

Annual report of the volunteer Melville Koppies Management Committee (MKMC) 2021-2022

held on the 3rd September 2022

at 2pm at the lecture Hut, Melville Koppies, Johannesburg.

Welcome to the 62nd annual general meeting of the volunteer committees of Melville Koppies (MK).

General

This was the second year of the Covid pandemic. Activities at Melville Koppies were adjusted to Covid restrictions. All the guides and helpers were double vaccinated. As infections declined, lockdown conditions were relaxed but masks were still compulsory in South Africa until March 2022.

Volunteer update

Long service committee member George Hofmeyr (GH) and Heike retired to Mossel Bay.

Cynthia Rose emigrated to the UK.

Sadly, school guide Maggie Hompes, died in August 2021 after a short illness.

Eric van Gils, chairman of the Melville Residents association and good friend of Melville Koppies, tragically died in a light plane crash.

Chrissie Carey (CC) and Danyle Nunes (DN) joined the MKMC.

The four signatories for the MKMC bank account were updated to Wendy Carstens (WC), Lis Jones (LJ), Jenny Grice (JG) and Tam Scheidegger (TS) due to the resignation of George and Cynthia.

The Sunday morning open sessions were hosted by regulars Wendy Carstens, David Carstens, Barbara Shaw, Alan Cawood with Jenny Grice and Alison Wilson. Tam Scheidegger joined the Sunday team (minus Barbara and Alison) in the school guiding team.

Conservation of Melville Koppies Central and East

This is one of the major undertakings and expenditures of the MKMC. Due to incessant soaking rains over the past summer, alien invasive vegetation has flourished. In addition, Global warming and rising CO₂ levels have promoted indigenous bush encroachment in the grasslands. The experienced conservation team (Clement Ndlovu, Lucky Mdluli, Best Ndlovu and part-timer Joseph Kasonga under Wendy's supervision) have worked continuously to keep Melville Koppies in pristine condition. Rain suits were bought for working in the daily drizzle and new gloves and boots for cleaning the polluted Spruit. Tam Scheidegger works steadily on her conservation projects on the Koppies. Jenny Grice provided her gardener, Madondana, to help out on occasions. He is now an experienced conservationist and is starting to clear the Geldenhuy's Hill Street cemetery of alien plants.

Chrissie Carey keeps the Puma entrance and surrounding roads of Melville Koppies East free of litter.

Some **firebreaks** were burnt with difficulty in June 2022 because the grass was still green and the soil damp.

Thanks to GH and Heike for the regular **rain stats**. The rainfall for July 2021 to June 2022 was 809mm. It seemed more because the rain was often light continuous drizzle with cool days and sodden soil.

Structural maintenance

Tony and Neilen Nunes took care of necessary structural maintenance. They fixed leaking toilets, the sagging roof of the Lecture Hut, replaced the rotten wooden base planks of the Westdene Spruit bridge, fixed the solar panel of the guard hut, cemented the loose bricks on the floor of the reception hut and replaced stolen fence slats. Danyle Nunes and Tam Scheidegger also helped with replacing the slats.

Publicity

Jenny Grice has sent weekly delightful publicity stories about Melville Koppies to the free community media. Wendy Carstens updated the Facebook page every week with additional photos by Alan Cawood. Anthony Paton added bird photos. Information was also sent to other free media outlets. Barbara Shaw kept the website updated and also added the 41 'lockdown Facebook articles' by Wendy, Jenny and Tam. Other free media has been successfully contacted. Melville Koppies articles have been published in *Veld and Flora* and *SA Landscape Gardener*.

Number of visitors

Due to the restrictions of the Covid pandemic, numbers of school visits declined drastically and only started picking up towards the end of 2021. Because of extensive red tape for public schools, the school visits are all by private schools. Transport costs are an issue for many schools.

Sunday morning open sessions proved popular with hikers, families and booked tours. We stopped the first-of-the-month guided hikes because of lack of interest and issues with unfit people.

1088 people came on booked weekday tours.

1465 people visited on Sunday sessions.

Members of the Witwatersrand Bird Club continue to ring on the second Saturday of every month.

Security

As a precaution, extra security was provided for all groups and Sunday sessions.

Danyle Nunes was very active in following up on robberies in Melville by perpetrators entering from Melville Koppies East. He also sorted out issues with vagrants on the East.

Finance

The financial situation is remarkably like the previous year's one. The % below relate to the percentage of income and expenditure totals. The donations for adults remained at R80pp and R40 per child for visits.

Thank you to Vaughan Russell for doing the financial statements.

Income from Sunday sessions (41.3%), booked groups (20.4%), private donors (21.5%), JUNKIE charity store (10.1%), MySchool (6.4%), and income from investments, was R277, 728 compared to the previous year's R280, 366. R35 000 was transferred from savings to cover the income shortfall due to Covid.

Expenditure on labour ((82.4%), security (12.9%), insurance 2.1%), maintenance (0.9%), bank charges (0.7%), website, (0.5%) and printing (0.4%) was R277, 984. compared to the previous year's R266, 861.

We have a YOCO card machine which reduces the amount of cash handled on Sundays. Booked groups mostly do EFTs.

MK West

Tony Lelliott continues to run the first Saturday of the month walk with socialised dogs. Volunteer security is provided. MK West has R1080 collected in dog-walk funds up to the 2nd July 2022.

MK West is totally under the management and conservation of Joburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ).

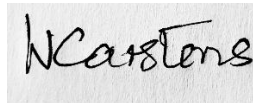
Danyle Nunes and Beagle security did a sweep and counted seven vagrant camps there.

Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ)

JCPZ has assisted with maintenance by cutting perimeter firebreaks and paths. The gate that was stolen from the Old Road entrance on the 4th July 2021 was replaced nine months later. A new guard hut was installed in September 2021. JCPZ supplies one day and two night guards for MK Central. The MKMC declined to sign a draft MOU with JCPZ which was drawn up for Klipriviersberg, Kloofendal, The Wilds and Friends of Joburg Zoo. The MKMC will continue with the long-standing Joint-Venture agreement between JCPZ and the MKMC.

Conclusion

The small dedicated band of volunteers have continued caring for and promoting our heritage of Melville Koppies. Caring community members have assisted immensely with private donations. Everyone's contribution is valued. We sincerely thank you all.



Wendy Carstens

Chairman of the MKMC