

T. S. MATABELE - ZIMBABWE SEA CADET CORPS

NEWSLETTER



December 2002

Greetings from Africa!

T. S. Matabele has had what we might call an eventful year. As most of our readers will know, the situation in Zimbabwe has been somewhat difficult to cope with, but nevertheless, we have sailed on regardless and determined to make our presence felt! The most remarkable story is that our recruitment is presently at its highest for some time. We are, in fact fully up to establishment of +/- 30 Cadets. We have lost the services of Lt. John Garacho and Petty Officer Frank Mangena, both of whom are now in the U.K. but they have both vowed to return in the near future, and give us the benefit of their experiences. We must congratulate Frank on getting himself a bride – naturally recruited from the Sea Cadets! However, here at home, the CO remains in office with the full back up of Lt. Ian Chatterton, now our civilian instructor, and Lt. Bernard Murambiwa. Petty Officer “China” Hlabangana is exercising his senior rating with

typical stentorian voice and exercise of command. We now have three killicks, to whom more and more responsibility is being given. When a camp is to be organised, the onus of this falls squarely on their shoulders. This involves transport, food, training, accommodation and welfare. With current shortages of things like mealie-meal (the staple food here), sugar, cooking oil and bread, they have been hard pressed. Quite an undertaking, but they are learning fast.

At the time of writing there are some 25 Cadets on a five day camp at our sailing HQ at Upper Umgusa Dam. There is only one problem. Due to the present drought, the water is very low and hence our water activities are somewhat curtailed.

The Unit has been even busier than usual this year. The number of duties that we have undertaken has increased, and for that we are most grateful, because this is the way we earn our income. With inflation at over 150%, we have had problems in making ends

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meet. We have made an appeal, with the kind co-operation of Sea Cadet HQ in London, to individual units in U.K. for any little assistance they might be able to help us with, and we have been most gratified and thankful for the response we have had. The first donation we received enabled us to re-quip the Cadets with boots, which we supply as part of the uniform. The price had gone up from Zim \$1500,00 a pair a year ago to \$9600,00 last month!

Uniforms are supplied free of charge to each Cadet, and we are eternally grateful to Mr. Eric Rensberg of "The Label Clothing Company" in Bulawayo, who has not only made shirts, shorts, skirts and even cap tallies for us without charge, but has also donated the fabric. Similarly, all our badges are screen printed for us by Mr. Neville Upwards, of Security Mills, again without charge. It is difficult to express our thanks sufficiently; these are wonderful donations. We have somehow managed to keep afloat financially.

Returning to duties, we have, as usual, been busy with traffic control for road races, both running and cycling, with motor shows, school events, theatre

front-of-house, Trade Fairs and other sporting activities. There have been a number of camps this year, both at Umgusa, and also in the Matopos, a wild area some 30 km outside the city. These camps have been concerned with boating activities, radio comms, map reading and compass work, adventure training, camp disciplines, repairs and maintenance – also lots of fun. One special camp was held at Hwange National Park, some 250 km away, for ten Cadets who had shown particular merit in their Cadet commitments. They were awarded a free three day camp, and found themselves busy with Wild Life Research into African Hunting Dogs, Hyenas, and Lions. They were able to find out how to use electronic collars placed on animals to trace their movements, and also got a chance to fire a special gun used to tranquillise the animal for collaring purposes. Perhaps a little strange as naval activity, but, we do assure you, very educational, different, and highly exciting.

The CO has visited U.K. twice this year in connection with his professional work, and on each occasion called in to Lambeth

Road. On the last visit in September, he was privileged to receive an invitation to HMS President on the River Thames, to attend the launching of a lovely new boat, made and donated to the Sea Cadets by a British Trust. You lucky people. Never mind, we have not done too badly. Only a few days ago, we were approached by a lady who offered us a fully equipped "Enterprise" yacht, which her family no longer used. Needless to say, we said "yes" with alacrity. We hope to take delivery in January, and at the same time, hope that, at last some rain will fall to fill our dam, and then we can get sailing. At Umgusa, the sailing club there, who were our hosts for our permanent camp for over 25 years has had to close down. After a period of considerable trauma, the club house and facilities have been taken over and it is now run as a weekend recreation park. This has not affected us, as we have been able to come to a most amicable arrangement with the new owner, who happens to be a Rotarian friend of the CO. In fact, it now means that every Sunday and holiday weekends, two or three senior Cadets are collected from

town, to go out to Umgusa to run boat rides for the visitors. This is particularly good training, as for each ride, the Cadets are required to fit each passenger with a life-belt, and give full instructions on water safety. It is also a very instructional ride, as there is a mass of water fowl to be seen and talked about.

We are still in touch with ISCA, and must thank webmaster Waldie Bartie in South Africa for the services he provides. We have not been able to travel to the annual conferences, but have been represented at each one by our colleagues in U.K. or South Africa.

Our last Annual Inspection Parade was held at our Parade Headquarters, and for the second year running, our Inspecting Officer was the District Governor of Rotary. It so happens the DG Phil Whitehead lives in Bulawayo, which made it even more eventful. The Parade was held on the afternoon of Saturday 24th. August under a hot blue sky, and culminated in a "braai" (barbeque to the uninitiated), for which an impala and a warthog were donated. They were duly cooked and eaten with great relish. It was a most successful event with an

audience of Cadet parents and also Rotarians.

Next year is special to T S Matabele – it is our fiftieth anniversary. We were launched on Trafalgar Day in 1953, by the then Mayor of Bulawayo, and have a commemorative plaque which recalls the event. We are planning a number of activities, and have issued an invitation to the Commodore of Sea Cadets, U.K. to visit us for the Parade. We are also hoping that some of our International Colleagues might also pay us a visit for this function. Formal invitations will be sent out soon. Maybe you will be able to come?

We still retain very good comms. with our brother organisations, including Scouts and Air Cadets, and also with the Municipality, Police, Sports Clubs, Service Organisations and the public in general. Cadets are known well in the City. Their uniform is distinctive, and their service to others is always excellent. They are renowned for their reliability, their courtesy, punctuality, manners, and good nature, and many people ask for their services in so many ways. This in itself shows how well they are respected. Sea Cadets may appear a little anomalous in a

land locked country, but we can assure our readers that the traditions and customs of the Navy are fully perpetrated whenever possible, and nothing gives the Cadets greater pleasure than to read magazines and journals showing happenings in the Navy and the Sea Cadets elsewhere – with sailors looking the same as they do!

T S Matabele certainly goes through what might be termed interesting times. We have certainly had some ups and downs. For instance, we had to close down for three weeks during the year, due to political activities, but we are back again as strong as ever, and ready to begin a new year with as much enthusiasm as always.

With that, may we wish you all our Seasons Greetings from a rather hot dry Christmas time in Africa, and hope that the year 2003 will be a prosperous, productive and happy one for everyone.

Good Sailing!

T S Matabele
ZSCC.
December 2002.