

**Melville Koppies Management Committee of
the Friends of Melville Koppies
Annual report from 1st July 2018 to 30th June 2019**

This year is the 60th anniversary of the Melville Koppies Nature Reserve and Joburg Heritage site. We also celebrate 60 years of passionate volunteer involvement in managing the Koppies. A **brief overview** of the whole period will follow the annual report.

Special features to mark the 60th

- Revil Mason, the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) archaeologist who found the smelting furnace at the Koppies, celebrated his 90th birthday this year. Wits' Origins had an exhibition of his work. His daughter, Petra Mason, organised a plaque in his honour at the lecture Hut.
- Dr Amanda Esterhuysen, Wits' archaeology specialist, will be the guest speaker at the AGM on the 24th August, 2019.
- Feature articles on the history of the Koppies have appeared in magazines with a close association to the Koppies:
 - *Veld and Flora*, the Botanical Society of SA
 - *WitsReview*, the Alumni magazine
 - *Bokmakierie*, the Witwatersrand Bird Club magazine
- Gillian Godsell made a very informative podcast with Wendy Carstens and Tam Scheidegger about the history of the Koppies.
- By pure chance, Melville Koppies flora has been used in art works
 - Amanda du Plessis' range of household goods
 - Pressed grasses in The Whippet's glass tile partition.
- Souvenir bags and buffs. A limited number of attractive shopper bags (250) made from recycled plastic bottles and buffs (200), with the wording 'www.mk.org.za 60th anniversary 2019' are on sale.
- A series of annotated photos contrasting the early days with the present are being posted on the melvillekoppies Facebook.
- The annual Heritage Day hike will take place on the 24th September, Heritage Day.

Report of activities during the past year

Conservation

This never ends. The conservation team of three full-time workers, Lucky Mdluli, Clement Ndlovu and Best Ndlovu, and part-timer Joseph Kasonga have kept the reserve in pristine condition. They were helped by five people in the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) from January to June 2019. Tam Scheidegger is a very welcome hard-working, innovative addition to the team, supervised by myself. Good rains have meant persistent weeding and hundreds of bags with seeded weeds have been taken to the municipal dumps. The tree poppers have been used extensively on Lantana and invasive Canthiums. We have made new scenic paths, maintained old paths and opened up unexplored areas. Old lintels, pavers and carpeting have been donated for path maintenance. Most of the southern part of the reserve was rehabilitated by a controlled winter burn. Graffiti has been removed several times from Melville Koppies East and once from the cave on Melville Koppies West.

Maintenance of structures

Due to the tardiness of JCPZ (Johannesburg Parks and Zoo) in maintaining structures that affect security, Tony Nunes has done major repairs, only getting reimbursed by the MKMC for the materials at R27 000. He replaced a total of 100 palisade slats that were stolen from the Beyers Naude fence. The sides of the wooden bridge over the Westdene Spruit were vandalised and Tony replaced these with polywood uprights.

JCPZ employed a contractor to paint the outside only of two of the four perimeter fences.

JCPZ installed 12 notice boards and 3 no dumping signs at various points on the Melville Koppies complex.

Publicity

Publicity encourages visitors, who generate income, which pays for labour, which needs more income from more publicity. A circle! Lis Jones has done fantastic work again this year in sending diary updates to numerous free media. She has built up a relationship with news editors because of her charming messages. Ornic Media sends free constant updates of anywhere Melville Koppies is mentioned in print or online for us to track.

Wendy Carstens updates the facebook page frequently with photo news of upcoming and past events and other snippets. The final newsletter was sent to the 3 000 database in April 2019. Facebook will be used instead for news.

Barbara Shaw updates the calendar on the website. This saves many hours of explanations to people who call 011 482 4797, the Carstens' private contact number for Melville Koppies.

Number of recorded visitors

	2018	2019
Sunday guided tours	508	555
Sunday hikes	1085	1044
Booked groups	2067	1302
totals	3660	2901

The number of booked groups has dropped off because of the decline in the number of school visits. This may be because of the costs of transport, bureaucracy to organise such visits, the full school calendars and lack motivated teachers. The donation per pupil for the Koppies is only R35 per pupil but the buses cost a lot. Most of the visits are from private schools. Other groups included Craig Natrass' bird ringers on the second Saturday of each month, Wit's first year Geology students, specialised groups and students doing private research.

Guides\hike leaders did a total of 285 duties this year.

Thanks to the hike leaders who helped Pieter Burger, David Carstens and Wendy Carstens, especially regulars Leo Chen and his daughters, Jenny Grice and Alison Wilson (and commandeered Carstens family members when necessary).

Sunday and school guides were Wendy Carstens, David Carstens, Jenny Grice, Tam Scheidegger, Maggie Hompes, Jackie Hugo and Arjen van Zwieten

Security

JCPZ funds 'Will to Win' security which provides two day-and-night guards for Melville Koppies Central. There have been no recorded incidents except for some petty theft from the lecture Hut at the end of June.

The MKMC employs Beagle security to accompany all Sunday events.

The conservation team does security during mid-week visits.

Noisy worshippers on Melville Koppies East

The issue of people praying loudly during the night on Melville Koppies East and disturbing nearby residents, has not been resolved despite numerous appeals to relevant authorities and site visits. According to the bylaws, no one is allowed on the Koppies at night.

Melville Koppies West.

Tony Lelliott continues with the first-Saturday-of-the-month walks with dogs on the West. His regular reports about the vagrants under the UJ pylons are ignored by JCPZ.

The MKMC only maintains the heritage cave area as this is part of the cross koppie hiking route. Because of security issues, and lack of manpower, we cannot maintain Melville Koppies West.

The clearvu fence along the west pavement of Beyers Naude Drive has four big holes caused by accidents. One wonders if these will ever be repaired. JRA (Joburg Road Agency) installed 2 X 20m barriers along this dangerous road, after the accidents. At least 140m of barriers is needed on this stretch, plus other permanent speed-control measures.

Seymour and Marlene Maloon passed away during the year. They were a very special couple who were the 'Guardians of the gate' at 3rd Avenue, Westdene.

Finance

Income R298,286 (including interest from investments) (This includes transfers from our savings of 6000, 22000 {for maintenance materials} and R12 500 {for purchase of bags and buffs}.

Expenses R302 407 (This include the expenditure from the savings transfers above. R8800 of the R12 500 outlay has been recovered in sales to date.

Nedbank's monthly MKMC bank charges, which used to be R8 have jumped to about R200. Email requests to reduce the charges have been on a fruitless circular journey amongst the bank officials.

SARS is impossible to contact about the refusal to give tax rebates to donors even though we are a PBO and donors have received the rebates from 2008 to 2017.

In due course, the investments will be used for pensions for the conservation team.

Thank you to Vaughan Russell who does the financials for us.

Cash donors

Grateful thanks to the contributions from the following Friends of Melville Koppies;

Gillian Godsell, Chris Carey, Carl Carey, Colleen Campher, Marian Hester, Taryn Hinton, Mike Ockenden, Lyn Maree and Cavan Hill, Gawie Nienaber, Ben Sheppard, Thora Hanna, James Wellsted, Viv and Noel Pope, Amanda Ansermino, Dael Stojakovic, Tessa Reddy, B &M Chandler, Victoria Cullinan, Wendy Carstens and some unknowns. A special thanks to young Olivia Smith who enjoyed

a school tour to Melville Koppies so much that she raised R1750 by making and selling pretty pots filled with succulents.

Conclusion

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the success of Melville Koppies. Every contribution, large or small, is valuable and appreciated– from time, expertise and finance. Continued support inspires us all. A special thanks to my husband David for his help with all aspects of running the Koppies – except for the conservation!

We care for what we love. Here's to the next decade!

Wendy Carstens

Chairman of the Friends of Melville Koppies.

July 2019

Six decades of volunteerism at Melville Koppies – a brief overview

In the summary below, all names have been excluded because there have just been so many people who have contributed in so many ways.

When Melville Koppies was declared a Nature Reserve in 1959, it aroused great excitement and enthusiasm. Johannesburg, the economic hub of South Africa, now had its own unique indigenous haven. When the 500-year-old iron smelting furnace was discovered, this added heritage status to the Reserve.

1960-1970

The first volunteer committee, the Johannesburg Council for Natural History (JCNH) was set up to advise the Johannesburg Council on how to manage its indigenous reserve. The JCNH did more than advise. The Koppies became an intense focus for Research and Development. Its Flora, Fauna, Geology, Archaeology and History were foci for research and fieldwork for academics and students from the University of the Witwatersrand and other individuals. Numerous studies were published. Volunteer academic guides shared their expertise and enthusiasm with the hordes of visitors on open days. Development entailed establishing and maintaining a circular self-guided nature trail by volunteer work parties. The Council was pressured into fencing the reserve, building an open air lecture Hut and protection for the smelting furnace.

1970-1980

The pattern set in the previous decade continued. Research included environmental management of the reserve. The aim was to use the Koppies for research, fieldwork, environmental education and sustainable recreation. Melville Koppies West, including the heritage section of the cave and surrounds, was added to the Koppies complex as public open space.

1980-1990

This was a period of consolidation. The JCNH committee continued with regular meetings, maintenance and open days for the public.

1990-2000

The JCNH was disbanded. The Melville Koppies Management Committee (MKMC), the operating arm of the Friends of Melville Koppies, was set up by Council to manage the Koppies in a Joint-venture relationship with Johannesburg Parks and Recreation, now Johannesburg Parks and Zoo (JCPZ). The constitution of the new committee followed the pattern set by the JCNH.

Council gave permission for the African Independent Churches to worship during the day on Melville Koppies West. To prevent erosion, the churches built 23 concrete 'dancing circles' for their services.

Melville Koppies East was added to the Koppies complex as public open space.

2000-2010

The new century marked a period of expanded environmental management of Central and the new additions of West and East. Because of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in South Africa in 2002, funds were made available. These were used for new palisade fencing of Melville Koppies Central, upgrading the Reception Hut as well as the riverine area with a brick path and scenic wooden bridge. Intense publicity in free media and the new website www.mk.org.za, led to an increase in the number of visitors, which meant more funding. This was used by the MKMC to employ full-time conservation labour, now necessary as volunteer work parties had dwindled to a few diehards. The improvement in the condition of all three sections of the Koppies was marked.

2010-2019

The MKMC continues with the intense conservation and maintenance work of the previous decade on Central and East

On Melville Koppies Central, volunteers lead two hikes and two guided tours for the public every month. Universities use the Reserve for research, fieldwork and projects. Schools are frequent visitors.

Melville Koppies East is open to the public daily. It is a favourite haunt for walkers with socialised dogs and families with young children.

Walks with socialised dogs are held once a month on Melville Koppies West. This is a very big section which JCPZ needs to manage as it is beyond the limited resources of the MKMC.

The next decade?

We look forward to another decade of volunteers managing our beautiful heritage.

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