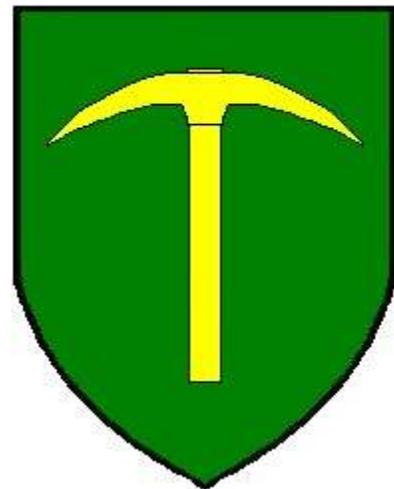




**May – August  
2010**

# **Pioneer Trail**



**Meeting  
Mabukuwene Nature Reserve  
Friday 19:00 - 21:00 hrs**

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

**1<sup>st</sup> Bulawayo (Pioneer) Scout Group**  
[www.angelfire.com/sc/matabeles/troops](http://www.angelfire.com/sc/matabeles/troops)

## Under the Pseudolachnostylis Maprouneifolia

As we near the end of the year, membership of the Troop is down to four active Scouts. Not good news, but that is the situation. Transport is a major problem when moving around and parents are not always available to assist, especially when an activity is over an extended period or to a far off destination. This is why I purposely keep membership at eight to ten Scouts so that when we do undertake our monthly hikes and other expeditions, we can all go as one party in one vehicle, however, it does have its disadvantages when Scouts who leave are not replaced timely by new entrants.

Being an "open" Scout Group means that we are not sponsored and therefore, we have to raise our own funds in order to undertake our scouting activities. Fortunately, over the years we have accumulated a good supply of basic equipment to practice our knotting, pioneering, first aid, mapping and compass work, as well as tents, tarpaulins and kitchen equipment for us to camp in modest comfort. Then there are the running expenses of the Troop starting with our annual levy to Province. The badges gained as Scouts progress along the scouting trail need to be purchased and all the activities members participate in have a cost factor. Meeting the cost of scouting, especially as we are an active out-door orientated Troop, is not easy and I Thank the parents for contributing to these costs. To our benefactors who follow our activities with interest and who have an understanding and appreciate the value of scouting to our young men, a most sincere Thank You. Your contributions in cash and kind are greatly appreciated.



**Kevin FitzPatrick in his home built Soap Box takes on Christopher Mackenzie down the hill at HQ, Gordon Park**

Two major competitions have been held since the last issue of Pioneer Trail. The first was the Bulawayo (East District) Pioneering Competition, namely "The Colin Turner Memorial Pioneering Trophy" My congratulations are extended to Patrol Leader Christopher Mackenzie, Declan FitzPatrick, Michael Dodds, Kevin FitzPatrick and Dylan Irwin - of the 8<sup>th</sup> Bulawayo, who had come out alone to Gordon Park for the weekend and was invited to join in with our Patrol - on their achievement in taking first place. This is the third time that our Troop has won the competition since it was first competed for in 1982 which on that occasion, was won by the 8<sup>th</sup> Bulawayo (Hillside) Scout Troop.

The premier Provincial competition, the "William Arnold Carnegie Assegai Competition" was held at Gordon Park from 31 August to 1 September. This year only five Troops entered, but they were the top five Troops of the Province, so competition was at a high level. The Troop entered and won by a fair margin. It is of interest to note that the Assegai Competition was first held in 1951 and was known as the "Small Assegai" competition, as the trophy is a genuine Matabele Warrior's stabbing assegai. It was presented to the Province of Matabeleland for competition purposes by Mr. William Arnold Carnegie, after whom the competition is named and has been competed for without a break ever since. The first winners of this competition were the 12<sup>th</sup> Bulawayo Scout Troop. This year marks the Fiftieth year that this competition has been held and this is the ninth time that our Troop has won the Competition. I am extremely proud that our Patrol comprising of, Patrol Leader Christopher Mackenzie, Declan FitzPatrick, Michael Dodds and Kevin FitzPatrick, brought the Assegai back to the Troop in our One Hundredth Anniversary year. Congratulations and well done.

Ending off the August school holidays, the Troop undertook another One Hundred Kilometre Hike as part of our anniversary celebrations. A report of the hike appears in this edition of Pioneer Trail.

Looking ahead to our final major activity in commemorating our One Hundredth Anniversary, the Troop is planning on undertaking a "Roof of Africa Expedition" during the Christmas school holidays. This overland expedition of some eight thousand kilometres will take us far from home through Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi. It should provide our Scouts with a fantastic experience of East Africa; its fascinating history, its peoples, wildlife, scenery, a swim in Lake Malawi, the Indian Ocean and most important, to stand atop Mount Kilimanjaro the highest place on our continent of Africa.

It is with great sadness that we record the passing on of Mrs Ruth Hadfield, on 17 August 2010. Mrs. Hadfield had been involved in Scouting in Bulawayo for well over forty five years. Her late husband Phillip was the Scout Leader of the 11th Bulawayo (Riverside) Scout Troop, where her four sons were all scouts. During this time, Mrs. Hadfield served on the Group Parent's Committee raising funds to build the Riverside Scout Hall. At Provincial level, Mrs Hadfield contributed freely of her time to Scouting for many years in efficiently organizing the manning of the gates and the selling of programmes for the annual, ten day duration International Trade Fair and Agricultural Show. This was and still is the main form of fund raising for Province, which helps in subsidising Scouting activities in Matabeleland. Added to this service, Mrs. Hadfield ran the Scout Shop, ordering supplies and then opening the shop at lunchtime three days a week for five years. For her services, in 1970 Mrs. Hadfield received Scouting's "Thank You Badge" and then "The Silver Eagle Award" in 1996 for her contribution to Scouting as a non-uniformed supporter. Mrs. Hadfield was also very active in her church. Honourable volunteers like Mrs Hadfield are few and far between, and this world has been made a richer place with all her enthusiasm and dedication. On behalf of all the Scouts, Leaders and lay personnel in the Province of Matabeleland, our sincere condolences to the Hadfield family in their sad loss.

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 Troop's ultimate High Adventure Activity, the "Roof of Africa Expedition" in December, 2010.

N. Scott  
Scout Leader

### **May Hike 2010**

1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2010

We started our hike at the gates to Gordon Park. The route we had chosen was as follows:

Gordon Park 592362

Moth Shrine 584402 (not along the road)

Path intersection 605404

River point 615373

Top of Shumba 602375

Gordon Park 592362

Distance approximately 11 kilometres.

The map we were using was, World's View - 2028 B3

From our start at the gates of Gordon Park we walked along the main road for about fifty metres and then followed the track that followed next to the Mtshелеle River in a northerly direction. We had walked about two kilometres when Norman who had stayed at the Park to lock up, caught up with us. At 09.45 am we stopped and looked on the map to find out where we were. We were at grid reference 588396. There was a small dam on our eastern side.

From here we headed for the MOTH Shrine at grid reference 584402, which was about 700 metres away. When we reached the MOTH Shrine we found people clearing up the grass and other plants that had grown during the rains. There was a plaque made of bronze fixed to the rocks which said:

**At the going down of the sun  
And in the morning  
We will remember them.**

Some of the people, who were cleaning up, stopped and talked to Norman. One of them was pretending to talk to us about the MOTH Shrine so he could get out of working. Then a lady shouted at him for not doing any work. Having had our rest and look at the Shrine, we continued on our hike along the main road for about 200 metres to grid reference 586404 where we were to turn towards the east following a foot path into the Gulati Communal Land. We got to the path at 10.25 am.



**Declan, Michael and Brendan**

At the beginning of the path, we stopped and waited for Brendan, who was at the back, when he was meant to be in the front with me, as we were leading the hike. We then set off along the path reaching the National Park's game fence about 500 metres from the main road. Most of the fence had fallen down as the poles had rotted. Soon we were at the path intersection, grid reference 605404. Here we found water running over the rocks where our path crossed a small stream. Chris took a picture of us at this place.

After another 600 metres we came to a second path intersection, grid reference 606400 where we took the right hand path heading off into a wide grassy vlei. Along here we saw a Snake Eagle, so Chris says. We entered the vlei at grid reference 601496 and continued along our path. Whilst hiking along we spotted a small cave to the west, so we went to have a look at it. Here we rested, during which we found some Bushman paintings painted on the walls.

Continuing down the vlei in a southerly direction, we came across a small herd of cows. Chris tried to play herdsman, but only managed to tire himself out chasing them around. We had a good laugh at him running madly around.



**Dylan, Brendan, Christopher, Declan and Michael inside the Butter-fly cave**

At 12.00 noon, we were at a kopje where the Butterfly cave was in. It took us quite a long time to find the cave and we nearly gave up when Chris found it for us. It was quite a big cave and I was hoping to see many original paintings, but no, the local people had put crude drawings in charcoal on the walls covering the original paintings. Having had our rest, we continued on our way.

We rounded the southern end of the kopje that contained the cave following a bush path and headed for Shumba. It was now 12.20 pm. Following a stream that led us to Shumba we were soon out of the thick bush. On reaching Shumba, we climbed up to the top from the southern side. It was now 12.40 pm. Here we had our final rest before heading down to the main road that we could see far below us. On the way down, Brendan spotted a Rhino and her calf in the Mtshelale vlei. It only took us ten minutes to get down to the road, which we followed to Gordon Park. Along the road, Chris, Michael and Declan walked fast, so leaving Norman, Brendan and I far behind. The three up front walked past the entrance gates to Gordon Park and

entered the Park via the waterfall behind the Headquarter kitchen. The three of us at the back, took the entrance road into the Park and then took a short cut across the dam wall just below Headquarters.

Whilst we were having lunch Chris told us that an elephant had walked through the Park during the week. After lunch we enjoyed ourselves climbing the rocks next to the kitchen.

Dylan Irwin  
8<sup>th</sup> Bulawayo (Hillside) Scout Troop

*Ed. Dylan Irwin and Brendan Mackenzie, Scouts of the 8<sup>th</sup> Hillside, joined our monthly Troop hike to undertake the hike test for their Adventurer Badge.*

*MOTH: Memorable Order of Tin Hats*

## **Colin Turner Pioneering Competition**

28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2010

We left from Christ the King at 4,30 pm on Friday afternoon to get out to Gordon Park early in order to choose a camp site before other Troops arrived. In our Patrol were Mike, Declan, Chris and me. Dylan from the 8<sup>th</sup> Hillside joined us as the 8<sup>th</sup> had not entered a Patrol. When we got to the Park, we got the *nqola* and piled our kit on it and pushed it up to the Bowl Parade Ground where the competition was to be held. We found a campsite and then off loaded the *nqola* and took it back for some gum poles.

We got our fire going and then decided what we were going to do, so we made some chairs out of gum poles, then a wash-up area, a table and put up our tent. We made our beds and then had dinner. We had rolls with ham, cheese and tomatoes and then went to sleep.

The next morning we ate oats for breakfast and then put up our gate, which looked good. After the competition had been opened, we went to our first base, which was knotting. We did quite well. Then we went and cleaned up our tent for inspection. They came to inspect our campsite, but there might have been some bad things.

We went for our second base which was to make a bridge. It was a bit hard, but we managed and then we had lunch which was the same as the night before. We then had some time to relax and enjoy ourselves, so we lay down for an hour. After our rest, we went to our next base where we had to make something suitable for Scouts to play on. We decided to make a foofy-slide. We got all the materials and started to build our foofy-slide on the Training Ground at Headquarters. When we had finished and were testing it the judges came and told us that we had run out of time, but they still looked at it. While everyone packed up, Chris and I did the next base which was whipping.

After the base, we went to our campsite to prepare dinner. After this we set up our beds and then just sat and talked until dinner was ready. Chris and Declan were asked by the judges to help collect wood for the campfire. Dylan went to help as he was hardly doing anything around camp. That left me and Mike to finish cooking dinner until Chris came back. When Dylan returned we had our dinner which was very nice.

Chris was called again, this time to help build the campfire. When the fire was built, everyone went to the campfire, but had to wait as the judges were late. When the judges arrived the campfire was lit and our Troop was called upon to do the first act. We did the horse's wee, wee play. In this play we have two scouts covered by a blanket who are a horse. The horse walks round the campfire stepping over guys who lay down. On the second time around when the horse steps over the guys water is poured over them. The horse runs away very fast. The rest of the plays were boring. So after the campfire we went to bed. Mike, Chris and Declan slept outside and I and Dylan slept inside the tent.



**Time to relax around the camp-fire**

Halfway through the night, it poured down with rain, so the other three came inside the tent. It rained on and off throughout the night. It was not a nice night. Then in the morning it was horrible because nothing was dry and the lashings on our projects were unbelievably tight. After breakfast we went for the opening parade in civvies as our uniforms had been outside during the night and were therefore soaking wet. We then did our first base which was to reeve a block and tackle. It was an easy test as we had practiced it at one of our Troop meetings not long ago.

The next base was followed by some free time in which we had to make a knotting board for extra points. When it was marked we got good marks as we had made every knot that they had asked us to do. We then had lunch with what we had left over and then we went to Headquarters to say Hi to Norman where he had remained, as he was not allowed into the competition area. We attended the closing parade in civvies as our uniforms had not dried out. The results of the competition were given and we found that we had won the Colin Turner Competition and had come second in the overall Provincial Pioneering Competition. We all enjoyed the competition, it was great fun. Thanks to Bekezela who had organised and run the competition.

Kevin FitzPatrick.

## **Poacher's Cave and Iron-age Furnaces**

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2010

Whilst climbing Shumba early on a Sunday morning in June, we noticed a plume of smoke curling up from the dense forested slope of the kopjes on the other side of the Mtshelele valley. We noted the smoke in relation to a huge "egg shaped" boulder near the top of the range and decided to investigate some other time, for we needed to get back to the Park early to prepare the Chapel for the monthly service.

Unfortunately, school commitments precluded all but one Scout to take part in the July monthly hike, so Chris and I decided that instead of undertaking a hike, we would instead try to find where the smoke we had seen rising up from the range a few weeks earlier had emanated from and why. On Saturday morning after a hasty breakfast, we headed off from the Park taking the short cut to the main road by going across the Dam wall. It was a fortunate choice as we were treated to a surprise, for on walking along the eastern bank of the dam we saw a Bushbuck doe gazing at us from not more than fifteen metres. We watched the Bushbuck for a few minutes before it bounded off higher up the bank and was lost in the thick forest at the top.

On crossing the main road, we found a path used by the animals and judging by the width of it none other than by the white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*) that frequent our area. Our path took us away from the Mtshелеle River up onto higher ground through the forested region at the base of the range of kopjes on the western side of the river. It was rather exhausting cross-graining the small tributaries, dry at this time of the year, that in the rains would channel the water down from the kopjes to the main river. Finally we arrived below the "egg shaped" boulder which was our landmark. Now we could start our search for the remains of the fire, the smoke of which had caught our attention a few weeks previously.

Crawling higher and higher through the tangled mass of creeper like branches of *Strychnos matopoencis* and other vegetation, we finally reached the base of our "egg shaped" boulder. On looking around we found the stones encircling the fire place we were searching for. It was at the entrance to a shallow cleft between some boulders. Not exactly a cave but a good sized overhang providing for some shelter. A little higher and to one side, Chris found some slag from an iron furnace, but no trace of the furnace. Then we climbed up onto a huge boulder that jutted out from the others. From the top we had a good view of the valley beneath us and the range of kopjes on the other side.

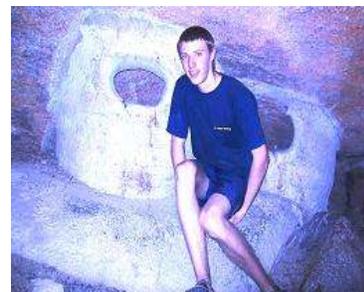
Having found our "poacher's cave" and as an added extra, chunks of slag from an iron furnace, we returned to the Park bundu-bashing our way through some magnificent woodland of mixed hard woods of *Burkea africana*, *Faurea saligna* and *Olea europea*. These trees were used extensively in the making of good quality charcoal that fired the furnaces.



**Chris at the Iron-age furnace**

Back at the Park we had a mug of tea and then we continued on our hike up to the Bowl campsites and beyond to where I knew of another iron furnace. Unfortunately this furnace had suffered the ravages of time and no doubt the trampling of animals, for it had been broken to pieces. There were however, vast quantities of slag scattered around. From here we returned to Headquarters and taking *Inguluvane*, we drove to yet another area much further from the Park to have a look at another iron furnace that I had found many years ago. This one was still in prime condition. Also in this area are a number of grain bins in good condition. Our monthly hike ended at the top of a large granite dwala, with a fine vista towards World's View and farther afield, Silozwi.

This hike had been very rewarding, in that we had found what we had set out to find and because of finding some slag from a furnace at the poacher's cave, this led to extending our hike to look at other known furnaces near to Gordon Park. These furnaces were built by the Makalanga and Abenyubi some two hundred years ago and additional ones later by the Matabele who had moved into the Matobo Hills.



**Two of the grain bins we found**

Explorers Two

## Sausage Sizzle

23<sup>rd</sup> July 2010

We arrived at Mubukuwene just before 7.00pm to meet for our sausage sizzle. Chris was already tending the fires so we opened our meeting and soon were playing a cheerful game with the tennis balls whilst we waited for the fires to burn down to coals. Norman insisted that we needed some culture of the 1960's so he pulled out his old Grundig reel to reel tape player and we were treated to hits of his time.

When it was time to braai we broke loose from the tape player and prepared our food. For one of our scouting tests we had to cook backwoods, (this is cooking without using utensils, but with items that one would find in the bush i.e. a stick). So, I put my meat on a stick and began to cook it. However my brother, Kevin deciding to be more adventurous made scrambled egg in a hollowed out orange. So, whilst listening to the 'classic hits of yesteryear' we cooked our meat and egg and then had the pleasure of enjoying our efforts. Kevin's scrambled egg was nice but it had a very powerful tang of orange. Very different! After we were full with our food we were pretty much at the beginning of the songs that we had been listening too all evening. Then we were treated to "Yellow polka dot bikini", one more time before closing the meeting. We left for our homes feeling a little more "cultural" and Kevin complaining of the 'burnt orange tang in his mouth.



**"Gosh, it has burnt to a frazzle"**

Declan Fitzpatrick

## William Arnold Carnegie Assegai Competition

31<sup>st</sup> July to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2010

We left from the church where we always meet when going out to Gordon Park a little earlier than usual, so that we could get the campsite at Gordon Park that we wanted. We arrived at the Park and quietly loaded the *nqola* with gum poles, ropes and our bags and pushed it up to the Bowl Parade Ground. Unfortunately, the 76<sup>th</sup> Bulawayo (Gifford) Troop had arrived before us and they had chosen the site that we had been wanting to use, but no train smash, we took the one next to them. We quickly got some firewood, our Troop dustbin and the gum tree logs that Chris and I had chopped up the previous weekend. Chris being Chris, immediately got to work on clearing a space for us to make a 'temporary' fire and get some hot water on the go to make coffee. We were to construct an altar-fire later on, on which to cook during the competition.

The alter-fire took a while to construct, so we put up the tarpaulins for us to sleep under. Whilst Kevin and I prepared dinner, Declan and Chris put the finishing touches to the altar-fire. By nine o'clock we were all tired so we decided to go to bed and get up early in the morning to set up the rest of our camp.

We woke up early and firstly put the water on for coffee and the usual 'scouts oats' for breakfast. Whilst waiting for the water to boil we started on building, first the washing-up area, then benches around the camp table, a rack for our bags and the Troop box. The time for the competition to begin drew close so we changed into our uniforms, tidied up the camp site and headed down to

the Skipper Knapman Training Ground for the opening parade. We had a busy day as we were backwards and forwards, running between bases, doing our spare time activities as well as preparing our campfire song and letter.

Below is our letter:

*I think myself that if Baden-Powell were here at this competition, he would say:*

*I am glad to see that you young lads are still part of the Scout Movement, as it is a real privilege.*

*I am also glad to see that you are enjoying yourselves as well as learning useful skills. I am delighted to be back in this beautiful place seeing you all learning and having fun. I hope that you young Scouts appreciate the out-doors and are treating it with your greatest respect.*

*Now back to this beautiful Matopos where I developed most of my skills that you young Scouts now use today. From the knotting, whipping, pioneering to the camp-fires and all the other activities you Scouts do, I hope you do them to the best of your abilities. Always remember, you my Scouting brothers, I am glad to see you enjoying yourselves and all working hard together. Do everything to the best of your abilities and never give up. May the best Scout group win.*

*Stay safe and always "Be Prepared".*

*Yours Truly  
Baden-Powell*

Written by: Michael Dodds  
Speech given by: Declan FitzPatrick

Following the campfire we had our dinner and fell exhausted into our sleeping bags. For the second day we woke up early, had breakfast, yes OATS again and coffee to make us bright eyed and bushy tailed. Doing a quick tidy up of the camp and changing into our uniforms we were ready for morning parade. The rest of the morning was filled by going from base to base undertaking tests based on our scouting skills. During lunch time we dismantled our camp gadgets and got ready for the closing parade. The time we were all waiting for had finally arrived and, yes it was us who won the 2010 William Arnold Carnegie Assegai competition.

Michael Dodds



**Declan FitzPatrick, Michael Dodds, Christopher Mackenzie and Kevin FitzPatrick  
Judges: Jolly-Jolly Mate and Bekezela Ndebele**

## One Hundred Kilometres of Adventure

29 August to 2 September

"Chappies, it is about time that we held another hundred kilometre hike and we had better do it now in these school holidays as we will not be around in December".

Well, the stampede nearly bowled me over. Preparations were made in less than a week and so it was that we met at Gordon Park on Sunday afternoon where I left *Inguluvane* stashed away to await our return four days later. Mike's dad, Mr. Dodds, kindly offered to take us to where our hike was to commence at a point on the Bulawayo - Kezi road in the Kumalo Communal Land, approximately one kilometre south of the National Park boundary at Whitewaters.



**Chris, Kevin, Norman, Mike and Declan**

Waving cheerily as Mr. Dodds drove off back to Bulawayo, the five of us, namely Chris, Declan, Mike, Kevin and I shouldered our ruck sacks and headed off into the sunset. Yep, quite laterally into the setting sun. Our destination was to a kopje going by the name of Bulale only two kilometres away. Once at the kopje we put our packs down and went in search of a cave that I had last visited forty years ago. Although we found many over-hangs with Bushmen paintings, my memory failed me and we did not find the main cave. By now the sun was low on the horizon, so collecting our packs we headed in a southerly direction until we found a suitable site to make camp. As a precaution, we made our presence known to the villagers we passed, telling them of our intention to camp in their area for the night. We were warmly greeted, received their permission and so felt quite safe.

Early, Monday morning, having had a breakfast of oatmeal porridge, gee we really ought to change from this gruel; Chris set a brisk pace southward to the Whovi River. From high up on the eastern range of kopjes and looking toward the southwest we saw the imposing Njelele massive some ten kilometres distant. The name, Njelele is of Barozwe origin and it is closely connected with the Mlimo worship, a sacred hill or the hill of the deity. This was one of the holy places, perhaps the most venerated spot in Matabeleland. Although no longer regarded as a place where the Mlimo resides it is still treated with awe and reverence.

Dropping down to the Whovi River over the hard baked soil of a dry Matabeleland veldt, we were relieved to find a good flow of clear water meandering through the sand banks of the Whovi. We stopped here for a twenty minute rest. Well, not really a rest, for the Scouts were soon busy constructing dams in the river. Great fun. Our route was simply to follow the river for the next eight kilometres to where the Kezi road crossed. Easy navigation, but hey we did not count on the scratching, clinging, thorn scrub nor the boulder strewn bed of the river. Not being a match for such treatment we headed out from the river and up onto the right hand bank to follow the footpaths of the villagers. We even had the services of a young lad who put us onto the main 'drag' which took us to Natisa Shopping complex about three kilometres from our intended road/river crossing point. We had made good time and made ourselves comfortable by sitting under a tree outside the bottle store we enjoyed a soft drink and packet of dried fruit.



**Damming the Whovi River**

Having refreshed ourselves, we wandered along the Natisa - Silozwi road heading in an easterly direction for the next part of our hike until we reached Nduba Primary School where we stopped for our lunch break. For us, lunch is a long drawn out festival for we do not care too much for hiking in the hot midday sun; that is only good for mad dogs and Englishmen. Whilst I inspected the inside of my eyelids, the others dashed around madly, for Chris, Mike and Declan had stopped at this very school two weeks previously on a one hundred and fifty kilometre cycle tour that they had undertaken. The real purpose and joy of school holidays. Kevin, being ever active joined in the fun. Where they found the energy beats me. Anyway, some time during their frenzied running around, Chris found time to make lunch, piping hot savoury jaffels. Mmmm, were they delicious?



**Chris the wandering Minstrel**

On having a close look at the map, we decided to follow a farm fence line to a point just south of Silozwi kopje. On finding the fence, we were treated to a well maintained fire-break and it was along here that Chris found a homemade guitar. The fire-break proved to be a welcome relief to us, no bundu-bashing as we had expected. It was not long before we came to our first obstacle, the Maleme River, which we had expected to be a mere trickle. Oops, we were confronted by a huge pool. That is what we thought, for having diverted our route to find a way around it we discovered that it grew in size and was in fact a dam. Not being marked on the map, our map was old and the dam new we retraced our path back to the fence. On a closer inspection of the dam below us from on the bank where we stood, we could see a definite path crossing under water to the other bank about fifty metres away. OK, a crossing point. As my Scouts hike bare foot, they just waded into the dam, at the same time hitching their ruck sacks high up on their shoulders. I, being a wimp, removed my hiking boots and followed suit. Once across, we continued following the fence in an easterly direction.

Having left the southern edge of the Matobo kopjes behind us, we found ourselves in open woodland of mixed trees, but mainly Terminalia and Burkia. On nearing the end of the fence, we again encountered kopjes. At this point we decided on changing direction for we could now see Tovi, a massive kopje which we were to go passed the next day. Using Tovi as our reference point we hiked through the open woodland following game trails until we reached the road coming out of the hills into the farming district. Along the way we passed many middens containing white, dog like droppings. On checking what they could have been, we were informed that they were the droppings of the Spotted Hyena. By now it was getting late and we were still too far from the Mtshелеle River to reach it before darkness, so we decided to make camp near a village where we were sure that we could obtain water. Mr. Dube at whose homestead we had arrived at welcomed us and allowed us to collect water from his well. We made camp away from his homestead at the base of a small kopje in a glade of trees. The light from our campfire provided our little camp with a warm cheerful glow. When the fire had burnt down to coals, we turned into our sleeping bags for the second night of our hike.



**Crossing the upper reaches of an unexpected dam on the Maleme River**

The next morning we discovered that our arrival had caused much excitement, for visitors came into our camp to find out who we were. They were amazed at how far we had hiked and even more amazed at how far we still had to go. In discussing with two young men the best route to follow to reach the Mtshелеle River, they volunteered to lead us part of the way as there were many paths in the area and that we may just follow the wrong one. The prospect of personal

guides to get us to the Mtshелеle River where it was joined by the Toghwana River was too good an opportunity to pass up. Once at the river, we bade our friend's good-bye and headed for Tovi which by now was only four kilometres away. The bush telegraph works fast, for when we met Adam, who works at Gordon Park on the Sunday following the hike, he told us that he had heard that we had camped at Mr. Dube's homestead and that two youths had taken us as far as the Mtshелеle River.

Our approach to Tovi was obstructed by a series of low kopjes at its base and we took the wrong route. Blunder, for we ended up bundu-bashing through thick bush and clambering over large boulders. We had a rest near the top of Tovi and then headed down the steep northern face to a path that we had followed on our one hundred kilometre hike of last year. We found our campsite of last year but decided to proceed further as there was no water in the small stream adjacent to it.

A lunch stop was made down stream where there was water. Once again the Scouts abandoned me in favour of exploring the river and having a much needed wash. We again had jaffels for lunch after which it was my turn to bathe in the crystal clear water of the little stream.

Mid afternoon we resumed our hike heading for the Gwandavale road which was about four kilometres to our east. Once on the road we followed it for a short distance until we reached a gap in the range of kopjes flanking the Tokwe River. Once we were through this range the ground fell away towards the Tokwe/Tuli confluence, our next point of reference on our hike. The shadows were lengthening by the time we reached the Tokwe and a little further, the Tuli River. Our aim was to make camp on the Tuli River just above its confluence with the Tokwe River. On walking up the Tuli, we found an ideal campsite, with access to a large pool from which we drew our water. Towering above and keeping a watch over us was the kopje Mwanawapakati. Dinner of boerewors braaied over the hot coals of our campfire supplemented with freshly boiled potatoes and green peas all smothered in a rich tomato and onion mix was just heavenly. With nightfall came the night sounds of the bush-veldt and being next to a river the croaking of frogs added to the sounds of the night. Life could not have been more idealistic.



**A dinner fit for Kings**



**Boulder hopping is an exhausting activity**

The morning air was cool and invigorating, which we were thankful for as we had another long day of hiking ahead of us. We had not gone more than a hundred metres when we were confronted by a blockage in the river. At this point the bases of two kopjes met in the narrow confines of the river resulting in the river having to carve out a passage so leaving a jumble of boulders obstructing our path. The rapids formed were a serious impediment to our route, but not daunted, we climbed, scrambled, squeezed and boulder hopped up and over the rapids to exit upstream to the tranquil meander of the river. We found ourselves on the true right hand bank of the river which was in the National Park. On the other side of the river was the Matopo Communal Land and a path used by cattle and people. We decided to cross over and follow the path upstream. Further, as the path

was against the kopjes, we were treated to a shady walk in what was becoming a hot morning.

Whilst hiking along this section, Chris our pathfinder noticed a shelter to the right of the path, which walls were covered in well preserved Bushmen paintings. On looking around he found more paintings on the adjacent rocks. It was not much further on when we left the river and headed up a tributary, which took us out of the Tuli gorge. Up and up we climbed until we were at the top of Labazimba, two hundred and twenty metres above the Tuli River. By now we were quite exhausted, for not only had we climbed in altitude in over a short horizontal distance, but we were now out of the cooling shadows of the kopjes. Hiking in a huge semi-circle we crossed from Labazimba to an adjacent kopje which contained Labazimba cave. Here we had a rest and viewed the fine paintings within.



**A Stone-age hiker joins us on our hike. Labazimba Cave.**

On leaving the cave we stopped at a homestead where the owner boiled water for us to make our morning tea. Naturally we got to talking about the weather, cattle and crops and his livelihood. His business was that of carpentry, which was quite evident from the tools and stocks of tree trunks laying about his yard. Mid morning was drawing near, so bidding him farewell our next stop was Manene kopje and cave three kilometres further to the northwest. Passing a village on the way gave us the opportunity of stocking up with a number of Pampel moes, a most refreshing fruit. A lunch stop was called at the base of Manene under a huge *Mimusops zeyheri* tree. Alas it did not have any fruit.

Before leaving for our next destination and night stop, we climbed to the cave on Manene, a beautifully shaped cave with paintings. Children however, had ruined these by scribbling in black charcoal all over them. From here our route took us out of the valley and over the top of Tonamambe at the top of which we looked around for a cave that we had been told about. We did not find the cave, but we did find a few paintings on scattered rocks. Then it was on the hike trail again this time heading for Buhwe kopje at which we were to camp our final night of the hike.



**It would have been great if this Python could have given us a ride. Buhwe Cave.**

This section of the hike was through beautiful forests and alongside clear running streams where the villagers gather firewood and graze their cattle. We eventually came out onto the Ginqa River where we were joined by two young men who showed us the way to Buhwe kopje. It was early evening by the time us weary hikers reached Buhwe, but our hike for the day was not yet over. Buhwe contains a splendid cave with Bushmen paintings and so our guides insisted on showing us the cave even in the growing darkness. Back to where we had left our kit, permission was granted for us to camp the night alongside a bush fence that is constructed in the Communal Lands around their mealie fields. This was not the sort of campsite we would have chosen, but we had no choice.

As summer is approaching, the eastern sky is beginning to brighten up earlier each morning and so our rising had kept pace with the dawn. Today was to be our last day of hiking and we had stopped short of our intended destination the day before, by three kilometres. This meant that we would have to hike twenty-three kilometres in the morning if we were to be in Gordon Park where we were to end our hike by lunchtime.

Saying our farewells to the people from whom we had obtained our water, we were surprised and delighted to be joined by our host as he volunteered to be our guide down the steep side of the Tuli River gorge and then to direct us to a path which would take us through the north-eastern corner of the National Park and on into the Gulati Communal Land. The view from the top of the

Tuli River gorge looking to the north, west and south was awesome. Beneath us forming a mosaic were the fields of the rural people, with the Tuli River meandering across the valley floor. Then far on the western horizon we could just make out the shape of Shumba shaba, our beloved sentinel keeping guard over Gordon Park. Closer to us, about halfway was Gulati kopje our first reference point of the day on our way home.

The path down to the valley floor was steep and winding giving us good vantage points to view the scene below. Once at the bottom we crossed the Tuli River, which was a mere trickle over some logs that had been laid to form a bridge. Then following up the Kantotola River, a tributary coming in from the Matobo National Park, our path took us along the dry sandy bed to a place where we left the river and entered the natural forests of the National Park. Here we said good-bye to our guide, Mr. Ndlovu. Through the forests we hiked for quite some distance until we came to the boundary fence separating the National Park from the Gulati Communal land. Not stopping for a rest we entered the forests of the Communal Land and only stopped for a rest when we again reached the Kantotola River near the site of the Kantotola battle in which Baden-Powell was involved in 1896. We were now in familiar country and we knew that our destination was not that far away.



**Our guide shows us the way across the Tuli River**

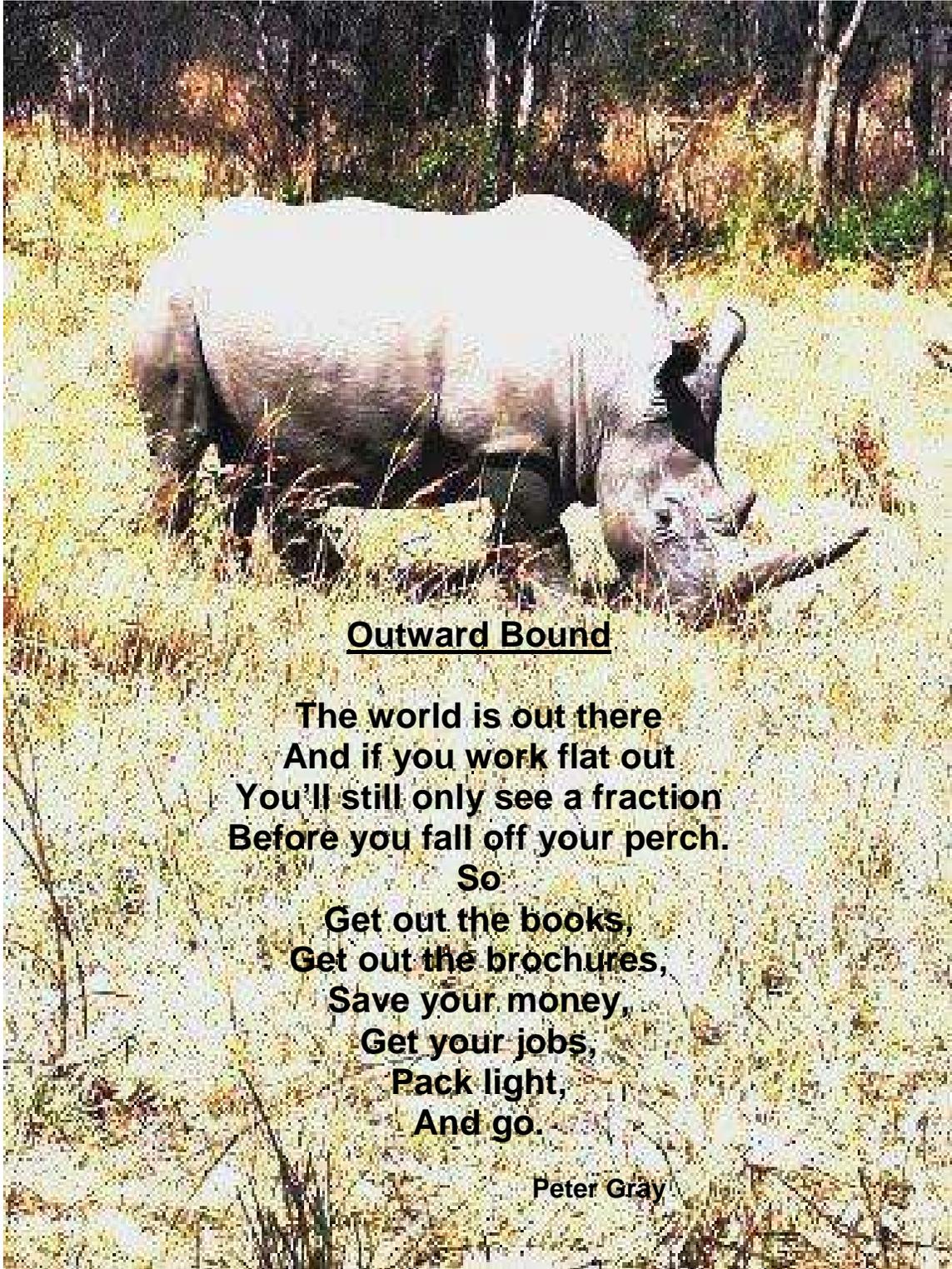
On the fourth day of hiking, we shouldered the saddle on Shumba shaba and gazed down onto Gordon Park, nestling in the Mtshелеle valley. A familiar sight, but more welcoming than usual for we were hot, dirty and tired from our morning's walk and down there behind the Stables was a shower waiting to cool us down and bring life back into weary bodies. We put our packs down for the last time outside the Stables at 14.00 hours.

The Matobo Hills is map reading country and that is what we did, we map read our way for a hundred kilometres through the Hills. We also carried with us a GPS which had recently been donated to the Troop by Gordon Park Crew Member, Graham Ross. Graham and his wife Angie farm in Headlands. Chris as our hike leader, path finder, pace setter and cook had carried the GPS, as he knew how to use it. We used it as a check on the distance we had hiked, and as a matter of interest our altitude at various places. On the home leg along the Kantotola River Chris punched in Shumba shaba and proudly announced that we had only ten kilometres to go, plus another two to Gordon Park. So there we have it, one hundred kilometres as measured by GPS. My map reading, when using a scrappy piece of string on the map put it at a lesser distance, but then using this method on a flat map doesn't take into account the ups and downs.

I would like to congratulate the four Scouts on their achievement, Chris at seventeen years of age, Declan and Michael at fourteen and Kevin at eleven, for their spirit to achieve. We were fortunate in having good weather, found water along the way and especially for our night camps. A hundred kilometres in four days over rough terrain is some achievement to be proud of.

To the Parents of the boys, a sincere Thank You for allowing your sons to go wandering off for four days not really knowing where they were other than in the Matobo hills. To the Scouts, you will long remember your adventure, be proud of your achievement for not many of your contemporaries can boast of such an experience. Long may you continue to have an adventurous spirit and the strength of body and mind to make it a reality.

Norman



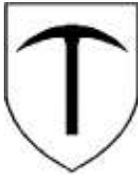
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**Peter Gray**



**1<sup>st</sup> Bulawayo (Pioneer) Scout Troop**  
Founded 1909

**Troop Programme of Activities for September to December 2010**

**September**

30 Aug–2 Sep Four day hike  
3 Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene  
7 Schools open  
10 Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene  
11 Boys Skills Course: PHQ  
12 Gordon Park Service: 12.00 noon  
17 Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene  
24 Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene  
25 Provincial Cookout Competition

**October**

1 – 2 Monthly Hike  
8 Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene  
10 Gordon Park Service; 12.00 noon  
15 -17 JOTA/JOTI  
22 Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene  
29 Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene

**November**

5 – 6 Monthly Hike  
12 Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene  
14 Gordon Park Service: 12.00 noon  
19 Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene  
26 Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene: Sausage sizzle  
27 - 28 National Patrols Competition

**December**

2 Schools close  
3 Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene: Last meeting of the year  
4 National Tree Planting Day  
6 to 7 Jan. Roof of Africa Expedition  
12 Gordon Park Service: 12.00 noon  
25 Christmas Day

**Additional Activities may be Added to the Programme**