with a bit of grating and trial-and-error, we managed to get under way again. Unfortunately, we weren't able to get up to Mutare, but we will come see you soon, Uncle Ken.

So, the plan was now to head to Lake Mutirikwe, where our end-of-hike dinner was to be on Friday evening. Once the mountain roads had been negotiated, we dropped back down into the lowveld, as the sun slowly drooped westwards. Mid-afternoon we crossed Birchenough Bridge, waiting for a huge truck to come whirring past, slipstream and all, the bridge shaking and rolling with the weight. As night drew closer, we looked for a suitable place off the road to settle down, and found a nice clearing about 500m off the road, in soft sand. Tea was followed swiftly by dinner, once darkness fell, followed even more swiftly by the unrolling of sleeping-bags and mattresses. Plagued by mosquitoes and other flying pests, we finally dropped off to sleep.

Friday dawned. Our second last day, and the ritual of coffee and oats welcomed another morn. Re-packed and on the road, steaming almost due east to Masvingo and Lake Mutirikwe beyond, we arrived about mid morning at the small Italian Chapel just outside Masvingo, with a brief look around, admiring the hand-painted frescos on the ceiling. After a stop in Masvingo to refuel, we were on the way to Lake Mutirikwe, and our end-of-hike dinner. Our first stop, through the swirling mist of the area, was at the Inn on Great Zimbabwe, where we were to camp the night.



Our End-of-Hike Dinner.

We booked in, and unloaded our kit, unhitched the trailer, and after a lunch and a rest, we were off to see the Dam Wall, the small Chapel above the Lake, and the sculptures of the Water Bailiff's Garden. We wandered around in the deliciously cool air, wreathed in a pale blue haze. As the day lengthened, we made our way back to the campsite, for a bit of rough-and-tumble, before gorgeous steaming hot showers, and our grooming preparations for dinner.

With darkness settling on the land, we made our way to the main Lounge, for pre-dinner cokes, before being called through to the Dining Hall. Starters were followed

by Soup, followed by a fantastic Main Course, finished off with a sweet desert. Coffee in the Lounge, and a quick game of touch on the green lawns, finished off a fantastic end-of-hike dinner. With drooping eyelids, and full bellies, we all curled into our familiar sleeping bags, and silence settled on the campsite.

Our last morning dawned bright, and after a hotel breakfast, and saying farewell to the staff who looked after us so well, we loaded up the car for the last time, and hit the road, noses pointed firmly home. The morning passed, as the miles rolled beneath the wheels, and with Norm now familiar with the clutch-less landy, we entered familiar territory mid-afternoon, climbing up from Esigodini to Bulawayo.

And finally, at the end of our 100th Anniversary Chimanimani Hike and Expedition, as we were each dropped off at our respective homes, it just remains for us to thank Norm for all his hard work making this expedition a success, and to all the friends we made along the way. Thank you!

Leon Wuyts

End of Year Celebration Pizzafest

18th December 2009

We were waiting at Mabukuwene for Norm to arrive for our last meeting of the year. Once Norm had turned up, Declan and Kevin went with Leon to invite and pick up Mr Sanderson, whilst Norm and I went back to Norm's house to collect something he had forgotten. We met the others at the Pizza Inn at Hillside shops.



"Better hurry up, Norm, or they'll be all gone..."

We had ordered three MEGA pizzas, and sat down on the tables, when Norm produced a very funny story for Leon to read, about a Rhino and the National Parks. Halfway through the story, the lights went off, but luckily Mr Sanderson had his bricks of LED lights.

Finally our pizzas were ready: one Margarita, one Four-Seasons and one Hawaiian... Munch, munch... After we'd finished demolishing all three pizzas, we were still a bit peckish, so we ordered an ice-cream for each of us, all large and covered in chocolate. Finally full, we ended our meeting.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone.

Christopher Mackenzie
Patrol Leader

An Old Friend in the South Matobo Hills

On the 22 December 2009, I had packed my knapsack with my few belongings and headed off from Gordon Park to the south Matobo Hills to spend the festive season with my relatives. It was always a pleasure getting back to my home area to relax, catch up on the news of my extended family and to help my aging *Gogo* (grandmother) in the preparation of the fields, when, at the onset of the rains we plant the seeds of the new crop. A slight disappointment was in store, for when I was looking around for the old hand plough to hitch it up behind our two faithful plough oxen, *Snikiwe* (I am given) and *Themba* (Trustworthy) I was told that it had been left out in the rain for one year too many and the rust had finally done a great deal of damage. It was no longer serviceable and so it had been assigned to prop up the chicken coop. A new one had been bought, but it had never yet been used. I therefore had the honour of using it for the first time. Everybody, from young and old including my nephews and nieces of several generations, gathered around, applauded as I raised and cracked my four metre long ox-hide whip over the heads of *Snikiwe* and *Themba*, signalling to them to take the strain and cut the first furrow, in the damp soil.

On Monday, 28 December 2009, as I was about to go out into the fields, I heard the sound of a vehicle, the engine straining heavily as it laboured quite close to my homestead. Now the nearest road to my home was several kilometres away, so this meant that whoever was driving the vehicle was not on the road, but following one of the many bush footpaths in the area. Leaving my knapsack containing my lunch and a flask of water under a shady tree, I headed off in the direction of the sound of the approaching vehicle. My goodness, I was in for quite a surprise, for there was *Inguluvane*, the Gordon Park Camp Commissioner's short wheel base Landy.

I stood back, concealed by the bright red fruit of the heavily laden branches of an *umthunduluka* tree (*Ximenia caffra*). Sitting in the driver's seat was the Camp Commissioner, beside him, well I wasn't sure but he certainly looked familiar and in the back, Leon and Chris, the two young stalwarts of the Gordon Park Crew. *Inguluvane* laboured in low gear through the sand whilst the Camp Commissioner fought with the steering-wheel as the sand tried to wrest it out of his grip. I decided to follow them, but first I went back to my hut and told one of my nephews that I would not be taking the oxen out today and that he would have the honour of ploughing the last remaining acre of land.

I collected my knapsack and deck-chair and headed off following the tyre tracks of *Inguluvane*. I caught up with them on the banks of the Tuli River just where the track they were following crosses under the protective shoulder of Mount Senungwe. Ah yes, I had been informed earlier in the week when I had arrived home, that Chris and the Camp Commissioner had been here earlier in the year whilst undertaking their One Hundred Kilometre Hike. No doubt they had come to show Leon and, yes, now I recognized the fourth person who had been sitting in the front passenger's seat. Bless my little cotton socks, it was umm, it was, oh my goodness I had not seen him for so long. Oh dear what was his name. I was sure to remember it later, may be one of the others will call him by name, I had better follow them.

On leaving the Tuli River, they retraced their journey back to the main Gwandavale road, where they turned right and headed south, towards the Wenlock Communal Land. Having passed the Gwandavale school they stopped about half a kilometre further on at the site of a long abandoned Store, in fact only the stone foundations remained. Discussing the scene, they reconstructed in their minds eye what the store and surrounds must have looked like in its hay-day. Then it was back into *Inguluvane* and off along the narrow track. Their next stop was off the road, having crossed to the other side of a dry vlei and parking *Inguluvane* under a shady tree, they set off on foot.

It was much easier following them now that they were walking, not that they were speeding whilst driving, for the condition of the road did not lend itself for speed. At last they arrived at the top of a dwala of considerable height. I moved off to one side to be out of their view, but still close enough to hear their conversation. The Camp Commissioner told of his dream of building his house on the top of this dwala, a flying saucer shaped structure raised off the dome of the dwala on three pods. It was to blend in with the shape of the dwala, with windows all round, a revolving floor inside and to be equipped with solar lighting. The others were not at all impressed and kept arguing about the design, practicality and so on. Anyway, they at last decided to head back down the kopje and to have lunch at *Inguluvane*, before continuing their journey. I sat at a respectable distance and opened my knapsack and took out my lunch of cold sadza and a roasted chicken leg. My flask contained cold, sweet tea.

Following along a much smaller and less used track, their route took them through the remainder of Senungu farm and onto Malaje farm. Crossing through the Mtshelili River, as the approaches to the low level farm bridge had been washed away (this was many, many kilometres south of Gordon Park) they eventually reached the Silozwi – Natisa road. Bundule kopje was not too far off and as Bundule kopje had the remnants of ruins near the top a decision was made to have a look at these. It was many years since I had last seen these ruins, so I too tagged along at a safe distance, so as not to be seen.

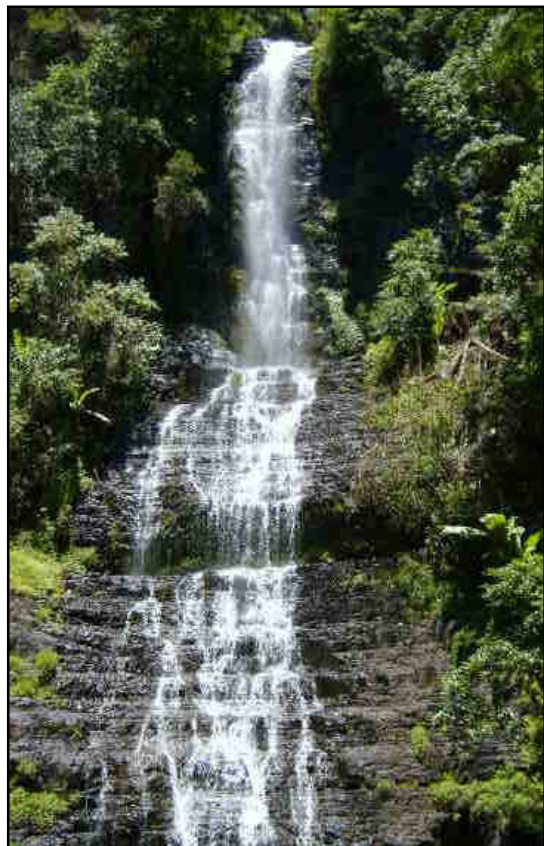
I was a long way from home and as it was now mid afternoon, I decided that I should head back for my village when we returned to *Inguluvane* parked a few kilometres from where we now were. On reaching *Inguluvane*, my efforts and reason for following them were rewarded, for Leon on reaching into the cooler box for cold drinks asked, “iFifi, what would you like to drink?” Yes, now it all came flooding back, his name, his intense interest and knowledge of the Matobo hills, its people and history. It had indeed been a very long time since I had last seen iFifi. I was jubilant at seeing him again, to know that he was still exploring these majestic Matobo hills and what was more, still keen on showing the younger generation those secret places, very few people have the honour of being shown. Having had their refreshments, the four of them clambered into *Inguluvane* and as the vehicle disappeared along the narrow track into the distance towards Silozwi and then onto Gordon Park, I waved a “safe travel and good-bye” until we meet again on another adventure. I shouldered my knapsack and holding the folded deck-chair in my left hand, the one with the fading canvas that blends in with the fallen leaves of a winter past, but enough green to tone with the budding green of a coming summer, but I must add no floral design, I too wandered off home.

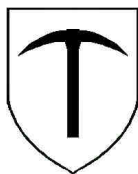
Well, until the next time we meet...

The Silent G.P. Observer

**...claim your life
and fight like hell for your right to be;
and the best gift
I could ever give to you,
was to say “yes” to your dreams
that aren’t my own...**

-- Margaret Sloan-Hunter





1st Bulawayo (Pioneer) Scout Troop

Troop Programme of Activities for January to April 2010

January

1 – 2	100 th Anniversary Group Registration Hike
8	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
10	Gordon Park Service: 12:00 noon
12	Schools open
15	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
22	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
29	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene

February

5 – 6	Monthly Hike
6	Provincial Sports Day
12	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
13 – 14	Parent's Camp: Gordon Park
14	Gordon Park Service: 12:00 noon
19 – 21	B - P Camp: Gordon Park
21	B - P Day Service: Gordon Park: 12:00 noon
26	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene

March

5 – 6	Monthly Hike
12	Centenary Group Dinner
13	Africa Scout Day
14	Gordon Park Service: 12:00 noon
19	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
26	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene (Sausage Sizzle)
31	Schools Close

April

2 – 5	Easter
9 – 10	Monthly Hike
11	Gordon Park Service: 12:00 noon
16	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
17 – 19	Mini Expedition
18	Independence Day
23	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
25	St. Georges Day
30	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene

Additional Activities may be added to the Programme