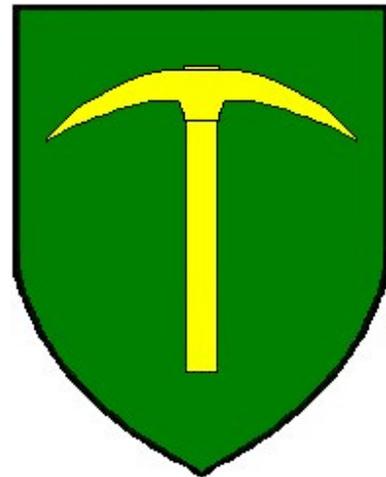


January - April
2009

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

We entered the New Year with the appointment of Mr. Bekezela Ndebele as the new Provincial Scout Commissioner for Matabeleland. Mr. Ndebele reaffirmed his Scout Promise during the Baden-Powell Day service in The St. George's Chapel, Gordon Park on Sunday 22nd February, 2009. Congratulations Mr. Ndebele on your appointment.



Mr. Bekezela Ndebele is appointed, Provincial Scout Commissioner for Matabeleland.

Our One Hundredth Anniversary year has started off on a positive note with the holding of our first special event, that of a mini expedition to Fort Tuli on the Zimbabwe/Botswana border. You will have the pleasure of reading about our experiences in this edition of Pioneer Trail. I must add that this event was in addition to our normal active programme. A bonus to our celebrations is that Matabeleland has had an above average rainy season, which has added another dimension to our sojourns into our beloved Matobo hills. The bush has been lush, to the point of it being "jungle like". The streams and rivers have all had flowing water making our hiking both interesting and adventurous, as normally the veldt is dry for a number of months of the year, so necessitating the carrying of drinking and cooking water on hikes.

Our weekly meetings at Mubukuwene Nature Reserve have been held regularly, but owing to the increased number of electricity cuts due to the load shedding programme, we have had to resort to improvisation, by using battery operated lamps. I couldn't help smiling, when there was a call by World Scouting, which was encouraged by our Association, to take part in Earth Hour on 28 March 2009, in which we were to switch off our lights for one hour to "send a powerful global message that it's possible to take action on global warming". I feel our national power authority is doing a very good job for us as it is, as we are all groping in the dark for many hours each week.

Our Scouts are steadily progressing through their scouting badge requirements and hopefully we will see a number of advancement badges being presented during the course of the year. The Patrol boxes, which are brought to weekly meetings at Mabukuwene, contain only minimal equipment such as; lashing ropes, compasses, scouting books and a few other items, as we do not have any storage facilities at our meeting place. Therefore, much of our scouting is of a "practical hands on" experience in the Matobo hills at Gordon Park where we store the bulk of our kit. Fortunately, as I am also the Camp Commissioner of Gordon Park and go out each weekend, I am able to take with me, those members of the Troop who are free of school commitments on weekends. Having this opportunity, results in their scouting becoming more meaningful. As we are on the whole the only Troop in camp, except for the occasional Provincial event, the Scouts are able to enjoy the solitude of this magnificent camping ground. They have the opportunity of camping out under the stars in our camp-site, cooking their own meals over open wood fires, wood for which they have had first to gather in the bush surrounding our site. Having this opportunity to camp regularly, results in them accumulating a good number of 'camp-nights' each year and they hear the sounds of the night, and on many an occasion, that of the leopard.

The chance of being in the bush with their friends is so beneficial, as they learn to live with others at an early stage in life and to enjoy the best of their carefree youthful years. The opportunity for them to develop mentally and physically in a real life situation is worth more than any amount of instruction in the Troop Den. To me this is the wider aspect of Scouting, which is more important than merely "learning skills to progress" in their badge work. In this free environment, the skills they learn are meaningful. I have signed off tests on many a boy's progress card to his amazement and utterances that he has not sat in front of me to be tested. When I explain to him that he has passed the test by getting involved with the others and doing things right, there is no need for a formal test. This method of passing a test is less stressful and brings so much real joy to the boy. Besides instruction in the "run of the mill" skills of the Scout syllabus, they also have the opportunity of learning skills of a much wider range, in that of assisting me with the on-going development and maintenance programmes at the Park.



Admiring our gifts sent by the Scouts of the 12th Cork Scout Troop, Ireland.

Scouting is world wide, but to make this meaningful to young people has in the past not been that easy. However, today with modern technology, communicating with Scouts around the world has resulted in Scouts being able to 'talk' with each other with the minimal of delay and cost. This is thanks to Email and Skype, two computer generated communication systems. Our Scouts have pen-pals with Scouts of two Troops, one in Surrey, England and the other in Cork, Ireland. The more active of the two, is the 12th Cork Scout Troop, who's Scout Leader, Philip Jones ensures a regular communication between our Troops. He has also sent us a number of gifts, which have included a Scout shirt complete with badges; loose badges; a collection of commemorative memorabilia that was produced for the Irish Scout's One Hundredth Anniversary Jamboree held last year; their Troop scarf or 'neckie' as they call the scarf and photographs of their Scouts undertaking activities. These gifts are highly prized and we are very grateful to the 12th Cork Scouts for their thoughtfulness.

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I was very pleased and indeed proud to receive an Email from a former member of our Troop, Timothy Chadwick. Tim had moved with his family to Canada four years ago and had joined a Scout Troop. Unfortunately, the Troop was not very active, so Tim left Scouting and joined the cadets. Within the space of three years and joining at an older age than most Canadians do, he has risen to the highest rank possible as a school pupil, that of Chief Warrant Officer. With this rank, he was appointed to the position of Battery Commander, 1st A/TK Reg. RCAC. He included with his Email, a photograph of himself on the Parade Square, standing out in front of his regiment, in an immaculate uniform and saluting with a sword, the Reviewing Officer. Tim has kept in regular contact with me over the years and on many an occasion he has mentioned the training he received whilst a member of our Troop and how it stood him in good stead in his cadet training. Congratulations Tim. We Scouts of the 1st in turn salute you and are extremely proud of your dedication and achievement.

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 forth coming Centenary Camp to be held in Gordon Park in commemoration of our One Hundredth Anniversary. 1909 – 2009.

N. Scott
Scout Leader

Gordon Park to Rowallan Park

9th – 10th January 2009

Five of us energetic Scouts left for Gordon Park, for our monthly hike. Because of the previous month's hike, not all of us were able to come because of sore feet. We dreaded the hike because it was raining when we got to Gordon Park. So, after some desperate pleading, Norm allowed us to spend the night at the Park. Phew!

In the morning, Dale and I showed an interest in the grain bins just a few kilometres west of G.P. So, donning light back packs we set off on our journey and as per normal, Chris lead us off the wrong way. Something must be wrong with his internal compass!

We got to the overhang under which the grain bin is in no time, as soon as Norm's lead the way. At the bins, there was only one, but evidence of at least five others. It is questionable how only one has stood the rigors of time. No need for photies, as Norm had plenty.

Next stop was Imadzi, a kopje about four kilometres further along the valley. Because of all the rain, the river was flooding. Yeah! Splash, splat! Even Norm got his feet wet. (And that doesn't happen often). We crossed through the water, then bundu bashed through the tall grass to the dam. No need to say what happened next, but easy equation; Water + Scouts = Mud-fight, with Dale and I on one side and Brendan and Chris on the other.

Leaving the dam we stopped again for some time where the main road crosses the field drainage stream from the Communal Land, and yes, more swimming. The swimming did not last long, before Norm called us for the hike back to the Park, this time along the main road. Before we reached the Park, we stopped for another swim in the river that flows from the kopjes and under a bridge over which the road ran. It was great.

We got back into the Park at around lunch time. All in all, we had hiked 12 kilometres.

Declan FitzPatrick



Playtime in the dam near Imadzi

My First Hike

6th – 7th February, 2009

We left from Christ the King church dreading the hike, for rain clouds were upon us. The team was, Declan, Chris, Dillin, Dale, Brendan, Norman and myself. Barry came along to drop us off at our starting point, Gali. We hit the road and were soon caught up by Shaun, who had arrived late at the church and raced to catch up with us.

We went to Gordon Park, unloaded everything from Norman's Landy and put our packs into Barry's truck. We then squeezed in, all eight of us and left for Gali. If you thought the roads in town were bad, the road to Gali was so bad that the bumping around in Barry's truck gave us bruises! We dreaded sleeping on Gali because it looked as if it was going to rain, so we found a homestead with a family and we put up the small trail sheet that Norman had.



We are joined by two children from the Communal Lands in the Butterfly Cave.

We had our dinner and then went to bed. It was cold and without the trail sheet we would have got very wet. I kept waking up, freezing my nose off. When the sun came up, it got warmer. Clouds came over fast, so we ate our breakfast and set off. We followed the soggy paths and stopped off to see some cave paintings. My favourite was the one of a Kudu. We left again to Norman's favourite dam. It was spilling water and it was very full. But this offered only a short rest, as we soon set off again.

We followed a path and got hopelessly lost in trying to find the butterfly cave. So we went out of the bush and continued looking until we finally found the cave. We discovered, we had turned off into the thick bush too early. On our way, there were vines with thorns on the

ground and boy they hurt when I stood on them. My favourite painting in this cave was the butterfly. It was cool. As we set off, I was hurt by those *mangy* thorns again.

We went over Shumba shaba and back to Gordon Park. Besides the lack of sleep, I enjoyed the hike and I am looking forward to many more.

Kevin FitzPatrick

Family Social Camp

7th – 8th February 2009

Once again, time grew close for the Parents' camp and I was looking forward to 'getting away from it all' for a short while. Even though there is never any time for slacking on these camps, the change from one's regular routine while in such beautiful surroundings is stimulating. Our greatest concern this time was not whether we would freeze as on a previous occasion, but whether the heavens were going to open up yet again and drench us – as the rains have been so wonderful this season and the Park was looking so spectacular. When we arrived the camp was already well prepared - even the campfire was set up (with distinctly wet looking logs, but we knew we could be rest assured, that Chris would manage to strike a light)! We quickly made for the kitchen area to see if the kettle was boiling and enjoyed a quick 'cuppa' with Monika and Cherie McAtier. Only Chris McKenzie was present – the other boys in camp (Brendan Judge, Dale Van Aarde, Declan FitzPatrick, Dillin McAtier, Kevin FitzPatrick, and Sean Francis) were at mini Maleme which they later reported, was completely full. The boys had been on the monthly hike the previous night – from Gali back to Gordon Park, a distance of about 10 km, which was ideal as it was Kevin's first hike with the Troop. It seems they had all done well on the hike, and Kevin had enjoyed the experience and had not been left behind!

Having relaxed briefly we set about putting up our tents, choosing our sites well in case it did decide to rain. We were surprised when Martin Sanderson seemed to appear out of nowhere – nobody had heard his 'Pajero' coming up the road. He explained that his faithful steed was impaled on the centre mound a short distance back along the road. The excitement among the boys was very evident as they went bounding off down the road – an opportunity to go and rescue the 'Pajero'! Unfortunately the rescue operation did not take much effort and we were back at the camp putting up tents again in a short while.

It wasn't long before it was time to start preparing our evening meal with the usual social antics that take place around the braai fires. By this time we had been joined by other parents who had come along for the evening braai and campfire, but who prefer their home comforts to tents.

Preparations for the campfire seemed to unfold quickly after supper and we were soon seated around the fire and Chris again showed his pyromaniac skills and had the flames soaring high before long. Norman had asked me to lead the campfire and by chance I had recently been passed a booklet on how to run a campfire – admittedly I had concentrated on the variety of songs included rather than the art of leading the activities! Judging by the laughter generated by the 'actions version' of, "Old McDonald had a farm", I was not the only one whose limbs were totally out of 'sync' with the words of the song – it's good to laugh at yourself occasionally! Soon it was Kevin's moment to be invested and I'm sure he will remember the event – he had been so looking forward to joining the 1st Pioneers for a long time, but knew he was still too young and that he would be a Cub Scout for a few more months before moving up to the Scout Troop. He was overjoyed when Norman suggested he join now, so that he could take part as a Scout in all of the events planned to commemorate the 100 years of Zimbabwe Scouting, this year.



Elder brother Declan, hands Kevin his Patrol flash at Kevin's investiture

A campfire would not be the same if it were not for Martin – I'm sure I was not the only one who noticed that the rear of the 'Pajero' was loaded with cases and boxes, sure to be props for his campfire story. We all found the artefacts he handed around and described, so interesting – all being from the pioneer camp set up near the "Three Sisters" in 1896, just across the main road from Rhodes Estate Preparatory School. One could easily imagine being part of a pioneer family with so many pieces of history to prompt one's imagination. Martin then went on to tell the story of a large ant hill in the Gwanda area, which had a hidden entrance and in which people had clearly sought refuge in times past. More intriguing, is the way Martin musters up the ability to retrace others' footsteps, to find places of such interest. After closing the campfire with the traditional hot chocolate and flapjacks, the city dwellers hived off and left the boys, Norman, Martin and I to our camp.

Fortunately it did not rain during the night so we all slept well, until Norman's early morning wake up call for the Shumba shaba climbers, shattered the tranquillity of the early morning. It was impossible to sleep through the calls, and my hopes of having a quiet lay-in while the others went climbing were short lived, when I was tasked with making sure camp was cleaned up and the fire ready for breakfast.



Bekezela joins us in camp for tea and toast.

The service was taken by Fr. Nigel Johnson and was well attended by parents and friends of Scouting who have become a regular part of the congregation at these Services.

The Service was followed by the traditional braai down at the Stables, where Adam had things well under control as usual – I have noticed that the brass taps are always polished as part of his routine. Regrettably, the resident wasps nesting in the washing line poles outside the kitchen did not enjoy our company and took their anger out on Dale – fortunately he was only stung once on the face.

Norman decided to break the normal lazy routine between the braai lunch and afternoon tea, by involving all present in a lesson on knots – it was great fun to see how easily some people grasped the concepts while others were seriously challenged. I wonder how many will still remember the knots or even their names by the next Service Sunday? Our noble efforts at the tying of knots were rewarded by a wonderful spread of cakes and biscuits at teatime, thanks to the faithful ladies.

It was soon time to pack up, ensuring that each of the boys had all of their belongings before heading back to Bulawayo after another pleasant and memorable weekend with the Scouts at Gordon Park. Our sincere thanks are extended to Norman, Martin and the boys and all who played a part in making the camp such a memorable occasion.

John FitzPatrick
Parent

Zhugwe Hike/Safari

6th – 7th March 2009

This month's hike was a non event for the Scouts as they were all involved in re-scheduled school activities such as sports days and cricket festivals, as a result of sports fixtures being postponed owing to the good rains that we have experienced this season. These changes were made at the last moment and as my own calendar of events was fully booked, I could not move this month's hike to another weekend.

As I had already organised a friend to help with transporting us out to the starting point of the hike, after having left *Ingulungundu* at our finishing point, I cancelled this arrangement as no Scouts were able to go on the hike. I, therefore, decided to do another route, so that the Scouts could still undertake the planned route on some other date in the future and proceeded out to the Matopos on my own. On the way, I gave some thought as to what hike route I would now do and came up with the idea of driving to a point where I could camp the night and then in the morning do a circular route so as to end up at my vehicle latter in the afternoon. Ping! An idea. I had been meaning to climb a kopje named Zhugwe for many, many years, but I had never got round to doing so. I had always thought that it would only take an hour and so never considered it to be a hike of its own. So, off I headed toward Zhugwe.

I made camp on a seldom used road deep in the Matopos and as the road was overgrown with small trees and tall grass it took me awhile to find a reasonably clear spot in which to camp. The wind that had been blowing for the best part of the day, had stopped, the clouds had dispersed leaving a fantastically silent evening, not even the chirping of a cricket. I had prepared my dinner at home before leaving and now all I needed to do was to warm it up and to boil water for tea.

As part of the Troop's One Hundredth Anniversary Celebrations which will be spread over the next two years, I intend to mount a few expeditions, so as to make our anniversary really special. Being by myself, I could now try a few ideas as to how best we could make an overnight camp that did not take long in setting up, nor too much trouble in striking. I have done many expeditions in the past with my former Troop and I had always found that providing shelter for the night stop could present problems. Having stopped off at Gordon Park on the way out to collect some additional equipment, I was now equipped to try an idea. I fixed a small tarpaulin to the roof at the back of *Ingulungundu* and using two long tent poles, a couple of guy-lines, I had a simply erected shelter. For a larger party, all I would need was a bigger tarpaulin.



A final mug of coffee before heading for Zhugwe

I awoke to a really fabulous morning sky with high cirrus clouds tinged with pink from a rising sun. Having had breakfast, I packed the vehicle and drove off along the track. The track wound its way down steep slopes and across wide grass covered vleys. In places the water covered the track to a depth of three to four centimetres. It was not long before Zhugwe came into sight. I parked *Ingulungundu* under a tree, donned a small back-pack containing my cameras, buckled on my belt on which hung a water bottle and with my thumb-stick in hand, off I walked. The grass was exceedingly tall and thick, so my thumb stick came in very useful in clearing a path. As I have already mentioned, the rains this season have been exceptionally good and for most of my walk



along gently sloping ground, I sloshed through water. Along what would normally have been a dry stream bed I stumbled on a picturesque waterfall. The going was rather tiring as the grass in places was way above my head and the lush foliage of the bushes and trees hindered my progress. At last I came to the base of a granite kopje and proceeded up a ridge. Following this ridge, I soon reached the top of the kopje where I found a fantastic rock formation. A huge egg-shaped boulder was balancing upright on three smaller stones.

Continuing and crossing from one granite highway to another, I reached the last climb which took me to the summit of Zhugwe. What a magnificent view awaited me, for it was as if I was at the hub of a wheel. Looking to the south, I saw Mtshlelele dam, to the southwest, Mount Silorswi, then across to the west, Mount Pomongwe, north-west was Mount Effifi with Mount Inungu to the north. In the north-east loomed Mount Shumba shaba and in the east, Mount Philo. When finally completing my 360 degree panoramic view, I saw, on the distant south-eastern horizon, the Isotshe ridge.

Spending longer on the top of Zhugwe than I had intended to, I proceeded down the southern slope. All went well until I came to a really steep drop of some one hundred metres at an incline of about fifty degrees. I took my time on this section as the lichen, although dry, crumbled beneath my feet and therefore, rather dangerous given the steepness of the slope I was going down. At last, on level ground I could speed up the pace. It was marvellous walking next to a small stream through the verdant forest. I was even treated to a gorge, at the head of which was a waterfall. The walk back to *Ingulungundu* was about four kilometres. At the vehicle, I enjoyed a late lunch and then drove on to the next area I wanted to have a look at.

I bumbled along the track quite contentedly, but on rounding a corner, any further progress was abruptly stopped, as a large tree had been blown over, so blocking the track. I turned round and retraced my route stopping off to investigate a small kopje hoping to find Bushmen paintings or even possibly an iron-age furnace. No such luck, so I continued on to Gordon Park where I spent the remainder of the weekend.

My hike had only been seven kilometres, but I had climbed the elusive Mount Zhugwe. And what of my earlier estimate of one hour? Well, I will never be too old to learn that sometimes what looks easy may not necessarily be so.

Norman

Mshashasha Falls

14th March 2009

We arrived at Gordon Park at about 10 o'clock, unloaded our kit and then packed a picnic lunch and set off back to the main National Park's gate and then onto the Fort Usher road and finally onto the Old Gwanda road. We drove very far before turning off down a scotch cart track. At the end of this, we parked the Landy and then headed off on foot. Winding our way through a beautiful forested area, we finally arrived at Mshashasha falls.

At the top of the falls, we had lunch and then Chris and I made our way down to the bottom of the falls following the water course. At the bottom we found a large pool so we had a swim. Both of us got covered in small leeches that were in the water. Having had our fun in the pool, we climbed back up to the top of the waterfall where Norm had remained. We then headed back to the Land Rover. Christopher and I went ahead and got lost and could not find Norm on the way back. We eventually found our way to the Land Rover and Norm. He had taken a different route, which was shorter. Then the long bumpy drive back to Gordon Park.



**Michael and Christopher
enjoying lunch at
Mshashasha Falls**

Back at the Park, we cooked our supper, cleaned up, took a shower and then went to bed. It had been a tiring, but fantastic day.

We awoke early, lit the fire and set off to climb Shumba shaba. Coming back down we went back to camp, tidied up and started to cook lunch, as Martin (Mr Sanderson) had been invited to join us. I then went exploring in the cave that overlooks the headquarter kitchen. Martin arrived early for lunch, so we sat and talked with him. Soon after lunch, Martin left, so Christopher and I went

to the Skipper Knapman Training Ground and cut some wood from a dead tree that Christopher had started to cut a few weeks earlier. At 5 o'clock, we packed our bags whilst Norman was doing some last minute things. We then locked up and left the camp to go back to town after a lovely weekend.

Michael Dodds

Ye Olde Sausage Sizzle

27th March 2009

We usually start our stories with the when and where we were picked up and so on, but it always feels a bit too long, so we arrived at the top of a hill where there was a house and out of the house came a man, who, as it turned out, was Mr Sanderson. So, with a few words to Norm, we followed Mr. Sanderson along a winding path through his garden, until he finally stopped in a cosy little clearing amongst rocks and trees. In the middle of this clearing was a fire over which was a grid and of course where there is a fire, you are sure to find Christopher. We had been puzzled as to why Chris had not been with us at Mabukuwene from where Norm had picked us up and now we knew why. He had come directly here to help Mr. Sanderson prepare for our arrival. So, with a Hi and a Ho we started to cook our food. Out came the mealies, steak, sausages, potatoes, buns and cold drinks.



Brothers, Shaun and Daniel with their steam engine

A few jokes here and a lot of laughs there in between munching on the food is always the best way to get Mr. Sanderson to tell us a story and sure enough, he had one ready. From out of a box, Mr. Sanderson pulled out four *thingymajigs* and asked us what we thought they were – silence. He then handed us a bottle of methylated spirits and told us to pour some into a little tank that we would find underneath a round brass cylinder. Next we were given a small bottle of water and told to fill the brass cylinder. When we had done this we were told to light the wicks on the tank in which we had poured the methylated spirits. In next to no time, steam had been created in the boiler and our four little *thingymajigs* came to life. Our *thingymajigs*, were in fact stationary steam engines. Once the methylated spirits had burnt away, our steam engines came to a stop.

Mr. Sanderson then showed us some old rusty tins, pieces of pottery, broken plates and other rubbish. Then he showed us some very old photographs of wagons being pulled by oxen and even one wagon with a huge steam engine on it. The people in the photographs were dressed in bush clothes and carried old looking guns. These bits and pieces led into the story by Mr. Sanderson of when the Pioneers entered into our country at Fort Tuli in 1890 on their way to establish Fort Salisbury, now Harare. This story was to prepare us for our mini expedition to the Tuli Circle in a few weeks time. All too soon our time was up, so, with a cough and a stir, we cleared up and saying our Thanks to Mr. Sanderson for hosting us and telling us stories of the past, we piled into Norm's Landy and drove off.

Daniel Francis

Kantololo River Hike

3rd – 4th April 2009

The fire was glowing as our Troop members sat around it munching on our ready made meals. We were on our monthly hike in the Matobo wilderness and the majority of the Troop had turned out. Michael Dodds was our newest member and it was to be his first hike.

As soon as dinner was finished, we all jumped into our sleeping bags, as Norman retired to his secluded part of our bush camp. Us boys were not tired and so for the next hour we 'dogpiled' each other in our sleeping bags and talked about the huge starry milky-way stretching across the heavens over our heads. Eventually, overcome by tiredness, I fell asleep, oblivious to the night sounds.

Light rain woke us up at five o'clock in the morning. Kevin, Michael, Declan, Chris and I pilled into the Land Rover. Norm, Brendan and Dale, the brave ones, stayed out in the rain.

With breakfast out of the way, we were soon hiking following the Kantololo River in a southerly direction. The bush was a lush green. Our hike took us along the fast flowing stream. With the exception of Norm, us Scouts had taken our shoes off and were walking in the water as far as possible along the trail. All too soon we had to don our shoes, as the hike route turned away from the river and we followed bush paths to the site of a battle in which Baden-Powell had taken part in 1896. We stopped for a short rest at the plaque erected by the Boy Scouts of Matabeleland, one hundred years later in 1996, to commemorate this battle.

We then continued with our hike towards Gordon Park. When we were about five kilometres from the Park, Norm left us to go back to fetch the Landy and drive back to Gordon Park the long way round. From here, Chris took over leading the hike back to Gordon Park through the bush and over kopjes. It did not take us long to reach the Park and some time after, Norm arrived with the Landy. Sadly, Michael had received many blisters on both of his feet, on this his first hike and was in much discomfort. Once the fires were lit, we made our lunch and relaxed for a while before enjoying the remainder of the afternoon at the waterfall behind the Headquarter building.

Dillin McAtier

Tuli Circle Mini Expedition

15th – 18th April 2009

As this year is our Troop's One Hundredth Anniversary, this mini expedition had been programmed as one of our special events to commemorate the year. To start the year off in this locality, The Tuli Circle, was no accident, for it was at this very place that the Pioneer Column on 1 April 1890, crossed into our country from Khama's country (Botswana), and only nineteen years later, in 1909 our Troop was established. And to think, this was just two years after world Scouting was established. Our anniversary celebrations just had to begin at this most historic place.

The expedition members were Barry Knight with knowledge of local history and a Land Rover Discovery, Martin Sanderson with knowledge of local history and wit, Christopher Mackenzie with cooking skills and unending energy, Dale van Aarde with non-stop chatter and loveable personality, Brendan Judge with helping hand and comments, Declan FitzPatrick with logical solutions and mathematical preciseness, Dillin McAtier with bottomless sweetie bag and generosity, Kevin FitzPatrick with laughter and courage, Matthew Dodds with his reticent nature and measured reactions and then Norm with *Ingulungundu* and a lot of patience.

Our meeting place was at Woodlands garage at 07.00 hours on Wednesday 15 April. Barry being Barry was 45 minutes late, but he got away with it because he was one of the 'main manna that counts', he had also collected Martin and he too, was invaluable to the expedition. As there were ten of us on the expedition, the division of numbers was simple, five to a vehicle. The journey to Gwanda was uneventful. Fortunately Dillin was in *Ingulungundu* with Norm and he had the foresight to bring a box of tasty meat pies 'to keep the wolf from the door'. Added to this, Christopher had a large bag of popcorn, so Norm was in his element as we sped towards Fort Tuli. On our way through Gwanda, we collected the keys for the Shashi Wilderness Camp (Wildlife and Environment of Zimbabwe Camp) at Fort Tuli, where we were to stay for the duration of our visit.

We were on a tar road for most of the way, which made the going pleasant. The last seventy kilometres was a rather washed out, corrugated, hard gravel road, along which our teeth rattled loose as we proceeded. The descent from the highveld of Bulawayo at 1490 metres, through the middleveld of Gwanda, to the Lowveld of Tuli at 270 metres, was noticeable as there was a change in temperature. It got warmer. The vegetation changed too, Fort Tuli is in a much drier region and therefore, the grass is tougher and the trees stunted, mostly Mopane and thorn scrub. Even the ground was cruel, being composed of jagged rocky outcrops of basalt and calcite

On seeing the Shashi River on our arrival, Dillin describes it thus:

The Shashi is about six hundred metres wide with small channels of water and many sand dunes. There were sharp reeds along the edge by the river bank. Surface water in the Shashi begins to dry up around this time of the year and so there was sand everywhere. Shallow but wide streams of water brought the Shashi back to life as it glistened in the sunlight. Across the river there were many trees along the bank. This side too there were many enormous trees. Birds flew in and out along the vast Shashi River to drink and bath.

The banks of the Shashi River were awash with thick riverine vegetation. No, this is not a mistake in the river's name for Fort Tuli is actually located on the southern bank of the Shashi River and not the Tuli River. This is because the Pioneer Column, being guided by Captain Frederick Selous, mistook the Shashi River for that of the Tuli. The mistake has remained and Fort Tuli, it is. The Shashi Wilderness Camp is located on the northern side or the left hand bank and this is where our little convoy of two vehicles stopped.

Kevin has this to say of our arrival in camp:

As we got out of the Land Rovers we saw the Shashi. We unpacked our luggage and then headed towards the large river which was about six hundred metres wide. Within minutes we were splashing away, playing games and having fun. We swam around catching fish.



Ball game on the sands of the Shashi River

Brendan's description of the camp:

The Shashi Camp has three big thatched buildings overlooking the great Shashi River. There is a dining-room / kitchen and two dormitories with ten beds in each. In front of the dining hall there is an enormous Weeping Boerbean tree. (Schotia brachypetala)

Water for the camp is pumped from the river through a perforated pipe buried under the sand into an overhead storage tank. The old, six horse power Lister diesel engine driving a centrifugal pump commanded a great deal of attention from all of us and an old fashioned "Rhodesian boiler" provided us with hot water in the showers.

Our arrival time coincided with lunch time, so tables and benches were moved outdoors under the shade of huge trees on the soft sand of the river bank. Following lunch everybody once again headed down to the river, only twenty metres from the camp, to swim, build sand castles and terrify the fish. The day ended with a glorious sunset directly opposite our camp. Chris was in charge of the kitchen, cooking to washing up, throughout the camp. He did a first class job, earning a gold star for each meal. And need I add that he was in his element in building the camp fires each night. Well, huge bon fires, the coals of which he cooked on in the mornings. Much of the wood he used was *Combretum imberbe* (leadwood) which is one of Zimbabwe's hardest of hard woods.



The Knighting of "Sir Kevin FitzSlashtrick" and "Sir Declan FitzSplashtrick"

One unfortunate incident occurred just after dinner when Dillin, while on his way to re-fill the kettle, tripped and splashed hot water down the right side of his body. We rendered first aid and although feeling very sore and shaken from the experience Dillin joined us later on at the camp-fire.

During the afternoon, the FitzPatrick brothers whilst playing in the river raced each other back to the river bank. However, neither of them saw a submerged sand bar about a metre from the bank. In unison they tripped, fell and splashed flat on their stomachs into the water. At the camp-fire that first night, Martin, whilst seated in his camp chair called them forward, asked them to kneel in front of him and then using his "sword", actually braai tongs, he knighted

them by laying his "sword" on their shoulders in turn and saying as he did so, "Arise Sir Declan FitzSplashtrick" and "Arise Sir Kevin FitzSplashtrick". Needless to say, their new names have stuck.

Chris records our crossing of the Shashi on Thursday morning:

We left the Shashi Wilderness Camp and went to the National Parks Office to ask their permission to cross the River into the Tuli Circle. We wanted to visit the Fort. The Warden said a National Parks Ranger would go with us. Then we set off towards the River. At first it looked as if we would not be able to get across. It was quite fun sitting on the front of the Land Rover. The water came up to the bumper of the Land Rover. When we came to the sandy parts of the River the Land Rovers could steer themselves in the deep tyre channels left by other vehicles.



Ingulungundu sinks into the soft sand of the Shashi River on the return journey

The crossing of the river in our Land Rovers, was a re-enactment of exactly what the Pioneer Column did, by ox-drawn wagons, over one hundred years ago, (in the opposite direction). Our mission was to fossick amongst the remains of the area of Fort Tuli and hence our crossing.

Declan and the Pioneer Cemetery:

After crossing the Shashi River the first place we visited was the Pioneer Cemetery. It was square, and around it there was a trench about a metre wide and a metre deep. This was to prevent elephant and other animals from getting amongst the memorials. Most of the people had died from malaria. The youngest was just seven months old. The oldest was forty-three years old. Most of the crosses were made of steel but some were made of marble and were very elaborate. The place was overgrown with thorn bushes.

Then to the fort, where Dale tells us of the gun emplacements above the laager site:

We arrived at the Fort and immediately started to find and identify objects. We decided to head to the top of the hill where there were gun emplacements and also a telegraph pole from about 1890 which was used to help relay messages. The pioneers also used mirrors to send messages from place to place. We explored the area and one of the Scouts (Dale) kept on finding nails. We then took a scenic route down, finding a cocoa-powder tin lid on the way. Another Scout decided to get Norm and Barry lost. Mr. Sanderson decided to go and discover what some foundations were for.

From the fort, we proceeded to the Baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*) that had the faint scars of people's names having been carved into its trunk

Finally, on our way back to camp, Michael records our rummaging through the Pioneer Midden (Rubbish dump):

The midden was full of tins. For example condensed milk, bully-beef, sardine tins. After searching around and finding all sorts of interesting bits and pieces, Martin sat us down and talked to us about all the old artefacts and told us about how the manufacturing of the tins and other items were different from today, e.g. how the bully-beef tins were shaped in a different way and soldered together differently.

Early on in the afternoon and in true ceremonial style, Barry called everyone together and then calling Chris forward, presented him with a lump of meat. We all looked at it. After several attempts in trying to recognize what it was, Dale got it right. It was a portion of elephant trunk, complete with two nostrils. Well, Chris set to and prepared for us, using a cast-iron three legged pot, a magnificent stew. Dinner that night was something really special. This was a first for all of us, but no doubt a common meal for those of the Pioneer Column.

Members of the Troop noted the following species of trees in the immediate area of the Camp:

Weeping Boerbean (*Schotia Brachypetala*)
Fever Berry Tree (*Croton megalobtrys*)
Leadwood (*Combretum imberbe*)
Rain Tree (*Lonchocarpus capassa*)
Mopane (*Colophospermum mopane*)
Buffalo Thorn (*Zesiphus macronata*)
Umbrella Thorn (*Acacia tortilis*)
Ana Tree (*Faedherbia albida*)
Sycamore Fig (*Ficus sycomorus*)

Troop Surveying Activity.

Having established the length of the tow-rope (50 metres) borrowed from Barry, members of the troop waded through the braided rivulets between the sand spits of the Shashi and further established the width of the River at the Camp-site as being 580 metres.

Our last full day in camp was spent in playing in the Shashi River, restocking the wood pile and the pumping of the water storage tank for the next intake of visitors.

Our journey back to Bulawayo was broken about thirty kilometres before we reached Gwanda, when we turned off the main road in search of Mchela cave marked on the map. After searching around for some time and asking the local people for directions, we eventually found it. It turned out to be a huge cave with some fine San paintings.



The Seven Dwarfs. Declan, Michael, Kevin, Dillin, Christopher, Brendan and Dale.

We arrived back home at three o'clock, very tired but excited at having enjoyed our expedition.

We offer a sincere Thank You to Martin Sanderson and Barry Knight for making our expedition so interesting.

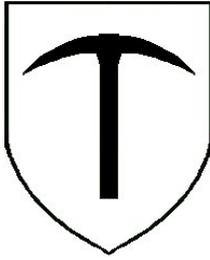
And the final words are from Martin:

The fun and pleasure each of the Scouts had was obvious throughout the three and a half days. Thank you and them, very much, for inviting me to be part of the expedition along with Barry. I too enjoyed the experience of having a real adventure into the wilderness and into the past.

The Scouts of the 1st Bulawayo (Pioneer) Scout Troop

**The world is very big,
The number of its people overwhelming.
But listen for the laughter,
The words of kindness.
Let them give you courage – so that you in turn can bring to every life,
Concern and gentleness,
Hope and delight.**

Helen Exley



1st Bulawayo (Pioneer) Scout Troop

Celebrating a Century of Scouting



Troop Programme of Activities for May to August 2009

May

1-2	Monthly Hike
10	Gordon Park Service: 12.00 noon
5	Schools open
8	Troop Meeting
15	Troop Meeting
22-25	Troop camp
29	Troop Meeting

June

5-6	Monthly Hike
12	Troop Meeting
13	Boy Skills Course (Provincial course)
14	Gordon Park Service: 12.00 noon
19	Troop Meeting
20-21	Parents camp
26	Troop meeting

July

3-4	Monthly Hike
4	Chuck Wilcox Art and Craft Competition
10	Troop Meeting
12	Gordon Park Service: 12.00 noon
17	Troop Meeting
24-26	William Arnold Carnegie Assegai Competition
31	Troop Meeting

August

6	Schools close
7-11	Zimbabwean Scouting Centenary Camp: Gordon Park
9	Zimbabwean Scouting Centenary Service: Gordon Park; 12.00 noon
14	Troop Meeting
21	Troop Meeting
28	Troop Meeting

Additional activities may be added to the programme