



THE TRAM-LINE

On-line

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Chairman: KEVIN WALTON

The official newsletter of The Mutare Club

Busy time for the Club of late

The Club has been particularly busy over the last couple of months accommodating all the overseas experts installing the new Bottling Line plant at Mutare Bottling Company. They have now moved out to The Wise Owl as we were unable to accommodate the increased numbers arriving from overseas and it is their company policy that they all be accommodated in one place where they can have single rooms and with their own en-suite facilities. Sadly Mutare Club could not meet their requirements, however we continue to feed them on a daily basis for lunch and this is keeping our staff on their toes. This arrangement is likely to continue for another month or so. Les, Peter and all the staff have done a great job in making all the visitors most welcome and mostly happy during their time at the Club and it would be good to compliment them all for that.

New system of billing

The Club has introduced a system of sending out statements of account following the charging of subscriptions due on Members' cards. This has helped tremendously to collect outstanding monies more timeously which obviously is of benefit to the Club

Help for the secretary.

The Club has recently employed Mrs. Carol Moolman on a part-time temporary contract to assist our Secretary with the day to day procurement of provisions etc. and to assist where necessary in view of the increased work load now happening in the kitchen and the Club dining room.

Generator

At our last meeting the Committee agreed to take the decision and follow up on the acquisition of a Prime Power Industrial Diesel Generator. It was felt that the regular power cuts from load shedding and faults were seriously compromising the operation of the Club and preventing us from generating much needed income necessary to pay the bills, and to make the Club a better place all round.. The lack of electricity is also hindering us from pumping borehole water on which the Club is now surviving solely, in the absence of Municipal supplies. On expert advice, we are focusing our efforts initially on a 40 KVA F G Wilson Genset (no association with our Past Chairman!) and we have put in a bid on this Generator and now await adjudication on this bid. Hopefully we shall

Ed cleans up at the draw



It was a bountiful Christmas Draw for Ed Coutinho who took home a goodly amount of good cheer, no wonder he's smiling. It was altogether a happy occasion for the members and guests who attended this festive affair and the number of prizes donated surpassed those of previous years thanks to the efforts of Ken Smith, Iqbal Joosab-Ali and Pension Mandimutsira.

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hear shortly. If this fails we shall have to look elsewhere. In order to meet the necessary expenditure, we decided at Committee level to impose a levy on each Member to help us raise the funds for this exercise, and we calculated this levy on the basis that the Members would contribute towards almost half of the Genset costs whilst the balance would be found from Club funds. We did not levy the Members for the expenditure on the borehole and ancillary equipment including water tanks, but we could not fund this new exercise without contribution from the Members and we do realise that times are tough for everyone. We hope Members will understand, although there are bound to be some who object.

New Face

Some Members will have noticed a new face behind the Members Bar. Benson is currently under training to be able to stand in and help Rufaro when needed.

Financial constraints

We continue to talk about making improvements, painting and redecoration at the Club, but this exercise is hampered by financial constraints for the time being.

Stop Press

At the March committee meeting, as a convenience to members, it was decided that with effect from the beginning of the next billing period members will have the option of paying their subscription on a monthly basis.

KEVIN WALTON

Chairman

The end of the line?

When Denis Parks asked me to join his committee in 1990, I agreed after giving the matter some thought on how I could best serve the Club. Being conversant with the noble and ancient art of printing (or “bloody printers” as we were referred to by that breed apart, the journalists of the newsroom), it seemed that the production of a newsletter would be my obvious contribution. What to call it was my first consideration. Knowing something of the history of Mutare, including the fact that the tram (see picture in the guests bar), ran from the Club down to the station and back. Not an electrically operated one – it freewheeled down to the station and was mule drawn back up to the Club. The name that came to mind was The Tram-Line.

The problem with taking on such a project is that once you have put the hat on the only way you can get it off again, is when your anatomical hard-drive gives in or the wind fills your canopy and you fly to new shores leaving no contact address.

My last issue

This will likely be my last issue of The Tram-Line, although it has been suggested that in this day of internet communication there is no good reason for me not to continue. That said it really is time someone else took it over and injected some new thinking. It is time to move on, albeit with heavy heart. I have had much fun with this thing over the past 24 years and along the way have got up a few noses, but hell, that’s part of the territory. Whether it has helped to encourage patronage as was the objective, I know not, I hope so. It has however kept members informed of Club news and developments and entertained on occasion with historical stuff. Certainly there has always been an abundance of twaddle.

In my 35 years of membership the Club has changed little in character but by nature, the characters have. Back then there were a goodly number of former British servicemen, most with posh English accents and their kind made up the bulk of the committee. They would congregate on a Friday on hallowed ground in the shallow end of the bar around and below the picture of Winston Churchill as if in subliminal homage. The dress code was more stringent. You either wore a collar and tie or the ubiquitous safari suits with their short shorts and long stockings. Mr Fonda, the Club manager/steward, always resplendent in his tuxedo was there to remind anyone not conforming.

Younger members kept to the deep end

Newer and younger members mostly kept to the deep end of the bar and rarely ventured past the halfway mark on a Friday. The management style was old school, the stuff of huge ledgers and fountain pens. Financially the Club was safe but not abundantly. The entertainment tended to be formal also.

The metamorphosis came about in 1999 when a very young Graham Harris took over as Chairman and introduced more modern accounting practices. The atmosphere became more relaxed and this trend continued with a then young Graham Wilson taking over the chair. Thereafter and ever since, we have seen a succession of young chairmen. Of late, the committee when socialising, tend to favour the centre of the bar, neutral ground perhaps. Mr Churchill sadly has surreptitiously disappeared. Safari suits are out of fashion, with one exception, and members wear long shorts and short socks. Hah!

Fewer members

Today there are fewer members but we still have quality members; the food is good and the service old fashioned excellent. The gardens are fantastic. Financially the Club is safe when much around us is teetering on the brink. We have to thank our Committee, the effervescent and efficient secretary, Les Appleton, Peter Sande and their staff.

In conclusion, I ask the members to value their membership and to be circumspect in their choice of candidates for election. Do this and you will continue to enjoy this unique establishment for many years to come.

Best wishes to you all.

Tony Waters



90th anniversary of the unveiling of Cross Kopje

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the unveiling of that dominant Mutare landmark, the memorial cross on Cross Kopje. “

“The memorial cross that dominates Umtali from a granite kopje was erected by Europeans (whites) in commemoration of the African (black) soldiers who died in the German East African campaign of the first World War. The cross stands on a massive boulder and is slightly over 9 metres high and 1.2 metres thick. It owes its existence to the generosity of Colonel J.A. Metheun and his brother Captain S.A. Methuen. The cross was solemnly dedicated by the Rt. Rev. F.H. Bevan, the Bishop of Southern Rhodesia and unveiled by the Governor, Sir John Chancellor on August 24, 1924. (Sir John was in fact the first Governor of Southern Rhodesia.) This extract comes from an article that appeared in The Monuments of Southern Rhodesia published in 1953 and written by a former editor of the Rhodesia Herald (1975-1980), Rowland Fothergill.

Cecil Hulley an early settler in what was previously Umtali, wrote in his book *Where Lions Once Roamed* as follows: *“Everyone has admired the majesty of the Cross Kopje war memorial standing on what was once known as Baboon Kopje in Umtali and many have marvelled at the engineering problems involved and the motive behind such an achievement.*

“The feat was accomplished by Umtali firm, Metheun Brothers, which was owned by Captain Stuart Methuen in partnership with his brother Colonel J.A. Methuen. The brothers decided that a memorial should be built in memory of those Africans of Rhodesia and Mozambique who had fought in East Africa with the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Rhodesia Native Regiment – the R.N.R. and had lost their lives.

“Every single item of material and every drop of water had to be carried up the steep path from below. Colonel Metheun was unable to help with the actual construction because of the troublesome leg wounds and the effect of gassing in the First World War. He took over the managerial side of the

operations and later the arrangements for the unveiling, which took place on August 30th, 1924 and was dedicated by the Right Reverend Bishop Bevan, the Chaplain of the forces in Southern Rhodesia and unveiled by Councillor W. Stowe, Mayor of Umtali in 1924.

“Picture the scene of the unveiling! There stood the massive cross of rock and reinforced cement, thirty feet high and four feet thick, weighing an estimated fifty tons, triumphantly silhouetted against the skyline, overlooking the town.”

“The Metheun brothers carried the entire cost of the project.”

The reader will have noticed contradictions in the above reports of this event, Fothergill tells us that the unveiling was performed by the Governor and Hulley writes that it was Mayor W. Stowe. The Umtali Post in its *Top of the Pass* column November 25, 1974 alludes to the fact that it was Mayor C.W. Stevens. A visit to the library at The Manica Post and reference to their bound files of what was then The Rhodesia Advertiser, of August 1924, and a report on a council meeting confirms, it was in fact the Governor who did the honours. It seems he went on to visit Hot Springs a day or two after the unveiling. The report confirms that the mayor at the time was in fact Stevens. There is also a contradiction in the date with Fothergill giving it as August 21 and Hulley, August 30. The date was in fact August 21.

The last point of contention is that of who financed the project. Everything above indicates that the Metheun brothers were responsible, however it seems there had been some public debate in the columns of The Umtali Post in 1976 on this point. The *Top of the Pass* column in October 1976 (exact date not shown on the cutting), referred to the 1928 edition of The Rhodesia Annual (brought in to The Umtali Post by Binks Holland) which read, *“This memorial is unique and is the only one of its kind in Rhodesia. It was erected by natives to the memory of their fellows who fell in the East Africa campaign. The memorial was erected by Lt. Col. J.A. Metheun, DSO and his brother, Capt. Stuart Methuen, and the cost was defrayed entirely by native subscriptions.”*

The council report in the 1924 edition of The Rhodesia Advertiser states that the Council donated the sand and the stone and that Col. Methuen had expressed his thanks.

Fast forward to 1971- The late J.S. “Binks” Holland had written to the City Council suggesting that the cross be floodlit at night. It seems he had seen such a spectacle somewhere in Europe and said it looked

“wonderful”, moreover “it would look spectacular from the new Christmas Pass Road at night.”

I recall the evening when it all came together, December 3, 1974, in a ceremony in the market square, which also coincided with the switching on of the Christmas lights. It was peeing down with rain when “Binks” Holland with the words “Fago moto” sent the signal which caused the lights to be switched on.

Yes, it was definitely Binks Holland, because I was there.

Not long after, bearing in mind the circumstances at the time, it was considered tactically prudent to switch them off

FOOTNOTE: sadly and ironically, some shameless cretin has ripped off the plaque for the couple of dollars that the metal would have fetched. The inscription thereon read: To the Glory of God and in memory of the Africans who fell 1914-1918. **HPO**

Recent

Visitors

To the Club

Recently the Club has seen some visitors from the distant past and they spoke to Peter Sande:

Mr Steve Clark left Mutare in 1957 and migrated to the UK. He was a former pupil of MBHS. He recalls a Mrs Hals Franklin who used to reside in Penhalonga who was a well-known artist at the time and it was she who did the pastel drawings of Palmer, Crawford and Perkins which hang in the bar. It seems the same pictures hang in the boardroom at MBHS. Mr Clark is currently lecturing in philosophy at a UK university.

Mr Anthony Harvey left Mutare in 1967. He attended Chancellor School and MBHS. His grand-father, W.E. Harvey was chairman of the Club in 1917. It made him very happy to see his grandfather’s name up on the board all these years later.

Mr and Mrs Winston Clutty spent a night with us on March 10. Mr Clutty’s grand-father Richard Harrison was a Honorary Life Member and was the owner of Harrison’s Plumbing and Sheetmetal Works. He left the business to his son Sidney. The business was later sold to Mr John Borthwick. The couple have been living in Bulawayo for the past 40 years and have now retired to Nyanga.

Tribute to Les Albery

*Taken from a
eulogy by
Tommy Hagan*



LESLEY JAMES, ALBERY 22/5/23- 25/1/14

What follows is taken from the excellent eulogy delivered by Les’ great friend and work colleague of 41 years, Tommy Hagan, at the service held at the Legion Club, Mutare on January 30, 2014.

Les was born into a family of nine boys and one girl. His mother died when he was little which saw him spending a good part of his early life in an orphanage. On leaving school he went to work as an errand boy earning eight shillings a week. In 1943 at the age of 20 he enlisted and saw service in Ceylon, India and Burma rising to the rank of W.O.1.

Les had met Violet his wife-to-be shortly before his departure for Asia and at war’s end they were married. They were to have four children, Chris, Lesley, Patsy and Brenda. He was grandfather to 11 grandchildren and great-grandfather to nine great-grandchildren.

After the war Les joined Coca-Cola at the factory in Acton, London. In 1957 he was recruited by Bennie Goldberg in London and came to work for Umtali Bottling Company. Tommy recalls that on his application for employment under hobbies, Les wrote, ‘Living and loving.’ “Those three words epitomise Les Albery”

Tommy continues, “I joined as Les’ assistant in 1960 and I found a man who very patiently showed you what to do and why you did it. Make a mistake and he showed you again but ask a third time and you got the WO1 dressing down.

Les gave 110%

“Les gave 110% of himself to the Company and played a big part in making the Company what it is today. He worked and played hard but no matter what time he went to bed he was always at the factory before 6am every day to open up and then have what he called his breakfast of a coke and two poached Aspirins. After about 15 years he had a day off work with flu. I told him not to make a habit of it.

“Les never asked any person to do anything he had not done himself consequently he had the respect of all the workers and many came to my office these last few days to express a genuine sorrow at his passing.

“Les played and was good at soccer – the field in those days was where the Open University is today, opposite the Greek Church. He played darts and snooker at the BESL (The Legion) and bowls at the MOTHS where he was Old Bill. At first I couldn't understand why he got so upset at losing a game as it has never worried me, but then I realised that it was because he strived for perfection in everything he did and he was being mad at himself.

Shoot from the ‘lip’

“His other failing was his ability, no matter who he was talking to, to shoot from the ‘lip’.

“One Friday a nun from Marymount College asked if she could borrow a sack trolley to use in a scene in a play they were presenting, I said of course but as they were very heavy and hard to push I suggested perhaps she should come and try one first. She agreed, so that afternoon I took her into the factory. If you recall some of the nuns were quite young and attractive in their modern knee-length skirts and blouses, as it happened Les walked around the corner and seeing this attractive young lady exclaimed, ‘Hello hello, practising pushing a pram are we?’ She turned to me and laughed, and I said to Les with a straight face ‘may I introduce you to Sister Mary.’ You can't imagine Les with a red face, but believe me it was scarlet. Muttering to himself he made a hasty retreat. That was the only time I ever saw Les Albery embarrassed.

Red face

“Speaking of red faces, in 1985 we became the first bottler in Central Africa to receive a gold award from Coca - Cola for Quality and Sales. Much of the praise was due to Les' dedication. The Company decided to have a big presentation. The Provincial Governor agreed to do the honours, after which we took the official party to lunch at the Holiday Inn. As we entered the hotel with Les on one side of the Governor and me on the other, a very small man rushed up to welcome us, the Food and Beverage Manager, ‘Welcome to the hotel, my name is Tich,’ he enthused. Les turned to the Governor, slapped him on the back and said ‘you know why they call him Tich?’ Without waiting for a reply Les continued, ‘It's because he's such a short arse.’

“I wished the floor would open up and swallow me because, A, this is the Governor; B, he was also a bishop and C and worst of all, he was two to three inches shorter than Tich.

“Les was a unique and colourful personality admired and respected by a host of friends and acquaintances and epitomised the adage, " they broke the mould when he was born " Aye.



The memorial as it is today, sans plaque

The story of the three nurses who walked to Umtali.

Not far from Penhalonga or more accurately, opposite the turnoff to St. Augustine's mission, Fair View Road, is a hill called Sabi Ophir Hill, I won't go into the origins of that name but some of you history buffs will make the connection. Below the top of the hill is a ridge on which grew a large fig tree referred to as the Indaba Tree and is said that at some point in time, beneath the canopy Chief Mutasa would hold court. Be that as it may, it was in the shade of this tree that the first hospital in what in those days was loosely named Mashonaland now known as Zimbabwe, was built. The hill opposite was the site of Fort Hill or Fort Umtali and was manned by members of British South Africa Company police. All about were mining claims and it was this general area that was known as Umtali because of the close proximity of the Umtali River. This was the settlement's source of water. Please bear in mind that the then Umtali was the English interpretation of what is now Mutare

Pole and dagga

The Bishop of Bloemfontein, Dr. Knight Bruce had been appointed Bishop of Mashonaland and he saw the need to establish a hospital at Umtali and to this end he personally supervised the construction of the building, a primitive structure being built using pole and dagga with thatch roof. To staff the hospital he persuaded two British nursing sisters who were working in Kimberley, Sister Rose Blennerhassett and

Sister Lucy Sleeman. They were to be joined by a third nurse, Sister Beryl Welby.

The nurses departure was timed to avoid the rainy season and they departed from Durban on the steamer Tyrian, disembarking at Beira on June 12, 1891. Interestingly Beira in those days was mainly populated by British inhabitants. The next leg of the journey was the 80km trip up the Pungwe River to Mapanda, (in some recordings Fontesvilla was the end of the line for the steamers, at the most 10km further upstream) which by my reckoning after studying the map and the river course, is the site of the present day town of Tica, or not far away. The journey was undertaken on a river steamer named 'Shark', taking anything up to 16 hours in cramped conditions and in the scorching heat.

Flood plain

Anybody who knows Mozambique will know that much of Zimbabwe's rain ends up in the lower reaches of the Pungwe to the extent that in a heavy rainy season the river course is lost in what becomes a flood-plain and makes navigating the actual river course, hugely difficult. Moreover, the road to Umtali was crossed by many secondary rivers creating a problem for ox drawn wagons. It was for this reason that travel to the interior was best undertaken in the dryer and cooler months.

Mapanda was a putrid, unhealthy backwater inhabited by about forty white people, mostly miners, traders and hunters and the nurses found their ministrations in great demand while they waited for a wagon to take them on to Umtali.

The women had with them a substantial amount of supplies for the hospital but no wagon was available to transport them and eventually they made the decision to walk the remaining 220km. With the help of a local carpenter they recruited 34 porters. Accompany them was Dr Doyle Granville and a Mr Sutton. Sister Rose spoke Portuguese and this was to prove an advantage as some of the porters were also able to speak the language.

Porters deserted

The trip was to take two weeks and they were faced with mountain ranges, crocodile infested rivers, lions and that scavenger of the bushveld the hyena, particularly at night. Four days out of Umtali, 30 of the porters deserted and so it was decided that the nurses together with the doctor and three porters would go on ahead to Umtali and on arrival there recruit help to bring in Mr Sutton and the stores.

In the course of the walk the nurses had long abandoned their shoes which had

disintegrated and they arrived in Umtali with their feet in bandages and in very bad condition.

During their time in Umtali the nurses had to attend to all manner of ailments and there were many occasions when there was no doctor present to guide them. The accommodation was basic, like the hospital, made of pole and dagga and there were few home comforts. In December 1891 the hospital along with the nurses and the entire settlement was to move to what is now known as Old Mutare.

Two years is those living conditions was considered enough and the nurses were replaced and they returned to South Africa to continue their nursing careers.

In 1941 the Rezende Mine planted a Garden of Remembrance under the fig tree on Sabi Ophir Hill centred around a memorial seat on which was fixed a plaque in memory of the three nurses and the hospital that they founded. The plaque reads as follows: "*On this spot Bishop Knight Bruce's nurses Rose Blennerhassett, Lucy Sleeman, Beryl Welby after an arduous upcountry walk from the East Coast and within a day of their arrival opened a Camp hospital and thereby inaugurated nursing service to the Colony, 14th July 1891.*" I seem to remember that there was a sun dial there also?

Three fig trees

Today there are in fact three fig trees on the site. In 1948 the original was burnt by honey gathers. It was pruned and propped up and seemed to be recovering when it was struck by lightning in 1953 and died of its wounds but not before scions were taken it would seem.

In 1953 a memorial arch and gate to the gardens was added to celebrate the centenary of Cecil Rhodes' birth.

This little story has a sad ending; while the bench is still standing the copper plaque has been ripped off as has the gate to the arch and the sundial (if there ever was one) is no longer there. Of course there is no garden but oddly someone is keeping the grass cut.

*I think we have to raise a few dollars to replace the plaque – but not in copper? **H²O**

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BAR TALK

Tipler to the barman.: "Would you like to sell more beer than you do?"

Barman: "Aye sir, that I would."

Tipler: "Then don't sell so much froth."

