

**Melville Koppies Management Committee**  
**Annual report from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

This has been a difficult year. The Covid pandemic lockdown started in March, 2020 and continued in various levels up to the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (and beyond).

**Number of visitors**

Melville Koppies East, zoned as public open space, had an unprecedented number of new visitors, eager to get out and escape the lockdown confines of homes. Many have since become regular walkers with their dogs. We do not keep records of these numbers.

Melville Koppies Central, the Nature Reserve and Joburg Heritage site, was only allowed to open officially in August 2020 after four months of lockdown. We stopped the previous pattern of guided hikes and walks because this meant close contact of people in groups, thus encouraging the spread of air-borne Covid germs even though masks were compulsory. Instead, Central was open every Sunday from 8am to 11.30am. Visitors were given maps and volunteers on duty gave lessons in map-reading. Maps for a 5km hiking route and a Heritage Route were made. Children were given an A4 page with pictures of things to look for. The R80 entrance fee for adults and R40 for children was all used for maintenance of the Koppies. In addition season tickets for a year's hiking were sold at R500 pp. A total of 1892 people visited the Koppies on these Sundays.

The number of booked groups diminished because of Covid. Schools included Kairos School of Inquiry, Michael Mount Waldorf and The Ridge. The University of the Witwatersrand brought first year students. Groups only totalled 290 people.

Revil Mason's family had a quiet memorial service in December for Revil, who celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday the previous year. Revil was the archaeologist who found the original smelting furnace at the Koppies which led to its Joburg Heritage status.

**Publicity**

We have no budget for publicity. Jenny Grice, brimming with ideas, has written delightful and topical short articles for various Caxton papers every week. Thank you to Theresa Gibbon who has organised a free monitoring service for us so we know exactly where Melville Koppies articles have been published and can thank the editors. Wendy Carstens updates the Facebook page with photos and snippets every week. Anthony Paton posted a photo of a migrant Fairy Flycatcher on our Facebook page which reached an unprecedented 13 000 people. Carol Knoll wrote two articles for Landscape SA. Koppie visitors do lots of blogging and upload photos on Instagram. We explore every avenue for free publicity. Barbara Shaw has simplified the open Sunday session information on [www.mk.org.za](http://www.mk.org.za) so that it is easy to navigate. The Melville Security Initiative sponsored eight information Chromadek notice boards for Central and East gates, and four for MK West. Tony Nunes erected the Central and East signage. Joburg Tourism representatives paid a visit to MK to see what needed upgrading.

**Conservation**

It is a pleasure to promote the Koppies because of its pristine condition. This is thanks to the full-time conservation team (Clement Ndlovu, Lucky Mdluli, Best Ndlovu and part-timer Joseph Kasonga), supervised by Wendy Carstens and Tam Scheidegger. Annual and perennial invasive plants

were all removed. Hundreds of bags of weeds with seeds have been removed and taken to the Victory Park Municipal dumps by Wendy.

In addition, some indigenous plants that have encroached into the grasslands were also removed. The aim is to maintain the endangered natural Highveld grassland.

This also entails controlled burning of patches as necessary. Uncontrolled burns do unfortunately happen on Melville Koppies East. We keep detailed records of planned and unplanned burns.

The team also maintains erosion bars on paths to prevent soil erosion when it rains.

The annual rainfall of 809mm was average. One torrential downpour in spring caused heavy erosion in burnt areas. Most of the other rain was soaking drizzle which encouraged plant growth – and weeds. Because the ground was continually damp, the Proteas, which do not like wet feet, did not flower this season. Disappointing.

JCPZ cuts the perimeter firebreaks frequently. These firebreaks needed constant weeding as weeds thrive in these cut perimeters.

### **Research**

Research this year included work on soil DNA, lichens, pollination of *Aloe verecunda*, hypothetical architectural projects and numerous tasks on the management of MK.

### **Structures**

The fences are an endless saga. A taxi crashed into the spruit next to Beyers Naude Drive. A taxi crashed through the Old Road gate – fixed by Tony and Neilen Nunes. A taxi crashed into the Orange Road fence – fixed by residents. Eight divisions of fencing fell down along Rustenburg Road – fixed by residents. Palisades constantly stolen from the fence between Central and East. Fixed by Neilen Nunes and Tam Scheidegger

JCPZ eventually fixed the gap where a taxi crashed into the Beyers Naude fence. The 250+ palisade slats were also replaced. The stolen Clearvu was also replaced. The two divisions opposite the Puma garage smashed by a drunk driver were replaced. JRA has been asked for crash barriers along this pavement. One of the Old Road gates has been stolen.

JCPZ has not replaced the dilapidated guard hut despite repeated requests for years.

JCPZ Phillip Mkhombo fixed a burst water pipe on Central. He also cut down an Acacia that had fallen across the Old Road.

The toilet at the reception hut was vandalised twice and repaired by Neilen Nunes. However, the rubber water pipes were cut by a vandal soon after. We have decided not to repair it again. The wooden door of the store room was stolen. Neilen and Sylvester also replaced the roof seam of the Lecture Hut to stop the leaks.

### **Security**

MK Central: JCPZ reduced their insourced day guards from two to one. There are still two night guards on duty.

We paid one Beagle guard R600 and Clement Ndlovu R200 to patrol the Old Road every Sunday session. This area is the Achilles heel of the Koppies, even more so with half the fencing stolen from this area.

MK East: The Melville Security Initiative arranged with Beagle for two guards to sit on MK East every morning from 7am to 8.30am. This is very comforting. There are notices at every entrance advising people to leave all valuables at home to deter robbers.

### Finance

Thank you to Vaughan Russell for doing the financials.

<b>Income</b>		<b>Expenditure</b>	
Sunday sessions	139 036	Labour	215 100
Booked groups	18 340	Security	36 622
Sales	1 820	Maintenance	6 084
MySchool	16264	Printing	0
MK West walks	2 530	Bank charges	1 943
JUNKIE	26 500	website	1 200
Private donations	58 440	insurance	5 910
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>262 030</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>266 859</b>

### Committee

Alan Cawood is a welcome new member to our active committee. Everyone has put in an extra effort this year, particularly with assistance on Sunday sessions. A great team. Thank you to David Carstens for his unceasing commitment to the Koppies.

Wendy Carstens

Chairman

July 2021