

**Annual General Meeting report
for the year ending 30th June 2017.**

Held at the lecture Hut at Melville Koppies on the 12th August 2017.

Conservation and maintenance

Conservation is an agreeable challenge if there are resources to cope with alien vegetation and general maintenance. Our full-time Conservation Team of Clement Ndlovu, Lucky Mdluli and Best Ndlovu, and part-timer Joseph Kasonga have ensured that Melville Koppies Central and East are in pristine condition, including the paths. Because of security issues, only parts on Melville Koppies West are maintained; the Cave and its surrounds, the spruit and the grid under Beyers Naude Drive.

Firebreaks and selected blocks have been burnt to stop bush encroachment, maintain grasslands and encourage biodiversity on Melville Koppies Central, which has detailed burning records from 1963. Melville Koppies West and East, still zoned as public open space, have regular uncontrolled burns.

Pikitup supplies plastic bags for litter and heavy duty bags which can be used many times for taking weeds with seeds to the local dumps.

Tony and Neilen Nunes do frequent patch-ups of the palisade fence and other odd maintenance jobs of structures.

Joburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ) has assisted by cutting firebreaks around the perimeters and grassy paths. They have supplied four government-funded EPWP workers (extended public works programme) to assist with conservation. Two broken fence divisions were repaired. The proposed JUMA route for 2 000 mountain bikes through Melville Koppies Central was stopped after numerous letters and meetings between JCPZ and MKMC. However, the 2014 negotiated route along the border of Melville Koppies West and West Park Cemetery was used again for the 2017 race.

Publicity

There is no budget for publicity, however, there are many free media outlets available. Lis Jones sends regular diary updates to 25 publications. Wendy Carstens deals with a variety of media. Ornico Media Information picks up any reference to Melville Koppies in the printed media and forwards the links to us. This free service was arranged by Theresa Gibbon. A monthly newsletter is sent to the 3 000 supporter database. Neilen Nunes made a virtual Google tour of Melville Koppies for the Internet. A feel-good publicity story was the eventual reuniting of Josephine, a shy skittish German shepherd dog trapped on Melville Koppies Central, with her owner.

Barbara Shaw updates the website annually.

Number of recorded visitors on organised events

Sunday tours 546, Sunday hikes 765, booked groups 1731.

TOTAL = 3042 people

Groups included schools, universities, specialist groups, hiking, team building, Horticultural Society, French tourists, Dendrological Society, JHB Country Club and church groups.

Members of the Witwatersrand Bird Club ring every month on a Saturday morning.

A Cites Cop 17 conference group tour was arranged by Joburg Tourism with JCPZ. Fourteen guests were accompanied by 22 helpers (guides, security and officials).

Guides

Anna Ludlow, a dynamic guide at Melville Koppies and a regular donor despite a meagre pension, died in January aged 95. John Freer, Melville Koppies chairman, guide, donor and birder, died in February aged 86. His wife Pam died soon after. Our sincere condolences to their respective families on the loss of these very special people.

Guides who shared their time and expertise to introduce people to our natural and cultural heritage were:

Sunday tour and hike leaders: Wendy Carstens, David Carstens, Tony Nunes, Jenny Grice, Alison Wilson, Danie Swart, Pieter Burger, Musarrat Safi, Shayleen Peekes, Erica Elk, John Cartwright, Arjen van Zwieten and Ivan Ginsberg

Mid-week school guides: Wendy Carstens, David Carstens, Jackie Hugo and Maggie Hompes.

George Hofmeyr leads a group weekday walk on Melville Koppies East.

Tony Lelliott leads monthly dog walks on Melville Koppies West.

Security

This is a continual issue affecting all the houses adjacent to the three sections of the Koppies. We employ CSS security to accompany all scheduled Sunday hikes and Tours at R600 per session. JCPZ funds two 24-hour 'Will to Win' guards for Central. The monthly CoJ Region B meetings to improve the security on MK West achieved little. Residents in 3rd Avenue, Westdene, eventually locked their entrance gate to MK West as they were traumatised by dealing with all the people who had been mugged on the Koppies. The gate is open on Sundays for worshippers. There is still plenty of access from other directions to MK West as the fences are either stolen or smashed.

Finances

Income is derived from

- donations on tours and hikes,
- MySchoolMyVillageMyPlanet members (thanks to Taryn Hinton and Pieter Burger for promoting these),
- JUNKIE Charity Store,
- sales of CDs
- private cash donations. Please see the appendix for the list of 2016/7 cash donors.

The bulk of expenditure is on labour 82% and security 13%. Volunteers do the guiding, administration, publicity, fund-raising, maintenance and conservation using their own computers, cars, fuel, materials, etc.

Thank you to Vaughan Russell who does the annual finance report.

Melville Koppies West

The land transfer of State and the Department of Education land to the Jewish Cemetery for urgent expansion is still hovering with the relevant authorities. When this is eventually transferred, security for Melville Koppies West and Albertsville will be improved as the Jewish Cemetery will close off one of the problem access points. JCPZ has commissioned EOH consultants to do a survey with the intention of upgrading Melville Koppies West and East to Protected Natural Environments. The wheels of bureaucracy turn very slowly.

Conclusion

Thank you to all the volunteers, including my very supportive husband, who have contributed in so many ways to the continued preservation and promotion of Melville Koppies and the many challenges that we have met successfully. Our reward is that Melville Koppies remains a unique Joburg community asset for environmental education and sustainable recreation.

Wendy Carstens

Chairman of the Melville Koppies Management Committee

Appendix: Cash Donors

- Godsell family
- Alan Jones, Cynthia Rose, Bernice Aspoas
- Lyn Maree and Cavan Hill, Campher family, Taryn and Mike Hinton
- Claas Kuehnemann, Zille family, Carl , Richard Doehring
- John Freer, David Carstens, Friend x 2, Lesley Couchman, Anna Ludlow, Brian Bayne, Kerry Stead, Noel and Viv Pope, Daphne du Preez