



Non-Profit Organisation 052-511-NPO

**Postal address:** PO Box 61 Cape Town 8000 South Africa

**Physical address:** 25 Queen Victoria Street Cape Town  
South Africa

**Phone:** 021 481 3913 **Fax:** 021 481 3993

**Cell:** 072 225 6893 **E-mail:** samfriends@iziko.org.za

**Website** <http://www.iziko.org.za/>

<http://www.iziko.org.za/static/page/friends-of-the-south-african-museum>

## NEWSLETTER – JULY 2019

The Friends programme continues to offer interesting lecture topics and exciting activities. We hope you will participate and enjoy these. We welcome suggestions from members; please contact us should you come across exciting events and lectures.

## LECTURE PROGRAMME

Lectures on the **last Wednesday** of each month at 18:00 in the TH Barry lecture theatre. The programme for lectures and outings is subject to change should this become necessary.

### **Wednesday 31 July 2019 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Speaker:** Ian Glass

**Title:** *Nicolas-Louis de La Caille's visit to the Cape in 1751–53*

### **Wednesday 28 August**

**Speaker:** Caitlin Smith

**Title:** *How giraffes Grow: a Tall Tale*

### **Wednesday 25 September**

**Speaker:** Dr Cameron Penn-Clarke

**Title:** *The rise and fall of the malvinokaffric realm in South Africa: exploring the lives and times of a unique polar Early-Middle Devonian Fauna*

### **Wednesday 31 October**

**Speaker:** Dr Sandra Shell

**Title:** TBA

## OUTINGS

**26–27 July** Robben Island overnight: a geological and historical perspective

**7 August** Tour of the exhibition: Unshackled history: the wreck of the slave ship Jose, 1794 at the Slave Lodge

Save the date for this exciting excursion - Exploring the fossils and geology of the Ceres Valley

### **Friday 18–Saturday 19 October**

Claire Browning, curator at the Iziko South African Museum, and Dr Cameron Penn-Clarke from the Council for Geoscience will lead this excursion to visit the unique and fossil rich 400-million-year-old mud rocks of the Bokkeveld group. We will visit sites such as the Pakhuis glacial rocks, Swaarmoed Pass, Gydo Pass, Op Die Berg and the Keurbos fossil site, once covered by the Aghullas Sea where we will learn about these ancient marine creatures such as trilobites and brachiopods. Accommodation has been arranged at Rhodene Cottages in Ceres. Further information will be provided nearer the time.



**Above:** Ceres Valley

Booking and advance payment to secure your booking is essential for all outings. To secure your booking, please respond by email [samfriends@iziko.org.za](mailto:samfriends@iziko.org.za)

Please do look at our Facebook page for notices, news and photographs of previous outings.  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-the-South-African-Museum/310188388996502>

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## CONFERENCE - ZAITUNA SKOSAN AND SIBUSISO MTUNGATA

Zaituna Skosan and Sibusiso Mtungata have been working in the Karoo Palaeontology Department for a collective twenty-one years. During this time, they have excelled in fossil preparation, field work and assisting with exhibitions and education programmes. Sibusiso is well known to members of the Friends who go on the annual fossil trip. Zaituna assists in arrangements for the trip prior to our departure.

Zaituna and Sibusiso were invited to deliver a presentation at a conference showcasing Iziko's palaeontology collections and new facilities and to receive specialised training at the Field Museum. After the conference they spent a week with leading collections and preparation specialists at the museum in Professor Paul Sereno's Dinolab. During this time the hands-on intensive training was filmed by Dr Wendy Taylor who will use this material to develop two online e-learning short courses. These courses will be made available online and will enable Zaituna and Sibusiso to train other museum technicians at the Iziko South African Museum as well as museum technicians based at other museums.

This was an excellent opportunity for two dedicated technical staff members to receive specialised training in cutting edge techniques

that can be used to improve Iziko's exhibitions and research programmes and assist with training technicians elsewhere. The Friends were asked to be one of the sponsors to make possible the presentation at the conference and specialised training at one of the world's premier palaeontology laboratories. The Committee unanimously agreed to donate R25 000 towards the expenses for this trip.



**Above:** Sibusiso Mtungata



**Above:** Zaituna Skosan

## FEEDBACK FROM KAROO PALAEO STAFF EXPLORING CHICAGO

Towards the end of May, beginning June my colleague Sibusiso Mtungata and I were fortunate to spend two weeks in Chicago. The trip was made possible with the help of various funders including the Friends of Iziko South African Museum, Centre of Excellence Palaeosciences (CoE), Palaeontological Society of Southern Africa (PSSA) and the Palaeontological Scientific Trust (PAST). Our mentors on this project, Ms Claire Browning and Dr Wendy Taylor also deserve a special mention for assisting us with the write-up of the funding proposal and for their continuous support.

During our two week stay in the United States we attended a week-long conference organised by the Society for Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC). We participated in hand-on workshops, attended a number of presentations and tremendously enjoyed the new five-minute specimen spotlight talks. We gave our very first presentation to an international audience on how 'Collections makes connections' at Iziko, we think it went well. Attending the conference was an amazing experience as we got to meet new people and network with collections managers and preparators from different continents. This also helped us evaluate how we at Iziko compare to other institutions and we are happy to say we are on par with most practices.



Our second week was spent behind the scenes in the collections of The Field Museum and in famous Dinosaur Palaeontologist, Paul Sareno's, fossil laboratory. The staff at these institutions were extremely helpful in sharing their skills, insight and knowledge with us especially in the areas of fossil preparation techniques, equipment used and collection management.

In and amongst our busy schedule we managed to do some sight-seeing that included numerous visits to the Field Museum (as there was just too much to see), The Art Institute, The Driehaus Museum and a boat trip circling Navy Pier.

Our trip would never have been possible if it was not for the generosity of The Friends of the Museum and our heartfelt thanks go to everyone involved in this amazing professional development opportunity.

*Zaituna Skosan and Sibusiso Mthungata*

## OUTINGS - REPORT BACKS

### SANCCOB SECOND VISIT

The Friends went to SANCCOB on Saturday 30 March for the second time. Once again, we had a great response, and again it was mostly a first time visit for those on the outing.

This time around we were shown a short video on the work done by SANCCOB. It was most distressing to see images of penguins encased in oil and the damage the oil spills do the environment.

We were intrigued to see how the lesser flamingo chicks have grown since our first visit. They are now in pens outside and are thriving. In the next month or so they will be able to fly and then decisions need to be made as to where and when to release them. It was interesting to see that everyone working with

the chicks was dressed in pink. This is to imprint on the birds that their adults are pink and, in this way, try to assist in their future life amongst other flamingos.

We were lucky to experience the feeding of the permanent inhabitants who had been waiting patiently for some time before their meal arrived. Two volunteers brought the fish; some are hand fed and the others helped themselves to the buffet provided for them. No pushing or shoving, all birds were very well behaved and waited their turn.

*Charlotte Honiball*

### **GROOTE SCHUUR ESTATE**

The Friends had a guided tour of the main house on the estate, now a museum, on grounds originally farmed by Jan van Riebeeck. The property at the time consisted of three barns, this building being the largest, named Groote Schuur.

Cecil John Rhodes purchased the house from a Mrs van der Bijl in 1893. As he wanted to have a more Cape Dutch type of house, he commissioned Sir Herbert Baker to add a storey and change the façade accordingly. Rhodes lived in the house until his death after which he left the entire property to the state who took ownership in 1909. Prime Ministers then made this their home, Louis Botha being the first and FW de Klerk the last to live there. The house has been restored to be close to what it was it during Rhodes' time. The original thatch roof was destroyed in a fire and replaced with tiles. As the house is very cold in winter, there are many very ornate fireplaces in most of the rooms. Beautiful inside shutters keep it cool in the hot summer months. Rhodes had a generator to electrify the house before Cape Town had electricity.

The library houses a large collection of rare and first edition books, collected by Rhodes as he was a great reader. As he only spoke English, he had some Greek and Italian books translated into English in England and these

leather-bound books are housed in the library. This project, overseen by Charles Dickens' daughter, was stopped when it became too expensive and the price reached GBP 800. All the books are still used for research by students, often Rhodes Scholars. There is also a large rare map collection consisting mainly of maps of journeys through Africa.

The house has forty-seven spaces which include passages and alcoves, thirty-six rooms, seventeen bedrooms and only three bathrooms. The museum is unique in that most areas are open, not roped off and we were invited to sit on the furniture in the lounge area whilst our guide, the curator of the museum, told us the fascinating history of the house and past inhabitants. One had to wonder which famous people had sat on those same chairs in years gone by.

Mrs BJ Vorster and Mrs FW de Klerk were particularly fond of the house, both leaving their mark when they departed. Mrs Vorster compiled an inventory of the contents of the house and wrote a book which earned her a PhD. Mrs de Klerk redecorated some areas, for example she curtained the windows over the indoor shutters in the reception rooms. When this inventory was checked recently, it was found that ninety-nine per cent of the contents are still in the house.

There are thirty-two houses on the estate, Genadendal being the home of our current president. Ministers of Parliament and staff members are housed in the other properties. Once again, this outing was so popular that we arranged a second visit, this one guided by Najwaa. Several members had invited guests which gave us an opportunity to showcase the Friends' activities. This tour was again a great success and another visit will be arranged for later in the year.

*Charlotte Honiball*

## **PALMIET PUMPED POWER STORAGE**

A large group of Friends assembled at the Visitors Centre at the Palmiet Pumped Storage Scheme close to Grabouw where we were met by Liesel Sherwood-Adcock, our very knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide for the morning.

Once we were seated in the Visitors Centre auditorium, she gave us a broad but clear explanation of Eskom's electricity generation and transmission model. In particular we learnt about the difference between base load power plants (such as Koeberg nuclear power station and the big coal-fired plants) and peak load power plants (such as Palmiet and diesel and gas turbines). We also learnt that Palmiet is a joint venture between Eskom and the Department of Water Affairs.

Palmiet generates electricity (hydro-electricity) for the Eskom national grid during peak periods. Water used to generate electricity during peak periods is pumped back to the Rockview Dam at night and on weekends to be used again for electricity generation or to be transferred into the City of Cape Town's water supply system via the Upper Steenbras Dam. This adds an average of twenty-five million cubic metres of water per annum to Cape Town's water supply.

After a question and answer session and a short tea break, we drove in convoy down to the power station itself, adjacent to the Kogelberg Dam. This power station is very impressive. Completed in 1988 it has a generation capacity of 400 MW, enough to power sixteen small towns.

The two identical Voith pump-turbine Fuji generator motor sets are located approximately sixty metres below ground level at the base of giant concrete lined wells. Looking into these wells was not for those of us who are scared of heights. We were also shown a massive crane with a lifting capacity of 360 ton and a span of thirty metres in the

surface machine hall. One can imagine how strong the floor and walls need to be just to support this crane which is needed for maintenance work on the turbines and generators from time to time.

The Palmiet Pumped Storage Scheme is situated in the heart of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve so it was very heartening to hear that careful measures had been taken during construction, for example steps to avoid introduction of environmentally harmful Argentine ants, conservation of seed-bearing topsoil and protection of vegetation.

All in all, it was a superb outing rounded off for many of us by a delicious lunch at the Houwhoek Farm Stall.

Thanks to Kathy Jay for arranging this outing for the Friends.

*Brian Davey*



## **ORIGINS OF EARLY SAPIENS BEHAVIOUR EXHIBITION**

The Friends were privileged to have Dr Wendy Black, curator of archaeology and the Blombos collection at Iziko, take us through new exhibition showing the unique archaeological discoveries that have been made at the coastal sites Blombos cave, Klasies River cave and Klipdrift shelter in the southern Cape. Occupied by early Homo sapiens between 120 000 and 50 000 years ago, this is a key period in the evolution of modern human behaviour.

We started at the Blombos exhibition where Wendy gave us an overview of fossil discoveries and where they fitted into the timeframe. We then moved upstairs to the new exhibition where we were all fascinated by the information Wendy shared.

The We Are All One message features strongly throughout the exhibition, pointing to the clear genetic evidence that all Homo sapiens – people like us – have their origins in Africa. You can take pride in viewing the oldest collection of abstract art, the oldest bone awls used for sewing, the oldest chemistry kit, the first containers, among the first pieces of handmade jewellery and the first evidence for the use of a bow and arrow – and knowing that all these firsts were made in southern Africa.



*The Origins of Early Sapiens Behaviour Exhibition: Mother Africa – Welcome Home* is a showcase of more than thirty years of archaeological research undertaken by Professor Christopher Henshilwood, Professor Sarah Wurz, Dr Karen van Niekerk and their research teams at the Blombos cave, Klasies River and Klipdrift shelter sites situated in the southern Cape. The exhibition has been curated by award-winning documentary filmmaker Craig Foster and Wits curator, Petro Keene.



**Above:** Homo Naledi

This world class exhibition will be at Iziko until June 2020. We urge Friends who have not already visited to be sure to explore this exhibition.

*Charlotte Honiball*

## **WEST COAST FOSSIL PARK**

The Friends visited the West Coast Fossil Park on a lovely sunny autumn morning where they were given a guided tour of the new state-of-the-art visitors' centre, museum and the active dig site, which was funded by a Lotto grant. Started as an open-cast phosphate mine, fossil excavation began in the late 1960s when fossils were discovered during early mining operations. After the site became protected mining ceased. The site continues to yield fossils dating back to more than five million years ago. The site is unique in that it is combination of land, marine and freshwater environments. Our guide Darryl explained that five million years ago the area was tropical. The subsequent arrival of the cold Benguela current had a big impact on the vegetation, which diminished and thus had an effect on the plants the animals that were dependent on, causing the animals to die out.

The beautiful work of art in the museum to shows what the terrain was like at this time. The striking centrepiece is a scene of a sivathere (extinct short-necked giraffe) family made from

driftwood which was used to create the animals with a focus on their anatomy. The sivathere was the forerunner of the modern-day giraffe. It had ossicones on its head as well as horns. Other magnificent artworks are also on display including those by Cedric Hunter who was for many years the scientific illustrator at the museum. The lower level of the museum very cleverly shows life below the soil and is used to teach children. The adults were fascinated by the models of underground creatures and plants seen from inside a termite structure.

We were then guided to the dig site by Wendy who told us about the site and showed us a map of how the Berg River has changed course over millennia. The dig is covered by a tunnel which enables excavation work to continue throughout the year. It was fascinating to see the large number of fossils that were being excavated and then attempting to identify them.

The newly opened restaurant with a beautiful view over the park provided a delicious lunch for those who wished to stay.

*Charlotte Honiball*



**Above:** Our enthusiastic guide Darryl explained how the fossils had been placed into a time zone of about 5 million years ago.

## **FOSSIL TRIP**

As always, this annual fossil hunt was a huge success. We met at the Lemoenfontein Country Lodge on Wednesday evening and prepared ourselves for Roger Smith's introduction to the forthcoming daily programme which was

followed by his informative lecture and slide show on the Karoo area that we were going to explore over the coming days. All very exciting, especially for newcomers to this adventure. And of course we all got the feeling that we are definitely going to be finding something of importance and expecting it to be highly visible.

We started off at 08.30 each morning after enjoying a full breakfast to keep us going up and down the slopes. The first day's drive was long but the spectacular scenery made up for the winding bumpy road. After refreshments we started off to the slopes some distance away and proceeded to search backwards and forwards for the elusive white bone fragments. Some of the old hands seem to always find something but the rest of us were happy with our small pieces from scattered sites.

The second day's drive was to a closer site with more interesting, but steep slopes. The fit and enthusiastic members rushed up and soon discovered various interesting specimens. The more cautious among us did parallel searches which were a bit easier on the body. Lunch as usual was a real treat. Roger's evening talk and film were based on his work with the National Geographic Society in which Permian mass extinction burrows were on display with a few very interesting interpretations of what took place all those millions of years ago.

The last day's site took us to somewhat gentler virgin slopes. This created a real buzz as we were all certain that we would make the find of the day. Well Claire Browning, Iziko's head of Palaeontology, found a very special new beastie identified by Roger as the partial skull of a very rare rhinesuchid amphibian. Many other diictodon skulls and a lower jaw of a pareisaurus were of the exciting finds.

Our special thanks to Roger and his team and the staff at Lemoenfontein for a wonderful five days in the magnificent Karoo.

*Rosemary Smythe*



**Above:** Claire Browning, curator of the Karoo Palaeontology collections at the Iziko South African Museum, holding the amphibious skull fossil that she found. Photo by Kathy Jay.

### **J.A. CLIFT VISIT**

On a drizzly morning in early June a keen group of Friends gathered at J.A. Clift (Pty) Limited's Head Office in Concordia Street Paarl. J.A. Clift was founded in 1906 and is the oldest monumental and granite contracting company in South Africa. The company has remained in the Clift family for four generations. J.A. Clift's first contract as an independent business was for the supply and dressing of granite for the construction of the Rhodes Memorial. Later contracts included The Old Mutual building, the General Post Office and the Barclays Bank building.



After being introduced to director Jimmy Clift – our host and guide for the morning – we made our way in convoy to Clift's De Hoop Quarry on the slopes of Paarl Mountain. Some of our group – no names will be mentioned –

managed to get lost during the short journey to the quarry... but were found after a minor delay. At the quarry we were told how large blocks of the Paarl grey granite are extracted using power tools, diamond grit-encrusted cables and simple hand tools. We were very privileged to watch a large granite block being broken up into smaller pieces, along the natural grain line, by the use of a hammer and 'plugs and feathers'. This was definitely a highlight. Returning to the Concordia Street premises we were able to see the monumental and contracting sides of the Clift business – stocks of different types of granite purchased from other suppliers, gravestones, slabs for kitchen tops, etc. as well as the sophisticated equipment needed to produce these end products. To end off the tour we spent some time in Clift's own museum where the interesting history of the company is proudly exhibited by way of photos and artefacts.

Many thanks to Kathy Jay for patiently shepherding us and to Jimmy Clift for his warm hospitality.

After the tour many of the Friends enjoyed great companionship over a fantastic meal at Cucina di Giovanni at Laborie Estate.

For more information see <http://cliftgranite.co.za/paarl-granite/>

*Brian Davey*

### **VISIT TO IZIKO MUSEUM BY THE REDHILL ECO CLUB**

Friends arranged for a group of ten children from the Redhill Eco Club to visit the Iziko museum on Saturday 8 June. They were given a tour of the museum and attended a show in the planetarium. Rosemary Smythe was host to the group and Artefacts Café at the museum provided a packed lunch for each child at cost which was paid by the Friends.

The goals of the Red Hill Eco Club, in existence since 2011, are to inspire in young people an

appreciation of the environment through experiential learning from the perspectives of the biological and environmental sciences. Topics are considered against the background of their relationship to fynbos and the natural environment in the immediate area, specifically Red Hill and its surrounds as well as the Cape Point area.



The club members consist of youngsters aged from eleven years upwards who live in the Red Hill informal settlement situated just north of Cape Point.

*Charlotte Honiball*

**Below:** Friends overlooking the excavation pit at the fossil park.



## NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the following new members: John Lee Coram, Batloug Hlabeli; Joelle Dessard, Mike Hellmann, Nonhlanhla Taylor, Nonhlanhla Linda, Julian Paterson, Jonny and Susan Myers, Amber Myers, Keith and Pam Lourens, Barbara Grice, Graham and Sally Bean, Luc van Reenen, Margaret Jones, John and Di Morley.

Please note that membership renewals were due at the end of December 2018. If your membership is not renewed you will no longer be on the mailing list for information regarding lectures and outings.

*Charlotte Honiball*

Friends of Iziko South African Museum