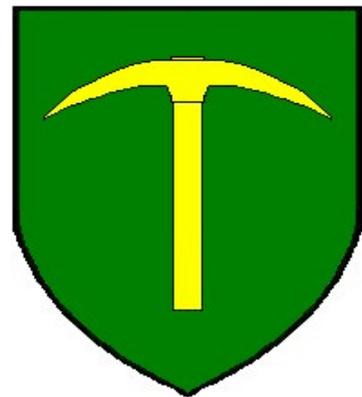




**January – April
2008**

Pioneer Trail



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

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

1st Bulawayo (Pioneer) Scout Group
www.angelfire.com/sc/matabeles/troops

Under the *Pseudolachnostylis Maprouneifolia*

Last year, 2007, we celebrated with the world the Centenary of Scouting. Next year, 2009, we will celebrate the Centenary of our Scout Troop, which was the first Scout Troop in this country. When Scouting was established here, we were known as the, 1st Matabeleland Scout Troop. The next Troop was opened in Harare in October 1910. It is incredible to think that Scouting in Zimbabwe has been operating for one hundred years, and that our Troop is still in existence, although it did cease to operate for a few years, owing to a shortage of Leaders. More information on our Troop's history will be given next year. Why I have mentioned our Centenary now, is because One Hundred years calls for a big celebration. However, Celebrations need planning, they also need to be financed and so I would like to invite you to give some thought to what special events you would like to see on our Troop programme for next year and the following year, as I intend to spread our Troop party over two years. As I mentioned above, our celebration will be the Centenary of Scouting in Zimbabwe, and so a National Jamboree is already being planned to be held in August 2009.

At the Church service held at Gordon Park in January, Sable Scout, Leon Wuyts was announced as the winner of the, 2007 Mike George Hike Project. Mrs George presented Leon with his cash prize and certificate. This was the second year running that Leon had won the Hike Competition. Well done Leon for writing such an outstanding account of your hike. Leon left for the United Kingdom at the beginning of February to start his adult life after having obtained three very good grades for his 'A' level exams. On behalf of the Scouts Leon, I would like to wish you well in your future career and that someday we will see you back with us, hopefully as a Scout Leader.

Our Troop Parent's Camp on 9th – 10th February was a little different from previous such camps, in that no mothers or sisters attended. No reason could be found for the non attendance of mothers. However, the all male gathering was a great success, providing the opportunity for dads to inter-act fully with their sons. Mr. Martin Sanderson once again gave a very interesting and riveting campfire yarn, complete with props from his vast collection of unusual memorabilia. A sincere Thank You Martin for your continued support of our Troop and Scouting in general.

The Troop attended the annual Baden-Powell camp, which was once again held in Gordon Park, from 22nd -24th February, 2008. A good turnout numbering one hundred and sixty Scouts from Troops in Bulawayo enjoyed a fun filled camp. At the Baden-Powell Day Service on the Sunday, service awards were presented to Leaders and Patrol Leader Jonathan Chitumbura of the 8th Bulawayo (Hillside) Scout Troop received his Chief Scout Award. Well done Jonathan on your achievement.



Rev. Fr. Noel Scott took the Memorial Service for the late Mike George

On Sunday 9th March 2008, a Memorial Service for the late Mike George was held in the St. George's Chapel, Gordon Park. Mike had started his Scouting career in the 1st Bulawayo (Pioneer) Scout Group as a Wolf Cub in April 1944, and had recently retired as President of the Matabeleland Scout Council. The service was conducted by Rev. Noel Scott, who regularly conducts our monthly church services at the Park.

I am pleased with the good turnout of our Scouts who are regularly going out to Gordon Park for the weekends. Not only do they help with the maintenance of the Park, but they are able to put their Scouting skills into practice. The camaraderie that has developed within the Troop is due largely to the interaction of the Scouts during these weekends.

During the holidays we moved our tin hut in our campsite to a more easily accessible location, but still out of view from the camping area. Moving the hut involved the clearing and levelling of the new site, which entailed the loading and transporting of approximately five tonnes of sand, the laying of paving blocks to form a hard level base, dismantling the hut and then re-erecting it on its new site. The Scouts thoroughly enjoyed the task, even though it was hard work. Only minor work remains to be done to make it more secure.

During the term, Assistant Patrol Leader Christopher MacKenzie was awarded the Backwoodsman badge. This badge is wide ranging in its requirements and is not attempted by many Scouts. Well done Christopher for your perseverance in completing the badge. Gaining their Discoverer Badges were Daniel Francis, Dale van Aarde and Brendon Judge. Well done to you three on your achievements.

I, along with the Scouts of the Troop, extend our congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. de Swardt on their being presented with, The Medal of Merit. Mr and Mrs de Swardt have taken a keen interest in Scouting for many years. Their support of our major events extended to baking and donating cakes to hundreds of Scouts who have attended special celebration camps at Gordon Park and by becoming involved in fund raising to assist our Scouts to attend International Jamborees. The presentation of their medals was made at the April church service at Gordon Park. To you Mr and Mrs de Swardt, we appreciate your support and say a big Thank You.



Mrs and Mr de Swardt

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 hikes and camps we will be enjoying and the friends we will be making in our Scouting activities this year.

N. Scott
Scout Leader

Mbalebale Hike

4th – 5th January 2008

As usual we met at Christ the King Church rearing to go on our first hike of the New Year. Only Leon, Norm and myself, were there, so off we set for the Matopos in Norm's Land Rover, "Inguluvane" Just after the Matopos Dam we stopped on the main road and looked across towards Three Sister's dam where we intended to spend the night in readiness for our hike the next day. Then we looked at the threatening rain clouds coming in from the east. A quick consultation and we decided that we had had enough wet weather on the Chimanimani expedition/hike the previous December and so we headed for Gordon Park. It was good that we had decided to stay the night at Gordon Park, because that night it rained hard.

Having changed our mind about starting the hike at Three Sister's dam, we now had to select another route. We decided to hike from the curio sellers near World's View, to Mbalebale cave. The cave I was told contained many first class paintings by the San people of long ago. Thinking of a new route took some time, and just as well, for as we were about to start off Dale phoned, yes we do have cell phone reception at Gordon Park, wanting to know if he could come on the hike. So while we waited for Dale to arrive, we decided to take a walk to Shumba Shaba, the kopje we usually climb on Sunday mornings when we are camping at the Park. As we came down from Shumba, Dale arrived, so we all walked back to the Park for some tea before Dale's mum left for home and we left for the start of our hike. Now there were four of us.

From the curio sellers, we hiked towards some kopjes to the southeast battling our way through the tall grass. Actually, it was really easy hiking for we did not take our packs. On the way, Norm saw some caves up in the kopjes to the west of our route, so we decided to have a look to see if there was anything of interest in them. Unfortunately, we didn't find anything. Then on we plodded. A short stop further on, revealed some paintings on a boulder, nothing spectacular though. When we reached Mbalebale, we could not get too close to the paintings at the bottom of the kopje as the overhang was full of mean looking hornets. We then found another way to the passages leading to the top of the kopje, where the really good paintings were. Again we were confronted by a lot of hornet nests, but fortunately there was a strong breeze blowing, which kept the hornets "grounded". The paintings were really fantastic, as was the view out over the Mtshelili valley to the east. Oh dear, a few drops of rain, so we rugged Scouts decided to head back to "Inguluvane" On the way back, Leon nearly stood on a black mamba, a deadly venomous snake. We were quite wet by the time we got back to where we had left "Inguluvane". We then headed for Gordon Park arriving in time to prepare a late lunch.

Declan FitzPatrick

The Cursed Hike

8th - 9th February 2008

It was early morning at Gordon Park the sun was blocked out by those menacing rain clouds, just waiting to pour half of the world's water on us the moment we set foot on the hike trail. After debating on whether we should go or not, Chris won, so we packed our bags and wearily slinked into the back of Chris' dad's car and zoomed off to Three Sisters dam, from where we were to start our hike. I think Chris' dad was only too eager to drop us off, (the peace and quiet was too much to wait for).

We walked in silence from where we were dropped off to our starting point, crossing fences, following an old water canal and weaving between numerous thorn trees. Once on the dam wall, we proceeded to the middle where we looked at the water in the pudd... sorry, dam. Here we stood for a while listening to the crows across the water bellowing at us. Norman eventually broke the silence, gave Chris his instructions and compass. Chris was doing his Backwoods proficiency badge and this was to be his compass test. The test required Chris to use a compass only and to follow a number of bearings for three kilometres, without consulting a map. Further the route was to be across unfamiliar country.

Having looked at his instructions, Chris took a deep breath, stammered that the distance was seven kilometres instead of the test requirement of three. Unfortunately, Norm's hearing is slightly impaired with his advanced age and he didn't blink an eyelid. In silence Chris took his first bearing and stated his reference point far in the distance. Norm checked Chris' bearing to make sure he wouldn't get us lost. (the sly old fox. If Chris got us lost he would have said that we had taken a wrong turn when we shouldn't have). After a lot of confusion as to which tree was the marker, the green one just below the dark green one, (there were many such combinations), we set off. Almost every tree we passed was a thorn tree or bush, so it was a wonder when Chris stopped under one thorn tree and said, "This is the one Norm". Norm looked at him in disbelief and just motioned him to carry on with the hike. Every now and again, Norm would check Chris' compass bearing and so we went trotting up to and around big and small thorn trees.

After a while Norm pointed out that the scenery was changing. We were now no longer in thick thorn tree country. The soil had changed from being reddish to a whitish grey. We were leaving the Bulawayo greenstone schists and had crossed over to the granite soils of the Matopos, hence the change in vegetation. There was also considerably more grassland. There were also some low granite kopjes and so we walked on using these kopjes as our reference points. Chris, who was in the front spotted a bird fly past (I didn't spot it). He then showed Norm and I a tiny birds nest on the ground, sheltered under a rock containing three tiny polka dotted eggs. Back at Gordon Park later that afternoon, Chris looked in Roberts Bird book and identified the bird he had seen as, a Striped Pipit. A few kilometres further we found another birds' nest, this time a Blue Waxbill flew out. Again there were eggs in the nest. We saw a small variety of animals on the hike, but my favourite moment was when Chris and I walked right passed a small shrub and then a yelp of surprise came from behind us. Norm had disturbed a scrub hare and the hare had bolted for fear of an old man and not of two teenagers who had passed it earlier. We passed six small dams, one of which was the checkpoint of the first leg of the hike and a second was the end check point. We nearly missed the last one as it had been breached and not much remained. Chris had completed his compass hike, and passed. Well done Chris.



Christopher finds the eggs of the Striped Pipit in a nest tucked in close to a rock.

We now had another seven to eight kilometres to go to get back to Gordon Park. This section went quickly as Norm took over as leader as he knew the area well. We had to get back to the Park by midday in order to set up our campsite for the Parent's camp that was to be held that afternoon and into Sunday. The rest of the hike passed uneventfully with only a few cuts and scrapes, but plenty of close calls with the rain until the end of the hike then it was, all sunshine and smiles.

This is called the "Cursed Hike", because it was rained out on two previous attempts to hike this particular route.

Daniel Francis

The First For 2008

9th-10th February 2008

What a weekend we were to have with the weather going from hot on Thursday to cold and miserable on Saturday morning.

Chris was to do a hike for his Backwoodsman's badge on Saturday and we were late in getting out to Gordon Park on Friday, so the hiking party decided to sleep over at the Park and start early the next morning on their exercise. I drove the happy trio to their start point and dropped them off. They informed me that they would be back at the Park round about lunch time.

The hiking party marched into Gordon Park at about 13:30 and had lunch and preparations were made for the arrival of the others later that afternoon.

After the arrival of the rest of the campers who had come out for the Parent's Camp, we arranged for all the necessary equipment to be loaded onto "Ingulungundu" and taken to the campsite. The camp was speedily erected and organized as required with everyone carrying out their duties and arranging their tents in preparation for the night ahead.



Everybody gets involved when it comes to preparing supper

Dinner was prepared soon after dark and everyone ate a hearty meal in the cooking fire smoke filled atmosphere. After the dishes were taken care of, a campfire was ignited and the campers assembled themselves around to listen to another one of Martin Sanderson's very enjoyable stories that was sure to keep everyone on the edge of their seats, but before this the usual campfire songs echoed in the night.

Martin had a real treat in store for us with a real event filled story with all the show and tell items included. The best was kept for last with the sword being the highlight of the story and yes, we got to play with it as well. The camp fire was closed in the correct manner followed by hot chocolate and flapjacks. Then we made our way to our beds.

The morning's early risers made their way out of camp on their way to climb Mt Shumba Shaba; I must say not many were in this expedition as many chose to sleep for an extra hour or so.

A hearty breakfast was enjoyed by all and preparations were made for the arrival of visitors from town for the monthly church service in the open air, St. George's Chapel. The service was followed by a superb braai lunch. Tea seemed to follow in short time and preparations were made for the return journey to our beloved Bulawayo.

My first, but not last.

Cameron MacKenzie
Parent



Martin, with his father's sword, in a dramatic pose, whilst telling his campfire yarn.

The Egyptian Sausage Sizzle

14th March 2008

We began our journey at Mubukuwene, where we usually hold our meetings, by getting into the back of Ingulungundu, Norm's Land Rover and being blindfolded. We had to try and guess the roads we were travelling along, but at least Norm, who was driving, knew where he was going (he was the only one not blindfolded, thank goodness). At long last we stopped and were mercilessly hauled out of the Landy. Still blindfolded, we were given a stick to hold in each hand, which joined us like a chain and were led along what seemed like a path. As we went, I tripped over rocks, walked into trees and stumbled up steps. At last our blindfolds were removed. We found ourselves in a narrow passage of granite boulders and we were told to continue to where a fire was burning. Mr. Sanderson was waiting for us. Norm asked us to tell him the names of the roads we had travelled along to get to Mr Sanderson's house. We managed to name all of the roads.



While the sausages sizzle.....

"Greetings". Mr Sanderson said. "The fire is burning down to coals, so in a few minutes it should be ready for you to cook the food you have brought with you". We all started preparing our meals but Chris continued poking the fire with a stick to break down the coals. We told jokes to pass the time whilst the hot coals made the grid glow red hot. We then put our meat on to grill. When we had eaten our fill and had stopped laughing at the jokes being told, we were ready to listen to a story from Mr. Sanderson. He started by passing round little Egyptian amulets, and statues of the Gods and Pharaohs (tourist trinkets of course, not the real things) Then he went on to tell us the story of how the pyramids had been built

followed by his adventures in one of them. When he had finished, he showed us the most extraordinary thing in a giant copy of the Egyptian book of the dead!

But, alas I cannot give you the story, because it is not my story or my adventure. We ended our evening by packing up the kit and extra food we had brought with us, cleaned the site and doused the fire. We said our thanks and our goodbyes to Mr. Sanderson and our thanks to Norm. We got into the car, no blindfolds this time, and said for the last time, GOODBYE.

Shaun & Daniel Francis

Masiye – Lushumbe – Nanke

15 March 2008

We left from Christ the King Church where we normally meet, at seven o'clock on Saturday morning and headed for Gordon Park. On arriving at the Park, we off-loaded our 'katunda' that we did not need for the hike and then left for Masiye camp. Masiye is the Salvation Army's training centre for orphaned children where they are taught life skills in order to look after themselves and their siblings. We parked 'Inguluvani' under a large shady tree near a rural homestead, which over looked the training school's dam. We soon sorted our hiking kit out and left on our hike at 9 o'clock.

Our route followed the sandy Gwandavale road at the base of a long range of rugged kopjes for about four kilometres. On arriving at Lushumbe Primary school, a five class roomed school, we turned off the road and walked along a footpath next to a small stream, which was flowing strongly and crystal clear. Our winding path led us uphill through a gap in the range of kopjes we had walked next to when we had started the hike. In passing through the gap, where we crossed the fence into the Matobo National Park, we found ourselves at the end of a long wide vlei stretching to the north of us. Far in the distance, at the head of the vlei was another range of kopjes and beyond them we could just see Nanke kopje.

We were thankful for the footpath, for the grass towered over us and in places the bush was very thick. As we got nearer to Nanke, the path we had been following became fainter, until we had to 'bundu bash' our way forward. Along this section we came to a small stream flowing over the rocks and as we had been hiking for just over two hours, we decided to have a rest and a wallow plus an algae fight in the stream.



The tall grass towers over Christopher and Declan

It was just after 12 noon when we ascended the steep face of Nanke and entered the cave. Hot, tired, hungry and thirsty, we dived into our packs for cookers, pots and cups along with the sparse rations we had brought with us. The tea kettle was soon bubbling merrily and we set to, to enjoy our traditional style hotel lunch, i.e. sweet, black, hot tea with a generous chunk of home made bread. This, together with dry non-cooked two minute noodles, satisfied our immediate hunger pains. Only then did we have a look at the paintings on the cave walls done by the San, thousands of years ago. This cave is well known for its paintings, some of the best in the Matopos.

It was after half past one when we finally recovered our energy levels and left Nanke on our return journey to the Land Rover. We followed the small stream that flows past the front of Nanke kopje, and then winds its way through a gorge between two enormous granite kopjes. Here the bush was like a dense jungle. It was fantastic. As we emerged from the gorge, we were confronted by a long water slide. The temptation was too great. A rest break was called and Declan and I went water sliding. All too soon our sliding came to a stop, when Declan smashed into a rock in the pool at the bottom of the slide. He cut his head and although I helped him to walk back to the top of the slide where Norm was resting, he could not remember anything of his accident. Norm sorted out the cut on Declan's forehead whilst I continued sliding. It also rained for a short while, so we waited until it had stopped before continuing with the hike.

Soon after leaving the waterfall, we took a short cut to the main Toghvana River and followed well worn paths along its banks all the way to the end of our hike. It was along this four kilometre section that Norm joined Declan and I in hiking bare-foot, as sand was getting into his boots every time we crossed the fast flowing river. Whilst walking back to 'Inguluvane', we were attacked by 'fire' ants and boy our feet were sore from their bites.

Our 18 kilometre hike had been most enjoyable. Neither Declan nor I had been on this route before and with all the streams having water in them, made for a really great hike. It was early evening when we got back to Gordon Park and it was not long after having had our supper that we were fast asleep.

Christopher Mackenzie

THE CAVE ROUTE

4TH – 5TH April 2008

We look forward to our monthly hikes and although not all of us are able to go on every hike, usually because of school or family commitments, they follow the same routine of going out to the area we intend to hike in on a Friday evening, sleep out in the veldt that night and hike to places of interest the next day. For this month's hike, it had been decided to hike to three caves in the Kumalo Communal Lands, southern Matopos. The first cave was Matuzi, a little known cave, which no doubt is only visited by the people living in the area. The second cave was Silozwane, a well known cave with some excellent San paintings and the third, was Tshangula, known but seldom visited. Our visit to the latter cave was not so much for its paintings, as there are only a few, but more for its formation in the granite.

Only three of us, namely Norm, Dale and Brendon did not have any commitments for the weekend, so it was a small party that set off from town at 5 00pm and headed towards the Matopos. Further, we only had the use of 'Inguluvane', Norm's Landy, so our hike would have to start and end back at the same point. We arrived at our night campsite, Adam Moyo's homestead at about 7 30pm, and asked him if we could set up our camp next to a large boulder about seventy metres from his house. Adam is the caretaker at Gordon Park, so he knows us well and was so pleased to see us, as he did not know in advance that we would be camping at his house. Whilst, Norm erected a light trail sheet to keep off the morning dew, Dale and Brendon prepared dinner.

We awoke to a most spectacular sunrise. The high cirrus clouds were a brilliant pink against a turquoise sky. The night had been quite cold and the trail sheet damp from the dew. We had no sooner crawled out of our sleeping bags, when Adam appeared with a kettle of boiling water and a teapot. Later he brought us three hard boiled eggs, which we added to our breakfast of oatmeal porridge. Adam is a most thoughtful and generous gentleman. The rural people of our land are very hospitable, and on many of our hikes, they have been only too keen to help us find our way, provide us with clean drinking water and even a cup of tea whilst we rested near their houses.



Mount Silorswi looms high in the background

Adam asked us where we would be going on our hike and we eagerly told him of the three caves we hoped to see, our first one being Matuzi. He stated that we were unlikely to find Matuzi by ourselves and he offered to take us to it. We gladly accepted his offer, as there is no better a guide than one with local knowledge. It was great hiking along the paths joining the various homesteads of the communal lands, waving to all and sundry who were surprised to see visitors in their area, especially so early in the morning. It took us about one and a half hours and the services of a second guide, one of Adam's friends, till we were finally ushered into a low cave, well concealed by a screen of trees. The paintings were of the usual Matopos rock art, not all that distinct but interesting all the same. Having done their 'good

deed' for the day, they returned to their respective homesteads.

We hiked along in high spirits as we were pleased at having seen one of the three caves we had set as our objective for the hike. Silozwane is next to Silorswi, which is the highest kopje in the Matopos at three hundred metres from the valley floor to its summit and it was this kopje that we used as our beacon as we hiked for the next five kilometres. It did not take us long before we were close enough to see Silozwane with its cave quite high up on the south eastern side. The San paintings in the cave, a gigantic gapping hole in the solid granite of the kopje, are well known and are very well preserved. The view from inside the cave looking out onto the homesteads and fields of the rural folk is equally rewarding. The chatter and calling of the villagers, carried clearly up to our vantage point on the still air, as we ate guavas and roasted peanuts, given to us by Adam when we had left on our hike.

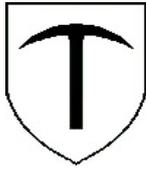


Spectacular examples of Rock art to be found in the Matopos

Our next cave, Tshangula was only five kilometres distant in a south westerly direction and as the day was getting warmer, we decided to have our lunch break there. For some reason, this leg of our hike seemed to take a long time, but we finally reached the cave and flopped down exhausted. Our meat, washed down with several cups of tea. The paintings, as mentioned earlier were not spectacular, but the 'rolls' of layers of rock one upon the other reaching up to the top of the cave, provide for an interesting 'architectural' feature to the cave.

Our return journey via a different route back to Adam's house was uneventful. The afternoon proved to be hot, which resulted in our pace being slower than what we should have been capable of. It was 6 00pm by the time we reached Adam's house, two hours later than what we had estimated. Further more we had hiked twenty-seven kilometres; this was five kilometres more than what had been planned. However, we were elated at having achieved our objective, enjoyed being out in the Matopos amongst the hills and having been to two caves we had never seen before.

The 21st Century Cave Men



1st Bulawayo (Pioneer) Scout Troop

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Troop Programme of Activities for May to August 2008

May

2 – 3	Monthly Hike
9	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
11	Gordon Park Service: 12:00 noon
16	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
23 – 26	Troop camp
30	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene

June

6 – 7	Monthly Hike
8	Gordon Park Service 12:00 noon
13	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
20	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
27	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene

July

4 – 5	Monthly Hike
11	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
12	Chuck Wilcox Art and Craft Competition
12 – 13	Parent's Camp
13	Gordon Park Service: 12:00 noon
18	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
25	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene (Sausage Sizzle)

August

1 – 3	William Arnold Carnegie Assegai Competition
7	School closes
8 – 9	Monthly Hike
10	Gordon Park Service: 12:00 noon
15	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
22	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene
29	Troop Meeting: Mabukuwene

Additional Activities may be added to the Programme